



# דרכים בפרשה

וישלה



## ותמת דבורה מנקת רבקה ותקבר מתחת לבית אל תחת

### האלון ויקרא שמו אלון בכות לה:

*Devorah, the wet nurse of Rivkah, died, and she was buried below Beis-El, under the oak. And so it was named Alon Bachus (35:8)*

After finally leaving the house of Lavan, the Torah tells us how Yaakov prepared for his confrontation with his brother Esav. We learn about Yaakov's struggle with the *malach*; the prohibition of eating from the *gid hanashe*, and finally the encounter of Yaakov and Esav. The Torah then tells us of Dinah's abduction and the subsequent decimation of Shechem; Yaakov's instruction to rid of all the *avoda zara* and the building of a *mizbayach*.

The parsha is fully packed with many lessons in literally every possuk. But then in possuk 8, the Torah adds a random detail. Devorah, the wet nurse of Rivka, died, and they buried her and named the place Alon Bachus. Who was this Devora, and what was her greatness? Rashi and Ramban discuss the midrashic tradition that this possuk was indirectly telling us about the death of Rivka as well.

Rav Moshe Shternbuch (Taam Vedaas Al Hatorah) explains that Devorah was not only the nurse that took care of Rivka physically but spiritually as well. Rivka was able to grow up as a rose among the thorns

of Besuel and Lavan's home because of Devorah's influence. Therefore, her passing was a terrible blow because her force in the family was so powerful and monumental. Rav Shternbuch writes that *this possuk is a chizzuk to all parents and educators, teaching us that the influence which one invests in another can last a lifetime and for many generations to come. Rivka Imeinu! Where did she come from? The answer is that she had a teacher named Devorah.*

Delving deeper into the identity of Devorah, I found another beautiful connection. In Sefer Shoftim (4:4-5), the possuk tells us about "a fiery woman", the great Devorah Hanevia, how she judged Klal Yisroel; the battle against Sisera with the help of another great woman, Yael, culminating with the beautiful Shiras Devorah.

Interestingly, the possuk relates that she used to sit and judge beneath the Tomer Devorah – the date palm tree of Devorah. The gemara in Mesechta Megillah (14a) explains the significance of this. When she judged the people, she sat in an open area in order to avoid possible issues with *yichud*,

in the event that a man would come with a question. Additionally, the gemara homiletically offers that just as a date tree offers little shade, so too that generation had few scholars providing spiritual shade, thus making it necessary for a woman to judge.

Most fascinatingly, the Abarbanel quotes a Midrash Chazal, that this tree had long since been named Tomer Devorah, because this was the very same Alon Bachus of our possuk in Chumash. This was where דבורה זבורה -Devorah, the wet nurse of Rivka was buried.

The question of course is that we can understand that sometimes one may feel a kinship to someone due to sharing the same name. But still, sharing a name should not be enough of a reason for Devorah to sit and judge there. Furthermore, why is it important for us to know this?

We can suggest the following idea: the people would arrive with their questions, expecting to see a great man with a long flowing beard attending to them. Instead, due to the times, they would be answered by Devorah. At this point, if the story would end, they might return home and turn to their own daughters, demanding of them great careers and leadership goals.

The truth is that the situation was one of במקום שאין איש, literally, there was no man capable, so therefore there was a woman

instead. But that was not her job, nor was it ever meant to be that way.

Perhaps Devorah would then point to the tree and tell these men: “Don’t be enamoured by my position. Do you see this tree? There was a much greater Devorah before me whom within her capacity of running a home, based on the virtues and foundations of the torah, was able to train Rivkah, the future mother of Klal Yisroel. Establishing the future homes of Klal Yisroel is the greatest achievement possible!

**מרדכי אפפעל, Good Shabbos,**

