

YESHIVAT HAR ETZION
ISRAEL KOSCHITZKY VIRTUAL BEIT MIDRASH (VBM)

THE BOOK OF YIRMIYAHU
Rav David Sabato

Shiur #19: "Rachel Weeping for Her Children"

**INTRODUCTION: THE COLLECTION OF PROPHECIES OF
CONSOLATION IN THE BOOK OF YIRMIYAHU**

As we noted in the introduction to this series of *shiurim*, it is difficult to trace the structure and arrangement of the book of *Yirmiyahu*, but it is possible to identify in it several clear literary units. Chapter 30 opens a new unit in the book of *Yirmiyahu* – the unit of prophecies of consolation, a unit comprised of four chapters, terminating at the end of chapter 33. The prophecies included in this unit are among the most moving and poignant chapters in the books of the Prophets, and we will dedicate the next three *shiurim* to study some of the main prophecies in this unit.

Although Yirmiyahu's prophecies are primarily prophecies of wrath and harsh rebuke, his book also includes several prophecies of consolation, as Yirmiyahu was told already in his prophecy of consecration (1:10): "See I have this day set you over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, **to build, and to plant.**" Although the prophecies of consolation constitute only a small part of the book, they are unique in that Yirmiyahu is ordered to write them in a book (30:1-2):

The word that came to Yirmiyahu from the Lord, saying: Thus speaks the Lord God of Israel, saying: Write all the words that I have spoken to you in a book.

What is the reason for this command? An explanation is given in the next verse (30:3): "For, lo, days are coming, says the Lord, when I will bring back the captivity of My people Israel and Yehuda, says the Lord; and I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it."

This is how the Radak explains the matter: "And He said that he should write [the words] in a book, because they are things that will happen in the end of days. And he spoke them to him in close proximity to the calamity that he mentioned above, because this section was to be a consolation for [the people of] Israel of that generation. For just as they will see that the calamity will take place soon, so too they should know that a great consolation will take place at the end of days."

Unlike the prophecies of destruction that were intended exclusively for Yirmiyahu's own generation, the prophecies of consolation are meant also for future generations living in exile. Their role is to serve as a consoling ray of light that fills them with hope for their return to the land of Israel. It is interesting that this verse refers to both Israel and Yehuda; in other words, the prophecy relates also to the exile of the ten tribes that already in Yirmiyahu's time was about a hundred years old. The prophecies of consolation end with similar words (33:25-26):

Thus says the Lord: If I have not appointed My covenant with day and night, the ordinances of heaven and earth; then will I cast away the seed of Yaakov and David My servant, and not take any of his seed to be rulers over the seed of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov. **No, for I will cause their captivity to return and have mercy on them.**

THE BACKGROUND OF THE PROPHECIES OF CONSOLATION IN CHAPTER 31: ISRAEL OR YEHUDA?

Let us now proceed to chapter 31 and review some of the prophecies included in the chapter.¹ The prophecies of consolation in the chapter relate to the kingdom of Israel that was destroyed and exiled. They prophesy its salvation and its return to the land of Israel, as well as the reunification of Israel and Yehuda:

(1) Thus says the Lord: The people who were left of the sword found grace in the wilderness, when Israel sought for rest. (2) The Lord appeared of old to me, saying: I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have remained true to you. (3) Again I will build you, and you shall be built, O virgin of Israel; you shall again be adorned with your timbrels and shall go out dancing with them that make merry. (4) You shall yet plant vines upon the mountains of Shomron; the planters shall plant and shall enjoy the fruit. (5) For there shall be a day that the watchmen upon Mount Ephraim shall cry: Arise, and let us go up to Zion to the Lord our God.

(6) For thus says the Lord: Sing with gladness for Yaakov, and shout on the hilltops of the nations; announce, praise, and say: O Lord, save Your people, the remnant of Israel. (7) Behold, I will bring you from the north country and gather them from the ends of the earth, and with them the blind and the lame, the woman with child and she that travails with child together; a great company shall return there. (8) They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them; I will cause them to walk by the rivers of water in a straight way, in which they shall not stumble; for I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is My firstborn.

