



## Rachel Imenu's Virtue

**"Sara died in Kiryat Arba which is Chevron in the land of Cana'an"** (Bereishit 23:2)

Rashi writes: It is called Kiryat Arba (lit. the City of Four) because four illustrious couples would be buried there: Adam and Chava, Avraham and Sara, Yitzchak and Rivka, and Ya'akov and Leah. Later on it says (ibid. 9), "Let him grant me the Cave of Machpelah which is his," on which Rashi writes it was called Machpelah (double) on account of the couples who were [to be] buried there (Eiruvin 53a).

This gives rise to a question. Why was Rachel Imenu not buried in the Cave of Machpelah as were the rest of the Avot and Imahot? Was there a shortage of space? How do we understand that Rachel, who was considered Ya'akov's main wife, did not merit being buried in this holy cave?!

At the end of Ya'akov's life, he spoke to his son Yosef about his mother Rachel's passing (Bereishit 48:7): "... and I buried her there on the road to Ephrat, which is Betlechem." Chazal tell us that even though she died but a short distance from Betlechem, Ya'akov Avinu intentionally buried her by the roadside according to a G-dly command, so that she could help the Jewish people when Nevuzaradan would lead them into captivity after the destruction of the First Temple. When the Jews were passing along the road to Betlechem, tormented, hungry, and exhausted, Rachel's soul came to her grave and wept, beseeching G-d's mercy.

But the question still remains. Rachel could have been buried in the Cave of Machpelah just like the other Patriarchs and Matriarchs, and Hashem could have caused Bnei Yisrael to pass by this Cave in Chevron, and then all the Patriarchs and Matriarchs who are buried there could plead for mercy for Bnei Yisrael. And above them all, Rachel, who would also be buried there, would plead for mercy for Bnei Yisrael and her voice would be heard in Heaven more than all the other prayers.

So why did Ya'akov Avinu bury her on the road to Efrat? The way from Betlechem to Chevron is not so long. Furthermore, Ya'akov Avinu himself was brought by his children all the way from Egypt to the Cave of Machpelah in Chevron, so certainly they could have brought Rachel too to this holy burial site. Why did Hashem not demand this of Ya'akov?

One can explain according to the words of the Navi (Yirmiya 31:14): "So said Hashem: A voice is heard on high, wailing, bitter weeping, Rachel weeps for her children; she refuses to be consoled for her children, for they are gone." What was so special about Rachel's tears and prayers on behalf of Bnei Yisrael? Did Avraham, Yitzchak, and Ya'akov, and also the holy

Matriarchs- Sara, Rivka, and Leah- not pray enough for Bnei Yisrael? Without a doubt they too constantly prayed for the welfare of Bnei Yisrael, so why do we attach such importance to and single out the prayers and tears of Rachel in particular, to the extent that the Torah stresses her crying, "Rachel weeps for her children"?

I would like to suggest that only Rachel exemplified the attribute of noble self-sacrifice. Rachel was supposed to marry Ya'akov, but that night when Lavan decided that Leah would marry him instead, she gave over the secret signs (given to her by Ya'akov to prove her identity) to her sister so that Leah would not be shamed and driven away by Ya'akov. This is Rachel Imenu's distinguishing feature and the reason why specifically she was buried separately, on the road to Efrat next to Betlechem, for she included within her all the Avot and Imahot. She is referred to as the main wife since she stood out with exceptional qualities and refined ways, combined with self-sacrifice.

Since Rachel negated herself for the sake of her sister Leah and gave up her position on her wedding day, even forgoing her burial place in the Cave of Machpelah, it was decreed in Heaven that Rachel should be considered as Ya'akov's main wife and her prayer will be the most influential. Even though all the Patriarchs and Matriarchs attempted to appease Hashem, He rejected all their pleas until Rachel recalled her own magnanimity to her sister Leah. Hashem accepted her plea and promised that eventually the Jewish people will return to their homeland.

Rachel was considered the main wife and mother of all Bnei Yisrael. When she prayed for them the verse states, "Rachel weeps for her children." It uses the term 'children' even though they were not all her direct descendants, since she loved Bnei Yisrael and considered them her children, a status that can never be changed. Similarly, the Torah says (Devarim 14:1), "You are children to Hashem, your G-d," for the status of 'child' can never be altered. Therefore later on when Hashem comforted her and said "Restrain your voice from weeping", He added, "[your] children will return to their border." The expression 'children' (and not descendants) is a demonstration of the special love between Rachel and her children and between us and our Mother Rachel.

The term 'child' is more significant than the person's actual name, since 'child' is a status that is part of the person's essence. Rachel loved Bnei Yisrael as if they were all her biological children. She wept for her children and it was this prayer that was heard on High, causing Hashem to promise, "[your] children will return to their border."

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## Hilula

24 - Rabbi Avraham Azoulai, author of Chessed L'Avraham

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## Walking in their Ways

Tidbits of faith and trust penned by Moreinu v'Rabbeinu Hagoan Hatzaddik Rabbi David Chananya Pinto, shlita

### The Key to Faith

In Elul 5777, we travelled to the gravesites of the tzaddikim in Marrakesh, Morocco. We also visited the gravesite of my namesake, the tzaddik Rabbi David Ben Chazan zy"a, who lived in Essaouira and was the chavruta and close friend of my esteemed grandfather, Rabbi Chaim Pinto Hagadol zy"a. Once when Rabbi David Ben Chazan came to Marrakesh for a visit, he suddenly passed away and was buried there. On his tombstone is engraved, "Fortunate is he who studied Torah with Eliyahu Hanavi." What a merit!

When I arrived at his gravesite, I asked the guard to give me a key to the ohel of this tzaddik as a souvenir. I do not remember what happened after that, if indeed I was given a key and lost it, or maybe I forgot to take it.

The next day, Thursday, we travelled to Essaouira where we planned to stay over Shabbat in honor of the hilula of the tzaddik zy"a. There, to my surprise, I was told that a certain Jew had purchased the Beit Kneset in Essaouira named after the tzaddik Rabbi David Ben Chazan, since recently some locals had invaded the house and Beit Kneset of the tzaddik. Now he had redeemed the place and asked me to affix a mezuzah to the doorpost of the Beit Midrash.

As I was leaving my hotel, I noticed someone I knew well from Paris. He approached me, kissed my hand and greeted me. I said to him innocently, "I have a surprise for you, come with me." He replied that he had just arrived from a long journey and would love to accompany me wherever I wish to go, but first he has to inform his wife. After speaking to her we set off together with the group who wished to participate in the dedication of the Beit Midrash. We were also accompanied by a police escort for our protection.

We walked through the narrow streets

which were home to the Jews fifty years ago. Then, as we arrived at the home of the tzaddik Rabbi David ben Chazan zy"a, my acquaintance stood still in disbelief and almost fainted. We asked him if everything was okay and he replied that just half an hour ago he had arrived from Marrakesh where he had gone to prostrate himself by the gravesite of Rabbi David Ben Chazan zy"a! There, to his surprise, the guard gave him a key to the ohel and asked him to give it to the Rav (to me).

I was simply astonished at the Divine Providence! Heaven sent me someone who had come straight from Marrakesh. When I met him at the hotel I invited him to accompany me, telling him I have a surprise for him. He had no idea where I was taking him and I did not know where he had come from! I certainly had no idea that he had brought me a key from the guard in Marrakesh, the key to the gravesite of Rabbi David Ben Chazan, whose Beit Midrash we were about to adorn with a mezuzah.

This story demonstrates the joy of the tzaddik that his Beit Midrash had been redeemed from unwelcome people, and he sent me the key to his ohel as a sign that even though he is buried in Marrakesh, his holiness extends over his sacred Beit Midrash.

Sending the key was also a sign of appreciation for my efforts in dedicating his Beit Midrash and affixing the mezuzah. It seems that both I and my friend who joined me were blessed with Divine Inspiration.

After that, whenever I was asked how one attains faith, I would reply by relating this fascinating story from beginning to end; how I asked someone to join me in dedicating Rabbi David's Beit Midrash, and he himself had just been at his gravesite and was asked to give me the key. This story is full of Divine Providence which helps us acquire steadfast faith in Hashem.



## In Our Father's Path

### The Judge Ruled: The Bachur is Exonerated

Avraham Avinu sent his servant Eliezer to find a match for his son Yitzchak, who could not leave Eretz Yisrael so he would not lose the special sanctity he attained when he was brought as an unblemished offering.

Eliezer agreed to go, and when he arrived in Charan he prayed a lengthy prayer for the success of his mission. Avraham's prayer for his son, and Yitzchak's own prayer for himself, were not enough.

Eliezer began: "Hashem, G-d of my master Avraham, may You so arrange it for me this day that You do kindness with my master Avraham. Behold, I am standing by the spring of water and the daughters of the townsmen come out to draw water. Let it be that the maiden to whom I shall say, 'Please tip over your jug so I may drink,' and who replies, 'Drink, and I will even water your camels,' her You have designated for Your servant, for Yitzchak; and through her I will know that You have done kindness with my master." Immediately following this it says, "And it was when he had not yet finished speaking that suddenly Rivka was coming out – she who had been born to Betuel the son of Milkah the wife of Nachor, brother of Avraham – with her jug upon her shoulder."

This is the power of prayer that stems from the heart!

The sefer Moshcheni Acharecha relates a story told by Harav Ashkenazi shlit"a, about a bachur who did not report to the army and as a result ran into great difficulties. This bachur was told that the hilula of the tzaddik Rabbi Mordechai Sharabi zt"l fell that week, and he used to say, "פטיור ועתיר", if you want to receive an exemption (פטור) and be saved from the army, pray (להעתיר) and you will merit salvation." Indeed, this segulah served as an effective tactic in endless cases that came his way...

The bachur took this advice seriously and went to the gravesite of the tzaddik Rabbi Mordechai Sharabi zt"l, where he pleaded, "Just as in your lifetime you would pray for those who came to you and tell them פטיור ועתיר, so too I beg of you to pray for me on High."

The bachur was called to a court case; his offense was one that generally received a sentence of six months' imprisonment.

The judge turned to him with a surprising question: "What do you want to achieve? Why did you not report to the army?"

The bachur answered, "I want to study Torah!"

And here's where we see a clear demonstration of פטיור ועתיר! Unbelievably, the judge declared: "You are absolved of punishment, you are excused!"

This is the power of sincere prayer!

## The Haftarah

"King David was old, advanced in years" (Melachim I 1)

The connection to the Parshah: The Haftarah says, "King David was old, advanced in years", as we are told in the Parshah, "Now Avraham was old, well on in years". The Haftarah also speaks about David handing over the kingship to his son Shlomo before his death, similar to the section of the Parsha telling us that Avraham gave all that he had to his son Yitzchak.

## The Path of the Upright

### Sometimes it is a Heavenly Decree

If someone feels that his friend hates him, he must try to find out the reason for this and when necessary apologize, for this might appease him and enable him to forgive.

If the friend continues to hate him even after these efforts, they should go to a mutual acquaintance or talmid chacham who will listen to their claims and judge the case, or they should go to a din Torah.

If this step too does not help, he should know that it is a Heavenly decree and his friend is only a messenger to carry it out.





## The Sabbatical Year

1. As we mentioned, watering is permitted during Shemittah if it can be defined as an act carried out to maintain but not promote growth. One should decrease the amount of water by 10-20%. Although the garden will not look its best, on the other hand it will also not be damaged.

2. There is no need to withhold watering until one notices signs of wilting. If it is clear that watering is required to sustain the plants, one may water them somewhat before they show signs of dryness. Dehydration and wilting of the leaves occurs when the soil loses its dampness. The plant then activates its survival mechanism which can cause damage to the leaves and branches. Therefore, it is permissible to water a short time before this occurs, so as to prevent setting this process into motion.

3. Washing one's floor during Shemittah: if the dirty water goes down a pipe in one's porch to the ground below and thereby inadvertently waters the plants, one may be lenient and permit this, even in a case where the water descends by actually propelling the water inside the hole with the sponja stick.

4. One may affix an air conditioner or switch it on even if the opening of the drain hose is positioned in the garden and water drips from the pipe. This is not considered as watering and is permitted in Shemittah.

This is also the case even if the garden does not require watering and may not be watered (since concerning Shemittah, an inevitable outcome is permitted if it involves a Rabbinic prohibition [e.g. watering], particularly since it is such a minute amount of water. We can additionally count on the opinion that an inevitable outcome in Shemittah is permitted).

5. One may wash his car outside even though the water will enter his garden, since his intention is not to water the garden.

6. A field or fruit tree that is hefker (ownerless) and requires watering may be watered in Shemittah. Even though one may not water ownerless trees on Chol Hamoed, nevertheless in Shemittah we have some connection to the produce, as it says "And in the seventh, you shall leave it untended... and the destitute of your people shall eat." Therefore watering is permitted.

7. Plants inside one's house, under a roof, may be watered as usual during Shemittah.

For any questions in practical application of these halachot, please consult a rabbinical authority.

## Treasures

Based on the teachings of  
Moreinu v'Rabbeinu Hagaon  
Hatzaddik Rabbi David Chananya  
Pinto, shlita



### Seize the Opportunity Given by Heaven

"Let it be that the maiden to whom I shall say, 'Please tip over your jug so I may drink,' and who replies, 'Drink, and I will even water your camels,' her You have designated for Your servant, for Yitzchak" (Bereishit 24:14)

This requires explanation. Why did Eliezer, servant of Avraham, seek a marriage partner for Yitzchak Avinu through prayers and signs, saying if she gives him to drink and also the camels etc. Why did he think he could fulfil his duty through praying to Hashem? He should have gone and searched everywhere until he finds the right match.

One can say that Eliezer himself, before leaving Avraham's house, heard his master Avraham himself praying to Hashem to send His angels before Eliezer and send him a wife for his son Yitzchak.

Since Eliezer himself heard Avraham praying, following which Eliezer experienced great miracles, his journey being shortened (kefitzat haderech) when he travelled to Padan Aram (Yalkut Shimoni, Chayei Sara 107), he understood that he was now being sent an opportunity from Heaven to be assisted through prayer. Eliezer therefore seized this chance of receiving Heavenly Assistance, and when he arrived at the well just as the water-drawers were coming out, he prayed to Hashem that He quickly find for him Yitzchak's intended.

We are the children of the King of kings and at all times are in the presence of our Father and King who wishes to assist us. A Jew is never lost and is never alone, said the holy Ba'al Shem Tov zy"ta. If so, every person always has the tremendous opportunity to be assisted by the open, generous hand of our Father our King, and one must utilize this chance to ask Him for everything.

This is what happened with Eliezer, servant of Avraham - he merited great siyata d'Shmaya. Avraham Avinu had already prayed on his behalf, "He will send His angel before you." Eliezer therefore utilized the opportunity to ask Hashem for assistance and said, "Hashem, G-d of my master Avraham, may You so arrange it for me this day that You do kindness with my master Avraham." For Hashem is the One who will complete the mission and send him Yitzchak's marriage partner in a miraculous fashion.

From here we can derive a most practical lesson that is applicable throughout our lives. When a person sees he has been granted special siyata d'Shmaya and now has the perfect chance to merit receiving, whether through prayer, various signs or any other way, he should not waste the opportunity but should utilize it appropriately and pray to Hashem, and then he will indeed merit Heavenly Assistance.



## May the Memory of a Tzaddik be for a Blessing

### Rabbi Shalom Aharon Lopass zt"l

The gaon and tzaddik Rabbi Shalom Lopass zt"l, Rav of Akko, was famous for his greatness in Torah combined with his zikui harabim and tzedaka activities on behalf of the destitute, orphans and widows.

Already as a young man he was considered one of the distinguished askanim of Yerushalayim. His entire being was a holy, fiery flame, burning with love for the Jewish people and the Torah. Together with his friend, the Gaon Rabbi Yehuda Tzedaka zt"l, he established "The Makbatziel Association", headed by the Rishon L'Tzion, Rabbi Ya'akov Meir zt"l. They worked tirelessly to disseminate Torah, return their Jewish brethren to the correct path, and establish Torah education networks.

After the establishment of the state and the founding of the Rabbanut Harashit in Eretz Yisrael, the Rishon L'Tzion, who was then the Gaon Rabbi Ben Zion Uziel zt"l, approached him requesting that he accept the position of Rav in the northern town of Akko. His master and teacher Rabbi Ezra Attia zt"l agreed and blessed him saying that עבו, Akko, is an acronym for "עמוד כגבר והתגבר", stand like a man and overcome." Indeed, this acronym was his guiding principle. He served as Rav of Akko for almost fifty years, and throughout this time he stood firm and overcame all the difficulties that accompanied his holy work.

In those days, Akko bordered on an Arab town and took in many Jewish immigrants. With nothing less than true self-sacrifice, he went from door to door out of concern for the education of the Jewish children. During that period Rabbi Shalom established schools affiliated with the Chinuch Ha'atzmai system, offering unadulterated Jewish edu-

cation for both boys and girls. He paid the price for his battle over every Jewish child, being subjected to hounding by the dominant religious party. However, he remained firm and overcame the challenges. In his merit Akko produced thousands of talmidim who established wonderful Jewish homes, despite his many demands and strong character which would not compromise principles in deference to anyone. His words, emanating from his heart, penetrated the hearts of those around him, causing many to repent and embrace a religious way of life.

A traditional Jew who had faith in the blessing of a Rabbi, purchased a truck and then went to ask Rabbi Shalom for a blessing. When he entered, he reverently kissed the Rav's hand, handed over a sum of money for charity and asked for a blessing for livelihood and success. As was his holy custom, the Rav asked him, "When did you pray this morning and where do your children study?" He answered honestly, "This morning I was unable to pray, and my children learn in the local school."

Rabbi Shalom zt"l then began explaining the significance of prayer and a religious education. However, the visitor was not convinced. The Rav rebuked him and remarked that one who does not pray appropriately is not worthy of receiving a blessing. When he handed over the money for charity, the Rav cried out, "Are you trying to bribe Hashem? Hashem's bank is full; He does not require your tzedakah! What point is there in your charity if you are cruel to your own children?!" And he sent him away.

Feeling castigated, he asked his son-in-law to ask the Rav to forgive him and accept his money for charity. When this was denied he was deeply disappointed. The son-in-law tried to intervene and told the Rav that since this person is an am ha'aretz, maybe it is worthwhile appeasing him. The Rav smiled and said, "Righteousness, righteousness, shall you pursue."

Not an hour passed and the lorry driver returned to the Rav. He promised to try and amend his ways; being truthful, he said he will do it in stages. Rabbi Shalom remained firm and explained that one who wishes to purify himself is receives Heavenly assistance. "Begin and you will see blessing." Indeed, he took the first steps and saw blessing. He was one of many who came to be blessed materially and left blessed with spirituality.

Throughout the decades he served as Rav in Akko, Rabbi Shalom was entirely devoted

to Torah, avodah and acts of kindness. The way he studied Torah resembled that of the previous generation; he would spend the majority of the day in the Beit Kneset wrapped in tefillin, diligently studying Torah. He never spoke about any secular matters since he devoted his time to spiritual pursuits alone.

Rabbi Shalom Lopass went from town to town, working tirelessly to establish minyanim for the morning prayers at sunrise. With Hashem's help, due to his influence he merited establishing tens of minyanim that pray vatikin (at sunrise), throughout Eretz Yisrael.

A number of years ago Rabbi Shalom Lopass went to visit his relatives in Bayit Vegan, Yerushalayim. As was his custom, he welcomed the Shabbat early and went straight to the Beit Kneset. There he met the gabbai and asked him what time they begin the morning prayers. He answered that they pray shacharit quite late and there is no minyan at sunrise. Rabbi Shalom explained to the gabbai, "I am accustomed to rising early so I have time to learn before sunrise. Please do me a favor and arrange that there should be light in the Beit Midrash at this early hour."

The gabbai was happy to comply and set the timer to turn on the lights early. On Friday night Rabbi Shalom was asked to speak since he was well-known as a maggid who always had pearls of wisdom to offer. He began by discussing concepts from the weekly Parshah and then went on to speak about the value of praying at vatikin. At the conclusion of his speech he announced that tomorrow morning there will already be a vatikin minyan in this Beit Midrash...

His words that stemmed from his heart entered the hearts of the listeners who rose early to join his minyan. After shacharit he delivered another shiur and brought sources for the superior quality of praying at sunrise. The participants were convinced and promised they would perpetuate this minyan. Indeed, from then on, the vatikin minyan became a permanent fixture.

This is what happened not only in Bayit V'gan but in many other communities in Yerushalaim and around the country: in Haifa, Chatzor, Teveria, Kiryat Shmuel and other places. Every time Rabbi Shalom zt"l visited a certain place for Shabbat, he somehow left the legacy of a vatikin minyan which functions until today.