

Monumental Presence

”וַתָּמָת רָחֵל וַתִּקָּבֵר בְּדֶרֶךְ אֶפְרָתָה הוּא בֵּית לְחָם. וַיִּצַּב יַעֲקֹב מַצֵּבָה
עַל קְבֻרָתָהּ הוּא מַצֵּבֶת קְבֻרַת רָחֵל עַד הַיּוֹם” (בראשית לה: יט-כ).

תני רבי שמעון בן גמליאל: אין עושין נפשות לצדיקים, דברייהם
הם זכרוניהם.

דבר אחר: מָה רָאָה אָבִינוּ יַעֲקֹב לְקַבֹּר אֶת רָחֵל בְּדֶרֶךְ אֶפְרָתָה, אֲלֵא
צָפָה אָבִינוּ יַעֲקֹב שֶׁהַגְּלוּיֹת עֲתִידוֹת לַעֲבוֹר שָׁם. לְפִיכֵן קְבָרָהּ שָׁם
כְּדִי שֶׁתֵּהָא מְבַקֶּשֶׁת עֲלֵיהֶם רַחֲמִים, הִדָּא הוּא דְכָתִיב: קוֹל בְּרָמָה
נִשְׁמָע נְהִי בְּכִי תַמְרוּרִים רָחֵל מְבַכָּה עַל בְּנֵיהָ (ירמיה לא: יד).

Rachel died and was buried on the road to Ephrat— now Bethlehem. And Jacob affixed/vayatzev a fixed marker/matzevah on her grave which remains the fixed marker/matzevet of Rachel’s grave to this very day (Genesis 35:19-20).

Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel taught: One need not make gravestones/*nefashot* for the righteous. Their words and deeds are their memorials.

Another way of considering the matter: What did our father Jacob perceive that made him bury Rachel on the road to Ephrat? Our father Jacob foresaw that future exiles would pass through that place. Therefore he buried her there in order that she might pray for mercy on their behalf, as it is written: *A cry is heard in Ramah—wailing, bitter weeping—Rachel weeping for her children. [She refuses to be comforted for her children who have gone into exile. Thus said the Lord: Restrain your voice from weeping, your eyes from shedding tears. There is a reward for your labor—declares the Lord. They shall return from the enemy’s land. And there is hope for your future—declares the Lord: Your children shall return to their country] (Jeremiah 31 14 [-17]).*

Genesis Rabbah 82:10