¹ This chapter was chosen as the *haftara* that is read on the second day of Rosh Hashana. The *gemara* in *Rosh Hashana* 31a says: "And the *haftara* is: 'Is Ephraim My dear son?'" And Rashi (ad loc.) explains: "Because of 'I earnestly remember him' and 'I will surely have mercy on him.'" It should be noted that this verse also appears among the verses of remembrance recited in the *Musaf* prayer. Regarding the nature of repentance and remembrance in this prophecy, see the end of the *shiur*.

One of the main questions that arise from the prophecy is the timing of the prophecy and its subjects. The prophecy deals with exile and return, and it is therefore reasonable to assume that this is a prophecy of consolation that was delivered after the destruction and that it deals with the return of the kingdom of Yehuda to its land, as follows explicitly from other prophecies in the collection. The only problem is that this assumption does not fit the content of the prophecy.

The first section (1-5) makes prominent mention of the kingdom of Israel; Yirmiyahu relates to the mountains of Shomron (4) and the mountain of Ephraim (5) and describes their going up to Zion. In this way, Yirmiyahu presents a vision of harmony and unity between the two kingdoms. Ephraim is mentioned again in the next section (8) as God's firstborn. Later in the chapter, mention is made of the voice of Rachel's weeping (14-16) and of the remorse of Ephraim (17) – which generally refers to the kingdom of Israel.

This evidence joins with the striking parallel between the prophecies of consolation here and the prophecies at beginning of the book, especially in chapter 3. There Yirmiyahu contrasts in his prophecies the fate of "faithless Israel" to that of "treacherous Yehuda." There it is explicitly stated that the background of the prophecies is "the days of Yoshiyahu the king" (3:6). In the continuation of that prophecy, Yirmiyahu envisions the future unification of the kingdoms (18): "In those days the house of Yehuda shall walk with the house of Israel, and they shall come together out of the land of the north to the land that I have given for an inheritance to your fathers."²

There are indications in several places that during the days of Yoshiyahu, an attempt was made to unite the independent kingdom of Yehuda with the remnants of the kingdom of Israel, and it is possible that these events also constitute the background of this prophecy.

RACHEL'S WEeping

Now that we have examined the background, let us focus on the famous prophecy concerning Rachel's weeping in verses 14-16:

Thus says the Lord:

A voice was heard in Rama, lamentation and bitter weeping; Rachel weeping for her children;

she refused to be comforted for her children, because they are not.

Thus says the Lord:

Keep your voice from weeping, and your eyes from tears;

² His words at the beginning of the prophecy: "The people who were left of the sword **found grace in the wilderness**; when Israel sought for rest. The Lord appeared of old to me, saying, I have loved you with an everlasting **love**; therefore **I have remained true to you**" – bring to mind the first prophecy in chapter 2: "Thus says the Lord; I remember in your favor, **the devotion of your youth, your love** as a bride, **when you did go after Me in the wilderness**, in a land that was not sown." Additional parallels will be pointed out over the course of this *shiur*.

for your work shall be rewarded, says the Lord, and they shall come back again from the land of the enemy.
And there is hope for your future, says the Lord, and your children shall come back again to their own border.

This prophecy is built as a dialogue, and its two parts open with the words, "Thus says the Lord." In the first part (14), we hear the voice of Rachel weeping bitterly; in the second part (15-16), God's words of comfort to Rachel are sounded. The second part inversely parallels the first part. Corresponding to Rachel's voice of weeping – "A **voice** in Rama... lamentation and bitter **weeping**" – God says: "Keep your **voice** from **weeping**." Corresponding to the two negatives: "She **refused** to be comforted for her children, because they **are not**," God responds with two positives: For your work shall [**yesh**] be rewarded... And there is [**yesh**] hope for your future." The only thing that might comfort Rachel who is crying and refuses to be consoled is the promise that her children will come back again to their own border – the knowledge that there will be children.

After examining the structure of the prophecy, let us go back and study it more carefully. The prophecy opens with a powerful and moving picture, which illustrates the hearing experience. The sound of Rachel's weeping is described here in three stages, and we feel as though we are coming closer to the sound. At first we hear only a voice: "A voice was heard in Rama." Then it is possible to identify its nature: "lamentation and bitter weeping." And in the final stage, it is possible to identify who is weeping, "Rachel," and the content of her weeping, "weeping for her children." This is the weeping of a mother for her children who have been exiled. Even when the hearer attempts to calm the mother and comfort her, his efforts fail: "She refused to be comforted for her children, because they are not."

This unique prophecy exalts the figure of Rachel and has been a source of inspiration for future generations. It has engraved the image of a loving and compassionate mother on the consciousness of the exiled and tormented people for thousands of years. Further study of the prophecy raises a question: Why does the prophet single out Rachel in particular? Mention of the patriarchs in the books of the Prophets is not particularly common, and mention of the matriarchs is even rarer.³ Why of all the matriarchs is it specifically Rachel who is chosen to express the longing and weeping of the nation's founders for their exiled people?

"A VOICE WAS HEARD IN RAMA"

Before giving an answer to our question, let us clarify the meaning of the opening words of the prophecy: "A voice was heard in Rama." The key

³ The other place where mention is made of one of the matriarchs is *Yeshayahu* 51:2: "Look to Avraham your father and to Sara that bore you," but there Sara is mentioned together with Avraham, and immediately in the continuation of the verse the prophet begins to focus exclusively upon Avraham: "For he was but one when I called him, and I blessed him and increased him."

words are "in Rama (*be-rama*)," but their meaning is unclear. Targum Yonatan interprets them as follows:

A voice was heard – A voice was heard in the height of the world, the voice of the house of Israel who cried over Yirmiyahu the prophet when Nevuzaradan sent him from the Rama.

The Targum opens with one interpretation, according to which *be-rama* describes the nature of the voice – this is voice that was heard in the height of the world. However, the Targum immediately suggests another interpretation, which understands *be-rama* as describing a place, associating our verse with the description of the Yirmiyahu's leaving for exile with the people later in the book (40:1): "The word that came to Yirmiyahu from the Lord, after Nevuzaradan the captain of the guard had let him go **from Rama**, when he had taken him bound as he was in chains among all the exiles of Jerusalem and Yehuda who were carried away as exiles to Bavel." The Targum, in its usual manner, joins together two interpretations and creates from them a single picture: The voice of the crying of the people going out to exile.

This interpretation leads us to one of the most difficult problems of biblical geography – the burial place of Rachel. If we interpret Rama as a place-name, this verse indicates that Rachel's burial place is near Rama, which is identified today with the village A-Ram, north of Jerusalem. According to this interpretation, the image at the beginning of the prophecy bears additional meaning: This is a picturesque description of the convoy of exiles on the way from Jerusalem to Bavel, passing the burial place of Rachel, who sees them in their troubles and weeps over their bitter fate. The earthly cries and tears of the exiles intermingle with the heavenly cries and tears of Rachel, which breach the gates of heaven and receive a Divine response. But in the account of Rachel's death in *Bereishit* 35, it says that she was buried on the way to Efrat, which is Bet-Lechem, south of Jerusalem!⁴

This contradiction troubled the commentators from the time of *Chazal* to contemporary scholars and commentators, who offered various solutions. From all the different explanations we will cite the words of the Ramban in his commentary to *Bereishit* 35, who tells of the change in his position on this matter in the wake of arriving in *Eretz Yisrael*:

But now that I have merited coming to Jerusalem, praised be God who is good and does good, I saw with my own eyes that there is less than a mile between the burial place of Rachel and Bet-Lechem... And I saw that she is not buried in Rama or anywhere near it, as the Rama in Binyamin is four furlongs away, and the Rama in Mount Ephraim (I *Shemuel* 1:1) is more than two days away. **I therefore say that the verse that says: "A voice was heard in Rama," is a figure of speech.** That is to say, Rachel cried with a loud voice and a bitter

⁴ To this must be added the mention of the site of Rachel's burial place in the story of the coronation of Shaul as king (I *Shemuel* 10:2), "By Rachel's tomb in the border of Binyamin at Tzeltzach," similar to the prophecy of Yirmeyahu.

lament to the point that her voice was heard far away in Rama which is at the top of the mountain... The verse does not say: In Rama Rachel wept for her children, but rather it says that her voice was heard there.

Noga Hareuveni proposes an original explanation in his book "*Or Chadash al Sefer Yirmiyahu*." Hareuveni argues that "Efrat" is "Perat," which is close to Anatot, the town in which Yirmiyahu lived. He identified Rachel's tomb with a site called by the local Arabs "*Kubur Benei Israil*," "the tomb of the children of Israel," close to A-Ram, which is identified with Rama in Binyamin.

Another interesting solution was suggested by R. Yoel Elitzur in his article, "*Kol Ba-Rama Nishma U-She'eilat Kevurat Rachel*." After reviewing the various positions on the matter, he presents his position, based on the parallelism that we noted at the beginning of this *shiur* between Yirmiyahu's prophecy of comfort and the prophecies of calamity at the beginning of the book:

First of all, something that several authors have noted – the way the word is written and the vocalization. According to the Masoretic text, in our verse – *Kol be-rama nishma* – the letter *bet* in the word *be-rama* is vocalized with a *sheva*. The word *rama* as a place name – and there are several places in *Eretz Yisrael* with that name – is always preceded by the definite article – *Ha-Rama*... What then is the meaning of the words: *Kol be-rama nishma*? Some see "*rama*" as an adjective; *kol be-rama* means a loud voice (*kol ram*) (R. Yosef). Yonatan ben Uziel, and in his wake several classical commentators, translates: A voice was heard in the heights of the world. Radak writes: "On a high hill to sound the voice." Now, when we consider the prophecies of calamity at the beginning of the book of *Yirmiyahu* (chapters 3 and 4), we find a remarkable similarity between them and the prophecies of great consolation in our chapter. This reverse parallelism between blessing and curse is a common practice in the Bible. By using the same content and the same phrases for both the good and the bad, the Bible emphasizes the uniformity of the events. Good and evil are two aspects of God's providence, and both depend on the actions of Israel... The connection of opposites between destruction and redemption suits Yirmiyahu more than anyone else. This is the prophet who, on the very days that all of his prophecies of rebuke are being fulfilled, stands in the court of the guard, as the batteries are already coming to the city to conquer it, and heralds the future salvation. Indeed, there are linguistic and substantive connections between the prophecies that are primarily about calamity in chapters 3 and 4, and the prophecy of consolation in chapter 31. Alongside the parallel and repeated contents in the two prophecies – exile and return; destruction of the land and its crops in contrast to fertility, farmers, and flocks; repentance and remorse; Ephraim and Mount Ephraim; and others – especially revealing are the stylistic and linguistic parallels... [Here Elitzur spells out the striking parallels between the prophecies]. After having said all this, we find in the prophecy of destruction in chapter 3, verse 21: "A voice is heard upon the high hills (*shefayim*), weeping and

supplications of the children of Israel; for they have perverted their way, and they have forgotten the Lord their God." The parallel to the prophecy of consolation (31:14) is complete: "A voice was heard in Rama, lamentation and bitter weeping; Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be comforted for her children, because they are not." "*Shefayim*" are high places. This is similar to what the Radak says: "On a high hill to sound the voice."

RACHEL'S WEEPING AND YAAKOV'S WEEPING

Let us now return to our question: What is the meaning of the focus on the matriarch Rachel in our prophecy? This question can be answered on several different levels. First, the description of Rachel accords with the conclusion that we reached above, that this prophecy deals with the exile of the kingdom of Israel – Ephraim. Ephraim is explicitly mentioned in the second part of the prophecy as well (17), and therefore it is fitting to mention Rachel, Yosef's mother and Ephraim's grandmother. Thus explains the Radak: "'Thus says the Lord: A voice was heard in Rama' – He said this about the ten tribes, whose head is Ephraim, and he mentioned the mother of all of them, Rachel, as if she were crying for her children. 'Because they are not' – This means: the nation. He mentioned these and said about them that they are not, because they did not yet return after they were exiled."

Rashi, following the Midrash (*Eikha Rabba, petichtot*), suggests that the prophecy alludes to the actions of Rachel herself:

A *midrash* states that the patriarchs and the matriarchs went to appease for Menashe's having set up an image in the Sanctuary, but He was not appeased. Rachel went in and said before Him: Master of the universe, whose mercy is greater, Your mercy or the mercy of flesh and blood? Say that Your mercy is greater. Surely I allowed a rival wife into my house, for all of the work that Yaakov performed he performed for me. When I came to enter the bridal chamber, they brought my sister in. And not only did I not keep silent, but I gave her my signs. So too You, if your children brought rival gods into Your house, keep silent. He said to her: You spoke well in their defense. Your work and your generosity that you handed your signs to your sister is rewarded.

This *midrash* is based on God's response to Rachel: "Your work shall be rewarded," and it explains it in connection with Rachel's noble act of handing over her signs to her sister. Despite the beauty of this *midrash*, it is difficult to accept it as the plain meaning of the prophecy, seeing that this act of Rachel is not found in the Bible, but is mentioned only in the *midrash*. But is there still a hint here to an incident connected to the matriarch Rachel?

Further examination of the prophecy teaches that there is an interesting linguistic connection between it and the story of Yosef and his brothers. In order to clarify the matter, let us pay attention to a grammatical difficulty in the verse: "She refused to be comforted for **her children**, because **he is** not (*einenu*)." The word *einenu* is difficult, because it follows mention of

"her children" in the plural, and therefore it should have stated "*einam*" (they are not)! It seems that in this way the prophet alludes to the words of Yaakov concerning Yosef: "And the one **is not** (*einenu*)." The word *einenu* is mentioned seven times in the story of Yosef and his brothers regarding Yosef and Binyamin, the children of Rachel.

There is another striking linguistic connection between the two matters. Regarding Rachel it says: "Rachel **weeping** for her children; **she refused to be comforted**, because they are not," and similarly regarding Yaakov it says: "**But he refused to be comforted**; and he said: For I will go down to my son mourning into Sheol. Thus his father **wept** for him" (*Bereishit* 37:35). The prophet weaves linguistic threads that create a conceptual connection between the two matters, between Yosef's being lost in a foreign land and the people of Israel's being lost in exile, and between Yaakov's mourning and weeping for his firstborn son from Rachel and Rachel's mourning and weeping for her children who are not. What is the meaning of this deep connection?

It seems that the basis is found in the words of Rashi on the words: "But he refused to be comforted": "A person does not accept comfort for a person who is alive, but thought dead, for it is about a dead person that it was decreed that he be forgotten from the heart, but not a live person." This is the deeper meaning of the plain sense of the text: Yaakov's lack of reconciliation with the loss expresses his inner recognition – that he is unaware of, and we alone understand – that Yosef is alive. This is the principle alluded to by Rachel's continuous bitter weeping. Her non-stop weeping and refusal to be comforted testify to a similar cognition: Deep inside, Rachel knows and feels that her children will one day return to their land, and that this "and he is not," is only temporary.⁵ This weeping is not a weeping of despair or reconciliation. On the contrary, the endless weeping stems from an inner recognition that it has a role. This is weeping is meant to stir up the mercies of Heaven for her children and return them to their land. Only weeping of this type has true influence: "Keep your voice from weeping, and your eyes from tears: for your work shall be rewarded." Rachel's activity is crying and tears.⁶ Just as Yaakov merited to be comforted and to see his lost son, so too Rachel is promised

⁵ The connection between Rachel's weeping and Yosef's weeping was noted by R. Nechemiah Nobel, an Orthodox Zionist rabbi in Germany at the beginning of the twentieth century. R. Nobel's sermons and lectures made a strong impression on his congregants and students, who included the most important German-Jewish thinkers of his day, such as Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig. In the introduction to the volume of his collected writings and teachings, *Hagut Ve-Halakha* (Jerusalem, 1969), his disciple Yeshayahu Aviad describes his impressions from R. Nobel's sermons and brings as an example his sermon about Rachel's weeping.

⁶ There might be an allusion here to the stories of Yaakov in the house of Lavan, which include a high concentration of matters of "reward" (seven of fourteen instances of the word in the Torah): between Yaakov and Lavan and between him and his wives, Rachel and Leah. But the main characteristic of the reward there is the lack of symmetry between it and the work for which it is given, and the deceit that surrounds it. But here God says: "For your work shall be rewarded."

that her weeping will have an effect, and in the end: "And your children shall come back again to their own border."⁷

"BITTER WEEPING"

In light of this interpretation, let us go back and examine the description of Rachel's weeping – "lamentation and **bitter** weeping (*nehi bekhi tamrurim*)." The word *tamrurim* is an exceedingly rare word in the Bible and is found in only four places, three of them in the book of *Yirmiyahu*, two of which are in two verses close to each other – here (verse 15) and in verse 20: "Set up waymarks for yourself, make you **signposts** (*tamrurim*); set your heart towards the highway, the way on which you did go; turn back, O virgin of Israel, turn back to these your cities." In both of them there is a twofold incidence of *shiva*: ""And they shall **come back** again from the land of the enemy... and your children shall **come back** again to their own border" – "**Turn back**, o virgin of Israel, **turn back** to these your cities." It is true that in the two places the word *tamrurim* is used in entirely different senses: In verse 15 it describes the weeping, as stated by Radak: "Bitter weeping – that he weeps with a bitter heart." So too in another instance in the book (6:26): "Make you mourning, as for an only son, most bitter lamentation." In verse 20, the word *tamrurim* (signposts) parallels the word *tziyunim*, and it seems to mean a tall pillar like a date palm, which marks the way back to *Eretz Yisrael*. The prophet calls upon the people already as they go out into exile to prepare the way back.⁸ But the proximity of two identical and rare words with two different meanings requires further study.

A beautiful and exciting interpretation of this phrase was suggested by the late R. Chanan Porat (in one of his articles in *Me'at min Ha-Or*):

We are not dealing here with weeping of mourning, and not with nostalgic yearning for what once was and is no more, but rather with *bekhi tamrurim*, which rises upwards and faces the future! This *bekhi tamrurim* stands like a road sign and sends out directions, both to the children, who are asked to return home, and to God, who is asked to return the children to their own border. Therefore, this weeping of Rachel is called by an unusual term: *pe'ula*, "work," as is stated in the verse: "Keep your voice from weeping, and your eyes from tears, for **your work** (*pe'ulatekh*) shall be rewarded." At first glance, it is strange to refer to weeping by the term *pe'ula*, which denotes creative activity. But the truth is that Rachel's weeping is "functional weeping" that does its job and does not rest – neither for the Father nor for the children – until they return home.

⁷ In several places in the book, Yirmeyahu alludes to the stories of Yaakov in the house of Lavan and to the stories of Yosef in Egypt. It seems that the reason for this is that these are the earliest stories of exile in the Torah. We will deal at length with these ties in one of the coming *shiurim*.

⁸ *Chazal* offer the well-known interpretation (*Sifre, Devarim* 43) that these signposts are a metaphor for the fulfillment of the commandments outside the land of Israel, which is but preparation for their complete fulfillment in the land of Israel. The Ramban discusses this issue at length in his commentary to the Torah, *Vayikra* 18:25 and *Devarim* 11:8.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN RACHEL AND EPHRAIM

Let us turn now to the second part of the prophecy (17-19). While the first part focused on Rachel's weeping for her children, the ten tribes going out into exile, the focus of the second part is Ephraim, who represents those lost "children" – the ten tribes. There is great similarity between the two parts of the prophecy, as can be seen from the following table:

<p>Thus says the Lord: A voice was heard in Rama, lamentation and bitter weeping; Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be comforted for her children, because they are not.</p> <p>Thus says the Lord: Keep your voice from weeping and your eyes from tears; for your work shall be rewarded, says the Lord; and they shall come back again from the land of the enemy. And there is hope for your future, says the Lord, and your children shall come back again to their own border.</p>	<p>I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus: You have chastised me, and I was chastised, like an untrained calf; turn me back, and I shall be turned back; for You are the Lord my God. For after I had returned away, I regretted; and after I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh. I was ashamed, and even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth.</p> <p>Is Ephraim my dear son? Is he a darling child? For whenever I speak of him, I earnestly remember him still; therefore My inward parts are moved for him; I will surely have mercy on him, says the Lord.</p>
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Let us spell out the parallels between the two parts:

1. Both prophecies are built as a dialogue. In the first part we hear a human voice – the voice of Rachel's weeping and the words of Ephraim's remorse – while the second part contains the Divine response to these voices.
2. Both describe parent-child relationships that are filled with love and yearning: Rachel's weeping for her children and God's mercy upon His children: "Is Efrayim My dear son?... Therefore My inward parts are moved for Him."
3. After the pain and weeping comes the stage of consolation from God: "Keep your voice from weeping... for your work shall be rewarded," "I earnestly remember him... I will surely have mercy upon him."
4. Both parts include the idea of returning: "And they shall come back again from the land of the enemy... and your children shall come back again to their own border" – "Turn me back, and I shall be turned... For after I had returned away, I regretted."

