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The Gates of Tears

The *Gemara* states[[1]](#endnote-1) that subsequent to the destruction of the *Beis Hamikdosh*, all the gates of prayer are closed, with the exception of the gates of tears.

It would seem that the word *bechi* (crying) comes from the root word *becha (beis, chof)*, meaning *in you*.

Crying emanates from the inner soul and reflects the true essence of the person. This sincerity, communicated in genuine prayer and tears, is always accepted by Hashem as its pathway never closes.

Moreover, the word *bechi* (*beis, chof, yud*) has numerical *gematria* 32 (*lamed, beis*), which spells *le*v, heart, and reflects the crying that emanates from the depths of the heart.[[2]](#endnote-2)

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*Chazal* explain[[3]](#endnote-3) that Leah Imeinu “cried until her eyelashes fell out” because she was worried that she would be forced to marry Eisav.

Hashem responded to her tears and she married Yaakov.[[4]](#endnote-4) This transpired because her sister, Rochel, disclosed to Leah the *simanim* (signs) that Yaakov had arranged with Rochel.

As a result of Rochel’s colossal self-sacrifice, Rochel was *zocheh* to henceforth use the gates of tears that Leah had used until then.[[5]](#endnote-5) Rochel cried because she was childless,[[6]](#endnote-6) cried with worry that Yaakov would divorce her because she was barren and that she would marry Eisav,[[7]](#endnote-7) and cried as she died in childbirth, naming Binyomin “the child of my pain.”

It is interesting to note that Rochel’s son, Yosef, also cried many times. TheTorah references Yosef crying eight times: when the brothers acknowledge regret that they sold him, when he meets Binyomin, when Yosef reveals to his brothers that he is Yosef, on Binyomin’s shoulders, when he kisses his brothers, on Yaakov’s shoulders when they meet, when Yaakov dies, and when the brothers suspect that Yosef may take revenge.

In addition, *Chazal* relate that Yosef cried when he was sold, and cried again when he passed his mother’s grave as he was brought to Mitzrayim.[[8]](#endnote-8)

*Chazal* elaborate[[9]](#endnote-9) that Rochel was buried on the road of Beis Lechem and not in the *Me’aras Hamachpailah* so that Yosef would cry there. Likewise, generations later, the *Yidden* would evoke tears at *Kever Rochel* as theywere lead into *galus*.[[10]](#endnote-10)

Rochel Imainu continues to cry for her children – “*Rochel mevakah al baneha*.”

*Chazal* explain[[11]](#endnote-11) that when the wicked Menashe placed an idol in the *Beis Hamikdosh*, the *Avos* and *Ima’hos* were unsuccessful in appeasing Hashem. Only Rochel’s crying and entreaties prevailed. She tearfully advocated: I permitted my sister and rival to take my place in marriage, facilitated it by disclosing the *simanim*, and shared my home with her; so too, You, Hashem, should look away when Your children bring *avodah* *zarah*, foreign gods, into Your house.

Hashem accepts her pleas, responding, “Cease your voice from sobbing and your eyes from tearing; you have accomplished, your children will return.”

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This may explain why the *pasuk* states,[[12]](#endnote-12) “The eyes of Leah were tender, while Rochel had been (past tense) beautiful in form and appearance.”

Two questions arise:

1. Why, asks the *Sfas Emes*,[[13]](#endnote-13) is Rochel’s beauty expressed in past tense, implying that Rochel was beautiful until then, but not prospectively?

2. Why is Rochel’s beauty contrasted to Leah’s appearance?

Answers the *Sfas Emes*:[[14]](#endnote-14) The *pasuk* is foretelling Rochel’s future destiny, and comparing it to Leah’s past history and lot. Until her marriage, Leah constantly cried, and her eyes and eyelashes were adversely affected by her tears. Henceforth, Rochel, who had been exceptionally beautiful until now,[[15]](#endnote-15) would merit to *daven* and cry, and – akin to her sister – her mission and myriad of tears would impact her eyes.

Today, as well, Rochel continues to use The Gates of Tears and cries for her children.

May Hashem accept Rochel’s tears, and bring the *geulah* speedily in our days.

*Feedback, critique and additional references are welcome at pg@waxmanrealty.com or 732.363.0300.*

1. Brachos 32b. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Ya’aros Devash 2:11. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Bava Basra 123a; Bereishis Rabbah 70:16. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Zohar Bereishis 223a. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. See Illuminating the Generations, Rabbi Hillel Goldberg, page 129. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. Bereishis Rabbah 81:7; Ramban Bereishis 30:1. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Rashi Bereishis 30:22. [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. Sefer Hayashor Parshas Vayeishev. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. Pesikta Rabbah 3:52; Radak Yirmiyahu 31:14. [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. Rashi Bereishis 48:7; Tziror Hamor ibid. 35:20. [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. Rashi ibid; Pesichta D’Eichah Rabbah 24. [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. Bereishis 29:17. [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. Sfas Emes Likutim. [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. My elaboration; later seen outlined in Sfas Emes ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
15. See Rashi Bereishis 33:6; Zohar 1:175a. [↑](#endnote-ref-15)