

# 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, בְּקִי) 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, מְאַנְהָה, actively refused) **because they were not** (אִתְּהָא, 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

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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

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**John 15:13** — Greatest form of love

**1 Corinthians 13:4** — Characteristics of love

**Colossians 1:16** — All things created through Christ

**Psalm 19:1** — Heavens declare God's glory

## Study Questions

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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

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בְּהִיא נִשְׁמָע בְּרִמָּת הַקָּרְבָּן וְיָהּוָה אָמַר כִּי הַנָּא  
H3541 Thus saith the LORD A voice in Ramah was heard lamentation  
H559 H3068 H6963 H7414 H8085 H5092

מִאָנָּה בְּתִ יַּחַד עַל מִבְּכָה הַרְחִיל תְּמִרְזֵךְ יָמָן בְּכָה  
weeping and bitter Rachel weeping for her children refused  
H1065 H8563 H7354 H1058 H5921 H1121 H3985

אִינְכֶּן כִּי בְּתִ יַּחַד עַל לְהִנְצַּח מִ  
to be comforted for her children H3588 H369  
H5162 H1121

## Additional Cross-References

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**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.

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