

Monumental Presence

"וַיָּמָת רָחֵל וַיִּקְבַּר בָּדָרֶךְ אֶפְרַתָּה הַוָּא בֵּית לְחָם. וַיַּאֲבַק יַעֲקֹב מֵאָבָה עַל קְבָרַתָּה הַוָּא מֵאָבָת קְבָרָת רָחֵל עַד הַיּוֹם" (בראשית לה: יט-כ).

תְּנִי רַבִּי שְׁמַעוֹן בֶּן גַּמְלִיאֵל: אֵין עוֹשֵׂין נְפָשׁוֹת לְאַדִּיקִים, דְּבָרֵיהֶם הַס זָכְרוֹנִיהם.

דָּבָר אַחֲרָה: מָה רָאָה אָבִינוּ יַעֲקֹב לְקַבּוֹר אֶת רָחֵל בָּדָרֶךְ אֶפְרַת, אֶלָּא אֲפָה אָבִינוּ יַעֲקֹב שְׁהָגְלִיות עֲתִידוֹת לְעֹבֵר שָׁם. לְפִיכְךָ קְבָרָה שָׁם כִּדִּי שְׂתַהָא מַבְקָשָׁת עַלְיָהָם רְחִמִּים, הַדָּא הַוָּא דְּכַתִּיב: קֹל בְּרָמָה נִשְׁמָע נָהִי בְּכִי תִּמְרוֹרִים רָחֵל מַבְקָה עַל בְּנֵיָה (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