

# GOD WATCHES OVER YISROEL

by Rabbi Pinchas Winston

*Rachel was giving birth and had difficulty in labor. While in hard labor, the midwife said to her, "Don't be afraid. This one is also a son for you." As she was dying she called him, "Ben Oni," but his father called him "Binyomin." (Bereishis 35:16-18)*

See Ya'akov run. Now see him return home 36 years later, a changed man, no longer Ya'akov, but Yisroel. However, though he gained a large family during that time, he lost a beloved wife along the way as well. It was Hashgochah Pratis because, as the Ramban points out, the Avos kept the Torah while living in Eretz Yisroel, and that meant not being married to two sisters at the same time.

It was also Hashgochah Pratis for another more Kabbalistic reason, as the Zohar [and the Metok Midvash] explains:

Once Binyomin was born [and the 12 Tribes were completed and bound together with the Shechinah], Rachel died [and her soul returned to its source in the Shechinah], and it [the Shechinah] took her place in the lower world [to become rectified through them. For, now that all of the tribes were joined with the Shechinah, Rachel "returned" to become the Akeros HaBayis-the housewife]. For this reason, Binyomin was born in the "Holy Land," as it says, "When I came from Padan Rachel died on me along the way in Eretz Canaan" (Bereishis 48:7). There Rachel died, and it [the Shechinah] took her place in the lower world to dwell in a complete house, since the entire time that Rachel lived in the lower world, it could not be rectified through them [the 12 Tribes]. (Zohar, Vayaitzai 158a)

Once Binyomin was born, the Shechinah joined with all of the tribes [and dwelled upon them], and took the house of all of them [all of them were one and created a house and dwelling place for the Shechinah]. And Ya'akov knew, through the Mystery of Wisdom [i.e., through Ruach HaKodesh], that once the 12 Tribes were complete that the Shechinah was bound to them, and that with the death of Rachel, she took the house [i.e., once the "Lower Rachel" died, the "Upper Rachel," which is the Shechinah, took the house]. (Ibid. 158b)

What this means is the following. While Rachel lived, Ya'akov kept his bed in her dwelling, and the Shechinah can only dwell upon someone who has permanently separated from his wife, as did Moshe Rabbeinu later on in his time. Therefore, the Shechinah had wanted Ya'akov to separate from

Rachel so that it could dwell on him permanently from that time onward.

However, this could have been accomplished by Ya'akov simply moving his bed out of Rachel's dwelling, and separating from her just as Moshe Rabbeinu did from Tzipporah. Since Ya'akov had cursed with death the one who had stolen Lavan's idols, and that happened to have been Rachel, the necessary separation of Ya'akov from Rachel was achieved through the fulfillment of the curse.

But, this seems to make the death of Rachel Imeinu incidental, and therefore tragic. It seems as if she was forced out of the picture, just to make room for bigger things, and through death because of a "mistaken" curse. Obviously, that cannot be true, especially since Rachel Imeinu played such a central role in the creation of the Jewish people, and continues to play a central role in their redemption, as millions continue to visit her burial place on a continuous basis.

Fine, but how did her very early death benefit her? The Leshem explains:

All matters pertaining to Ya'akov, Yisroel, Rachel, and Leah are all in the Malchus of Atzilus which is called, "Rachel Klalli," the "General Rachel," which is the Holy Shechinah. All of them are from the specific lights and partzufim that are within her. It is likewise with respect to all of the Avos and Moshe Rabbeinu; all the souls that will ever come out are within her. For, the lower world, which is the entire reality of BY"A, and all of their matters and functioning, whether essential or incidental, are from her. (Sha'arei Leshem, p. 383)

It is important to recall that all that occurs in our world originates in the upper spiritual worlds. Our entire world, and everything inside of it, including people and everything that occurs to and around them, is a function of Divine light. The physical world with which we are familiar is just a three-dimensional projection of that light.

As a result, everything that exists or occurs can be traced back to a certain level of light in the upper, spiritual realm, especially human souls. We may walk the face of the earth, but our souls can be traced back to spiritual worlds far higher and greater than the physical one in which we are conscious of ourselves. Potential in our world is a function of the spiritual level in which a person's soul is rooted.

Hence, though Torah on a Pshat-Level discusses physical human beings and the history of which they were apart, Torah on a Sod-Level discusses the spiritual roots of all they were and accomplished. Thus, though we can talk about Rachel Imeinu the human being, to fully understand her role in history, we need to talk about her spiritual root in the upper realm.

I could spend the next few pages discussing the various levels of those upper realms, which I have done in the past already, either here or in my weekly essay, "Connecting The Dots." However, in this case, I do not think it is necessary to do so again, because it is sufficient to know that Rachel Imeinu, in her fullest sense, corresponds to the level from which all the souls of the Jewish people emanate,

truly making her the ultimate Akeres HaBayis.

