

Jeremiah 31:15

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Thus saith the LORD; A voice was heard in Ramah,
lamentation, and bitter weeping; Rahel weeping for her
children refused to be comforted for her children, because
they were not.

Analysis

Thus saith the LORD; A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping; Rahel weeping for her children refused to be comforted for her children, because they were not. This haunting verse captures national grief through the image of Rachel, ancestral mother of Joseph and Benjamin, weeping for her descendants. **Ramah** was the assembly point where Babylonians gathered captives before deportation (Jeremiah 40:1), located near Rachel's tomb (1 Samuel 10:2). **Lamentation** (nehi, נְהִי) and **bitter weeping** (bekhi, בְּכִי) convey inconsolable mourning.

Rahel weeping for her children personifies the Northern Kingdom's tribes (Ephraim and Manasseh descended from Rachel through Joseph). She **refused to be comforted** (me'anah, מֵאָנָה, actively refused) **because they were not** (אֵינֶנּוּ, einennu, they are no more)—a devastating phrase suggesting total loss, not temporary absence. This echoes Jacob's grief over Joseph: 'he is not' (Genesis 37:30), later proven wrong when Joseph lived.

Matthew 2:17-18 applies this prophecy to Herod's massacre of Bethlehem's infants, showing the text's typological depth. Just as Rachel wept for children exiled/destroyed, so mothers wept when Herod murdered sons seeking to kill the true King. Yet in both contexts, God's redemptive purpose survives human evil—

Israel returned from exile, and Christ escaped to fulfill His mission. Rachel's weeping is not final; verses 16-17 promise restoration.

Historical Context

Rachel, Jacob's beloved wife, died giving birth to Benjamin near Bethlehem (Genesis 35:16-20). Her tomb became a memorial, and she symbolized motherhood and covenant continuity. When Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem (586 BC) and marched captives through Ramah, it was as if Rachel—buried nearby—arose to weep for descendants facing exile and death. The phrase 'they were not' reflected the apparent extinction of Israel's national existence. Yet God preserved a remnant, fulfilling promises to the patriarchs. Matthew's use shows this pattern repeats in redemptive history—weeping gives way to restoration through God's sovereign purpose.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How does Rachel's inconsolable weeping validate the reality of grief while pointing toward hope beyond present sorrow?
2. What does Matthew's application of this text to Herod's massacre teach about how prophetic Scripture functions?
3. In what ways does this verse comfort those who grieve losses that seem absolute and final?

Interlinear Text

כָּהֵן	אָמַר	יְהוָה	קוֹל	בְּרָמָה	נִשְׁמָע	נְהִי
H3541	Thus saith	the LORD	A voice	in Ramah	was heard	lamentation
	H559	H3068	H6963	H7414	H8085	H5092
יָבֵךְ	וּבִיטָר	רָחֵל	וּבִיטָר	עַל	בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל	וְשָׁרָף
weeping	and bitter	Rahel	weeping	H5921	for her children	refused
H1065	H8563	H7354	H1058		H1121	H3985
לְהַנְחֵם	עַל	בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל	כִּי	אֵינָם		
to be comforted	H5921	for her children	H3588	H369		
H5162		H1121				

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 77:2 (References Lord): In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord: my sore ran in the night, and ceased not: my soul refused to be comforted.

Jeremiah 40:1 (References Lord): The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, after that Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard had let him go from Ramah, when he had taken him being bound in chains among all that were carried away captive of Jerusalem and Judah, which were carried away captive unto Babylon.

Genesis 35:19 (Parallel theme): And Rachel died, and was buried in the way to Ephrath, which is Beth-lehem.

Isaiah 22:4 (Parallel theme): Therefore said I, Look away from me; I will weep bitterly, labour not to comfort me, because of the spoiling of the daughter of my people.

Jeremiah 10:20 (Parallel theme): My tabernacle is spoiled, and all my cords are broken: my children are gone forth of me, and they are not: there is none to stretch forth my tent any more, and to set up my curtains.

Genesis 37:35 (Parallel theme): And all his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted; and he said, For I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning. Thus his father wept for him.

Genesis 42:13 (Parallel theme): And they said, Thy servants are twelve brethren, the sons of one man in the land of Canaan; and, behold, the youngest is this day with our father, and one is not.

Genesis 42:36 (Parallel theme): And Jacob their father said unto them, Me have ye bereaved of my children: Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away: all these things are against me.

Lamentations 5:7 (Parallel theme): Our fathers have sinned, and are not; and we have borne their iniquities.

Ezekiel 2:10 (Parallel theme): And he spread it before me; and it was written within and without: and there was written therein lamentations, and mourning, and woe.