

One Word**By: Yosef Vogel**

As we conclude the story of Genesis, we have time to reflect on the rich legacy of these great men and women who have shaped our spiritual DNA and continue to inspire us until this very day. Each and every one of them personified a different attribute which shaped their character and consequently the impact they had on society at large.

As Jews we are their descendents and therefore must incorporate all the messages and values they represented, in our own lives. However it is helpful to have a focal point towards which we can direct our efforts and therefore we must ask ourselves, what is the most central value that we as Jews should strive for? Who amongst all the greats best sums up who we really are, as Jews.

In the closing chapters of the book of Genesis, as Jacob utters his final words to his son Joseph, reference is made to our matriarch Rachel. As we know, Rachel was not laid to rest together with the other patriarchs and matriarchs; she is buried in no man's land. Jacob has not discussed this matter with Joseph and at this point in time wants to deal with all unsettled issues.

Jacob explains to Joseph why he did so, and with this explanation we come to understand who Rachel was and why as our Sages tell us, it is only to Rachel's prayer that G-d pays attention, at some of the most difficult moments in Jewish history

Jacob buries Rachel in that particular place, because a thousand years later - after the destruction of the temple, on their way to exile - the Jewish people would be driven past that very same place, as slaves, Rachel had given up her place she so deserved - which would have allowed her to be together with her husband and the rest our patriarchs and matriarchs - so that she could be where her children would need her most, so many years later, in the time of their greatest need.

Rachel personified selflessness. She was not concerned about her self fulfilment or glory in securing her rightful status as a matriarch. Rachel was only concerned about her children and she wanted to be with them in the time of their greatest need. If we ever want to evaluate our moral fibre the most important question to ask is, what degree of selflessness inspires our behaviour. And it is the prayers of the most selfless of individuals for whom G-d always has time.

6 January

Vayechi

Shabbat Begins: 3:53 pm

Shabbat Ends: 5:02 pm