

## And Avraham came to eulogize Sarah. (23:2)

The *Midrash* notes the word *va'yavo*, "And (Avraham) came." "From where did he come," the *Midrash* asks. "He came from the burial of Terach, his father, but did not the passing of Terach precede Sarah *Imeinu's* death by two years? We must say that he came from *Har HaMoriah*." The *Midrash* is obviously enigmatic. When Avraham left *Har HaMoriah*, he returned to Beer Sheva. If this is the case, Avraham *Avinu* was "coming" from Beer Sheva. **Ramban** explains that *vayavo* does not refer to Avraham's physical act of coming, but rather, the place which inspired his eulogy of Sarah. Therefore, he explains that *Har HaMoriah* inspired his appreciation of Sarah.

In his commentary to the Torah, **Horav Zalman Sorotzkin, zl**, coalesces the two places quoted in the *Midrash* and offers a practical explanation of the places which inspired Avraham's eulogy of Sarah. The Patriarch focused on two significant points in Sarah's life and how she was able to transcend her own murky background and upbringing in order to be able to raise a son of the caliber of Yitzchak *Avinu*, infused with holiness and purity, willing to part with his life in the service of Hashem.

Sarah grew up in Terach's home. