



THOUGHT OF NACHMANIDES: VAYECHI: BURIAL OF RACHEL

Gavriel Z. Bellino – December 23, 2015

Genesis 48:7

And as for me, when I came from Paddan, Rachel died unto me in the land of Canaan in the way, when there was still some way to come unto Ephrath; and I buried her there in the way to Ephrath--the same is Bethlehem.'

ספר בראשית מח:ז

וְאֲנִי בָבְאִי מִפַּדָּן מָתָה עָלַי רַחֵל בְּאֶרֶץ
כְּנָעַן בְּדֶרֶךְ בְּעוֹד כְּבָרַת אֶרֶץ לְבָא
אֶפְרַתָּה וְאֶקְבְּרָהּ שָׁם בְּדֶרֶךְ אֶפְרַת
הוּא בֵּית לְחָם:

Nachmanides on Genesis 48:7

AND I BURIED HER THERE. In Rashi's commentary it is written, "And I did not transport her for burial even to Bethlehem to bring her into the Land." Now I do not know the meaning of this. Was Rachel buried outside of the Land? Forbid it! She died within the Land, and she was buried there, just as it says here: "Rachel died by me in the land of Canaan." And there in the narrative of her death it is still more clearly written, "And Jacob came to Luz, which is in the land of Canaan" the same is Bethel. And it is further stated, And they journeyed from Bethel and there was still some way to come to Ephrat, and Rachel died on the way between Bethel and Bethlehem Ephrata in the Land of Israel.

פרוש הרמב"ן על ספר בראשית מח:ז

(ז) וְאֶקְבְּרָהּ שָׁם. כְּתוּב בְּפֵרוֹשׁ רַש"י
וְלֹא הוֹלַכְתִּיהָ אֶפְלוֹ לְבֵית
לְחָם לְהַכְנִיסָהּ לְאֶרֶץ. וְלֹא יִדְעָתִי מֵהוּ, וְכִי
בְּחוּצָה לְאֶרֶץ נִקְבְּרָה חַס וְשְׁלוֹם, שֶׁהָרִי
בְּאֶרֶץ מָתָה וְשָׁם נִקְבְּרָה, כְּמוֹ שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר כָּאֵן
בְּפִרְשָׁהּ, מָתָה עָלַי רַחֵל בְּאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן, וְשָׁם
כְּתוּב עוֹד מִפְּרָשׁ (לְעֵיל ל"ה ו') וַיָּבֵא יַעֲקֹב
לְיוֹזָה אֲשֶׁר בְּאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן הִיא בֵּית אֵל,
וְכַתִּיב (שָׁם פְּסוּק ט"ז) וַיִּסְעוּ מִבֵּית אֵל וַיְהִי
עוֹד כְּבָרַת הָאֶרֶץ לְבּוֹא אֶפְרַתָּה, וּמָתָה
בְּדֶרֶךְ בֵּין בֵּית אֵל וּבֵין בֵּית לְחָם אֶפְרַתָּה
בְּאֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל:

AND I BURIED HER THERE. Now I know that there is some resentment in your heart against me, but you should know that I buried her there by the word of God, that she might help her children when Nebuzaradan would exile them, for when they passed along that road, Rachel came forth from her grave and stood by her tomb beseeching mercy for them, as it is said, "A voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping, Rachel weeping for her children," and the Holy One, blessed by He, answered her, "Thy work shall be rewarded ... and the children shall return to their own border." This is the language of Rashi.

וְאֶקְבְּרָהּ שָׁם. וַיִּדְעָתִי שֶׁיֵּשׁ בְּלִבְךָ עָלַי,
אָבֵל דַּע לְךָ שֶׁעַל פִּי הַדְּבָר
קְבֵרְתִיהָ שָׁם שְׁתֵּהא לְעוֹרָה לְבִנְיָה כְּשִׁיגְלָם
נְבוּזַרְאֲדָן וְהָיוּ עוֹבְרִים דֶּרֶךְ שָׁם יִצְתָה עַל
קְבֻרָהּ וּבִקְשָׁה רַחֲמִים עֲלֵיהֶם, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר
(יִרְמְיָה ל"א י"ד-ט"ז) קוֹל בְּרָמָה נִשְׁמַע רַחֵל
מִבְּכָה עַל בְּנֵיהָ, וְהַקְדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא
מְשִׁיבָה יַשׁ שׂוֹכֵר לְפַעֲלָתָהּ וְגו' וְשָׁבוּ בְּנֵי
לְגְבוּלָם, לְשׁוֹן רַש"י:

Now in any case there should be some allusion in Scripture to this interpretation which is stated in this Agadah. Perhaps this is alluded to in the expression of the verse, She died by me ... in the way ... And I buried her in the way, that is to say, "She died on the road which her children would pass, and I buried her there for her advantage." She did not die on the road, but in Ramah, a city in the land of Benjamin, and there she was buried. She died on the road which her children were destined to pass in the future, as Scripture does not fully explain future events but only alludes to them in a general manner.

In line with the plain meaning of Scripture, it is likewise understood that Jacob spoke to Joseph in an apologetic vein so that when he discerned his father's wish to be buried in the cave of Machpelah, Joseph should not be angered about his failure to bury his mother there just as he buried Leah there. It was for this reason that Jacob told him that she died in the land of Canaan, and she was not buried outside of the Land in the manner in which an Egyptian burial would befall Jacob. Furthermore, she died on the road suddenly, and he could not bury her in the cave of Machpelah for how could he leave his children and his flocks on the road and hurry with her body to the cave of Machpelah? And where could he find doctors and medicines to embalm her? This is the meaning of the word *alai* (by me).

Even though the cave of Machpelah is but a half day's distance from the place of her death, Jacob was heavily laden with much cattle and family, and he would not arrive there for many days. Thus he did indeed spend many days on that road until he came to his father. Our Sages have further taught: "The bier of a woman may never be set down, out of respect."

וְצָרִיךְ עַל כָּל פְּנִימֵי שִׁיחָהּ רָמַז בְּמִקְרָא לְטַעַם הַזֶּה שֶׁאָמַר בְּאַגְדָּה זוֹ. וְשָׂמָּה זֶהוּ מָה שֶׁאָמַר הַכְּתוּב מֵתָה עָלַי רַחַל בְּדֶרֶךְ, וְאֶקְבְּרָהּ שָׁם בְּדֶרֶךְ, כְּלוֹמַר בְּדֶרֶךְ אֲשֶׁר יַעֲבֹרוּ בָּהּ בְּנֵיהֶּ מֵתָה וְשָׁם קִבְרָתֶיהָ לְטוֹבָתָם, כִּי הִיא אֵלֹא מֵתָה בְּדֶרֶךְ רַק בְּרָמָה שֶׁהִיא עִיר בְּאַרְצָ בְּנִימִין וְשָׁם נִקְבְּרָה, אָבֵל בְּדֶרֶךְ שֶׁל עֲתִיד מֵתָה, וְהַכְּתוּב לֹא יִפְרֹשׁ בְּעֲתִידוֹת רַק יִרְמֹז בָּהֶם:

וְעַל דֶּרֶךְ הַפֶּשֶׁט גַּם כֵּן אָמַר לוֹ כֵּן כְּמִתְנַצֵּל, שֶׁלֹּא יַחַר לְיוֹסֵף בְּרֵאוֹת חֲפָצוֹ בְּקִבּוּרַת הַמְּעָרָה עַל שֶׁלֹּא קָבַר אִמּוֹ שָׁם, וְכֹאֲשֶׁר קָבַר שָׁם אֶת לֵאָה, וְלִכְךָ אָמַר לוֹ כִּי מֵתָה בְּאַרְצָ כְּנֻעַן וְלֹא נִקְבְּרָה בְּחוּצָה לְאַרְצָ כְּאֲשֶׁר תִּהְיֶה קִבּוּרַת מִצְרַיִם לְיַעֲקֹב, וּמֵתָה בְּדֶרֶךְ בְּפִתְעַ פְּתָאֵם וְלֹא יָכוֹל לְקַבְּרָהּ שָׁם, כִּי אִיךָ יַעֲזֹב אֶת בְּנָיו וְאֶת מִקְנֵהוּ בְּדֶרֶךְ וְיִלְךָ מִהֵרָה עִמָּה לְמַעַרַת הַמַּכְפֵּלָה, וְאִיךָ הִרְוֹפָאִים וְהִרְפוּאוֹת לְחַנֵּט אוֹתָהּ. וְזֶה טַעַם עָלַי.

וְאִף עַל פִּי שְׁמַעְרַת הַמַּכְפֵּלָה אֵינָה רְחוּקָה מִשָּׁם רַק כְּחֻצֵי יוֹם, הִיא יַעֲקֹב כְּבֹד מְאֹד בְּמִקְנֵה הַגָּדוֹל וּבְנֵי בֵּית וְלֹא יִגִּיעוּ שָׁם רַק בְּיָמִים רַבִּים, וְכֵן עָשָׂה בְּדֶרֶךְ הַהוּא יָמִים רַבִּים עַד בּוֹאוֹ אֶל אָבִיו. וְשָׁנוּ חֲכָמִים (מו"ק כ"ז.) וְלֹא שָׁל נָשִׁים לְעוֹלָם מִפְּנֵי הַכְּבוֹד:

Now it is my opinion that these are but words of apology as Joseph already knew that Rachel died on the road and was buried in the Land, and that honor was paid to her when she died. But the reason Jacob did not transport Rachel to the cave of Machpelah was so that he should not bury two sisters there, for he would be embarrassed before his ancestors. Now Leah was the one he married first, and thus her marriage was permissible, while he married Rachel out of his love for her and because of the vow he made to her.

וְאֲנִי סָבוּר שֶׁהֵיוּ אֵלוֹ דְבָרֵי הַתְּנַצְלוֹת,
וְגַם יוֹסֵף יוֹדֵעַ שְׁמֵתָהּ בְּדֶרֶךְ
וְנִקְבְּרָה בְּאֶרֶץ, וְכָבוֹד עָשָׂה לָהּ בְּמוֹתָהּ,
אֲבָל הַפְּנִינָה לְיַעֲקֹב שְׁלֵא הוֹלִיךְ אוֹתָהּ
לְמַעַרְבָה כְּדֵי שְׁלֵא יִקְבֹּר שָׁם שְׁתֵּי אֲחִיוֹת,
כִּי יְבוֹשׁ מֵאֲבוֹתָיו, וְלֹאָה הִיא הַנְּשֹׂאת לוֹ
רֵאשׁוֹנָה בְּהֵתֵר, וְרַחֵל בְּאַהֲבָתוֹ אוֹתָהּ בְּגִדּוֹר
אֲשֶׁר נָדַר לָהּ לְקַחָהּ: