

פרשת וישלח

בראשית פרק לה:יז-יט

וַיְהִי בְהִקְשָׁתָהּ בְּלִדְתָהּ וַתֹּאמֶר לָהּ הַמִּלְדָּה אֶל-תִּירְאִי כִי-גַם-זֶה לְךָ בֶּן׃ וַיְהִי
בְּצֵאת נַפְשָׁהּ כִּי מָתָה וַתִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ בֶּן-אוֹנִי וְאָבִיו קָרָא-לוֹ בְּנִימִין׃ וַתָּמָת רָחֵל
וַתִּקָּבֵר בְּדֶרֶךְ אֶפְרָתָה הוּא בֵּית לָחֶם

It came to pass when she had such difficulty giving birth, that the midwife said to her, "Do not be afraid, for this one, too, is a son for you." And it came to pass, when her soul departed for she died that she named him Ben oni, but his father called him Benjamin. So Rachel died, and she was buried on the road to Ephrath, which is Bethlehem.

Coral Yeudai Class of 2021- Original Commentary

In Parshat Vayishlach Yaakov experiences many significant different occurrences, such as the hope of a reconciliation with his brother Eisav, the long encounter and fight with the angel that embodied the spirit of Eisav, the successful reconciliation with Eisav, the abduction and rape of his daughter Dinah in Shechem, and lastly the birth of his son Binyamin. After the whole incident in Shechem, Hashem commanded Yaakov to go to Beit-El, where he built an altar for Hashem, was newly named Yisrael, blessed with many children that would become a strong nation, was promised the land given to Avraham and Yitzchak, created a stone monument in the place Hashem spoke with him, and lastly officially named that place Beth-El. Yaakov continued his long journey, going from Beth-El to Efrat. Suddenly, Rachel, Yaakov's wife, went into a difficult immediate labor. As exemplified in the pesukim, the midwife reassured Rachel, telling her not to be afraid, as it is another son to her, in addition to Yosef. As she was dying, with her soul departing, she was able to name her son "Ben Oni". Yaakov named him Biyamin instead, due to the fact that the original name had a more sad and negative connotation. Then, Rachel was buried in Beit Lechem, on the road to Efrat.

These pesukim that describe Rachel's childbirth were very emotional and powerful, as while one's life was being taken away, which was Rachels, another was entering the world, which was Binyamins. However, although the birth of Binyamin is happening during these pesukim, the focus is mainly on the death of Rachel, with the attitude being more negative. Although, the death of Rachel, the love of Yaakov's life, happens to be an exceptionally heartbreaking moment for him, the fact that his son is born seems to be less significant. This is evident in the pesukim when right after Binyamin is born, the pshat shifts back to Rachel and her death. After reviewing these

pesukim, I truly felt that there should have been an equal amount of respect to both the death and birth being described, as they are both great historical figures deserving of it. Furthermore, I feel that this ignorance can teach us a very important and valuable lesson. Something good always seems to come from something bad. It may be hard to believe, but we must be able to cope and then be optimistic for what there is to come.

Nissim Ruben- Class of 2023- “It’s a Boy”- Rashbam’s view

In pasuk י"ז perek of בראשית it says אַל-תִּירָאִי כִּי-גֵם-זֶה לָךְ בֵּן or in English, “don’t be worried because it is another boy for you” the Rashbam (1085-1158, France) has a commentary on this pasuk that says that the midwife who was helping רחל give birth to Binyamin heard her prayer for another boy when she named Yosef, which means “add on”. The midwife told Rachel it was a boy to reassure and calm Rachel.

I really like this commentary on this pasuk because when I was younger I thought this pasuk kind of felt out of place because in all the other sons births there was no “it’s a boy” it was just the mother named the son this name because of this, so this explanation really resonates with me because it explains why the midwife would tell רחל that it was a boy.

Rabbi Eli Litvintchouk, Lower School Rebbe, Judaic Resources Specialist

Regarding the difficulty which Rachel experienced while giving birth to Binyamin the Zohar explains that Yoseph and Binyamin are referred to as the “Tzadik Elyon, higher Tzadik”, and “Tzadik Tachton, lower Tzadik”, respectively. One of the differences between the two was that Yoseph’s focus was on drawing down the Shechina, G-dly presence from the spiritual realms to the physical world, Binyamin’s focus was on elevating the physical to the spiritual.

Binyamin embodied the desire of the lower, physical worlds to elevate and be enveloped by its source; Hashem’s presence.

The birth of Binyamin, the descent of his Neshama into the physical world, was in contrast to his very nature, which was to rise. Therefore, Rachel experienced difficulty when giving birth to him.

Jacob Kupferman; Class of 2023 : A Modern Approach

When reading this parsha you might question why Jacob decided to bury Rachel on the road. Jacob could have easily brought the body with him and buried him in Hebron. **Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky** (a rabbi at Yeshiva of South Shore in NY) says that Jacob realized that his own experience of personal pains from this should not be limited to his own suffering. He wanted to convert this traumatic event into a symbol of hope for Bnei Yisroel. Jacob foresaw that the Jews would one day be forced out of Israel into exile heartbroken but when passing by the grave of Rachel they would get hope. They would remember how even after the death of his wife, Jacob pushed through and they would do the same.

Source: <https://torah.org/torah-portion/drasha-5759-vayishlach/>

Art in the Parsha: “Rachel’s Death”

