

Monumental Presence

”וַתָּמָת רָחֵל וַתִּקָּבֶר בְּדֶרֶךְ אֶפְרָתָה הוּא בֵּית לְחָם. וַיִּצֵּב יַעֲקֹב מַצֵּבָה
עַל קִבְרָתָהּ הוּא מַצֵּבֶת קִבְרַת רָחֵל עַד הַיּוֹם” (בראשית לה: יט-כ).

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

דבר אחר: מָה רָאָה אָבִינוּ יַעֲקֹב לְקַבֹּר אֶת רָחֵל בְּדֶרֶךְ אֶפְרָתָה, אֶלָּא
צָפָה אָבִינוּ יַעֲקֹב שְׁהַגְלִיּוֹת עֲתִידוֹת לַעֲבוֹר שָׁם. לְפִיכָךְ קִבְּרָהּ 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 nefashot/grave stones 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 are gone. 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