The connection between the two parts emerges also from the parallel to the previous prophecy. Earlier we mentioned the parallel between the prophecies at the beginning of the book and the collection of prophecies of consolation and the connection to the weeping of Rachel. Now let us add that the prophecy there opens with a verse similar to the one at the beginning of the first part, describing the hearing of the sound of the weeping – similar to the weeping of Rachel, but in this context the weeping of the people (3:21):

A voice is heard upon the high hills, weeping and supplications of the children of Israel; for they have perverted their way and they have forgotten the Lord their God.

The connection to the second part stands out later in the prophecy, where the words of the people are cited:

Return, faithless children, and I will heal your backslidings. **Here we are, we are come to You; for You are the Lord our God...** Let us lie down **in our shame**, and let **our confusion** cover us: for we have sinned against the Lord our God, we and our fathers **from our youth** even to this day, and have not obeyed the voice of the Lord our God. (3:22, 25)

These words bring to mind the words of Ephraim in our prophecy:

Turn me back, and I shall be turned back; for You are the Lord my God. For after **I had returned** away, I regretted; and after I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh; **I was ashamed, and even confounded**, because I did bear the reproach of **my youth**.

In our prophecy the weeping of the people splits into two – into Rachel's weeping, on the one hand, and into Ephraim's pain, on the other.

In light of these parallels, let us examine the difference between the two parts of the prophecy. In the first part, God "hears" Rachel's weeping, and this weeping is the basis for salvation: "Keep your voice from weeping... for your work shall be rewarded." The merit of the patriarchs and the matriarchs, and their fierce love for their children, is the "work" that will bring the children back from the land of the enemy. In contrast, the second part describes a return of a different kind. Here, the return opens the process; Ephraim's desire to return is what drives the wheels of salvation. Indeed, here too there is parental love for a lost son, but this is a father's love for his son, which symbolizes God's love for Israel.

The difference between the two parts stands out in the root "*shov*." In the first part, it appears twice and denotes the children's return to the land as a result of Rachel's weeping. In contrast, in the second part, it appears three times and describes Ephraim's repentance, which will bring about his

salvation.⁹ Another prominent issue in the words of Efrayim is the desire to return without knowing how to do so: "Turn me back, and I shall be turned!" On the other hand, the most striking element in his repentance is the deep remorse that leads to shame and confusion for his actions in the past, and this is the essential and sufficient condition for his acceptance by God, his loving father.¹⁰

(Translated by David Strauss)

⁹ One of the most striking stylistic features in this passage is the double verb form (infinitive and verb). This phenomenon is repeated three times in the words of God: "I have surely heard" (*shamo'a shamati*), "I earnestly remember him" (*zakhor ezkerenu*), and "I will surely have mercy on him" (*rachem arachamenu*). These phrases mark three stages – hearing the words of remorse, remembering the beloved son, and finally having mercy on him and bringing him back. Corresponding to this, Ephraim's words contain double verbs: "You have chastised me, and I was chastised," "Turn me back, and I shall be turned." This doubling emphasizes the relationship between God's actions and Ephraim's response: First You chastised me, and I was chastised; now turn me back, and I shall be turned.

¹⁰ The words of Ephraim here served as the foundation for the description of the process of repentance in the Rambam's *Hilkhot Teshuva* (2:2). The Rambam spells out the stages of the process, and to each stage he attaches a biblical source taken from the various prophecies concerning repentance. He learns the principle of remorse as the foundation of repentance from our prophecy: "What constitutes repentance? That a sinner should abandon his sins and remove them from his thoughts, resolving in his heart never to commit them again, as it is stated (*Yeshaya* 55:7): 'May the wicked abandon his ways....' Similarly, he must regret the past as it is stated (*Yirmeyahu* 31:18): 'For after I returned away, I regretted.' [He must reach the level at which] He who knows the hidden will testify concerning him that he will never return to this sin again as it is stated (*Hoshea* 14:4): 'We will no longer say to the work of our hands, You are our gods.' He must verbally confess and state these matters which he resolved in his heart."