However, to reach this potential, she could not remain in the physical state in which she was born. Once Adam HaRishon ate from the Aitz HaDa'as Tov v'Rah, and caused mankind to go into exile for thousands of years, everyone that has come into this world has done so as but a shadow of their true spiritual reality. Our entire lives are spent trying realize what our potential is, and to strive to fulfill as much of it as possible.

Reaching it, or even just part of our potential personal greatness, is a function of our efforts, and of Heavenly help. Torah directs us, and gives us a means to get in touch with our inner, latent, and hidden potential, and the means to make use of it, which results in spiritual growth and personal greatness. Ultimately, it is a matter of how much our souls can be manifested through our bodies, which become more spiritual as a result, becoming more like the soul than when they were first born.

Since life is about tikun of the soul, at the least the part that joins with the body (the upper essential soul is always perfect), all of the tikun does not necessarily need to take place down here in the limited physical world. Sometimes, for some souls, the tikun in the lower world is just for the sake of reaching the level at which the tikun in the upper world can begin.

To us, down here on earth, possessing only human eyes and lacking prophecy, we just see righteous people die before their time. And, in the case of Rachel Imeinu, due to a curious twist of fate, so-to-speak, because her husband inadvertently cursed her, so certain was he that no one from his entourage would steal from Lavan.

Early death.

Unfulfilled potential.

Tragedy.

But that is not the way it appears in Heaven. In Heaven, they know the truth, about how remaining on earth can be a hindrance to a righteous person's spiritual growth. They know when a person has grown as much as he can while in his body, and how remaining in the physical world can slow the righteous person down. As a result, sometimes it becomes necessary for such a person to move on to the next stage of tikun, requiring an early death.

The fact that many righteous people live until old age means that this is not always the case. Sometimes a tzaddik's role in history can demand that he be around for a long time, if not for himself, then at least for others. But, sometimes a person's role in history can be so central and all-encompassing that he cannot stay around too long, for what he needs to accomplish on behalf of the nation can be better achieved in the upper realm, as was the case with Rachel Imeinu.

Interesting how seemingly negative events can really be positive ones in disguise. When Rachel

stole the terafim from her father to wean him off idol worship, she could have ditched them somewhere along the way, and been free of them. Just imagine if she had: Ya'akov's curse would have had no effect. In fact, had she decided not to take them at all, the entire incident with Lavan would never have occurred, and again, Rachel would have lived.

Even had she taken them, and hid them under herself as she actually did, and Lavan did search for them, did Ya'akov have to curse the thief just to prove his innocence? Could he not have, after Lavan's failure to find them, just say, "You see! We're innocent, so go accuse and investigate someone else! We're continuing on with our journey!" and be done with it, allowing his beloved wife to live?

Yes, on all accounts. And, that is the way it probably would have gone, had it been possible for Rachel to live past that point in history. But, apparently it wasn't. Apparently, the time had come for Rachel's soul to migrate upward in the spiritual realm, in order for her to assume her eternal role in Jewish history as the Akeres HaBayis.

Interesting that her yartzheit is the 11th of MarCheshvan, the month that prepares us for the light of Moshiach that emanates during Chanukah. Furthermore, the number 11, which also corresponds to Yosef, who was her first child but the 11th of the Shevatim to be born, is the number that represents the sefirah of Da'as, the key to victory over Eisav and to the Final Redemption.

Indeed, the only thing that stands between the Jewish people and the end of exile is Da'as itself. We may be frum, but we also have a Golus- Mentality, when we pray, when we learn, and when we perform mitzvos. We are merely biding our time, waiting for the world to change for the better, but having a blast while we wait. We lack enthusiasm and excitement for redemption, and if anything, we live with fear, not confidence.

Not Rachel Imeinu. For Rachel Imeinu, it was all about redemption, as the prophet said, "Rachel weeps for her children" (Yirmiyahu 31:15); she cries for an end to our suffering and exile. In fact, according to the Midrash, she told God:

*"If I, a human being, was prepared not to humiliate my sister and to take a rival into my home, how can You, eternal and compassionate God, be jealous of idols, which have no true existence, that were brought into Your House? Will You cause my children to be exiled on this account?"*  
(Introduction, Eichah Rabbah)

It was a good point, in fact, such a good one that God accepted it over the pleas of all of the rest of the Avos, promising to redeem her children in good time. No wonder her kever remains to be a magnet for people from around the world who are yearning for redemption, personal, national, or both. And, apparently, to assume such a central role in history, Rachel had to leave this world at the young age of 36, in order to ascend to higher heights within the spiritual realm.

## Text

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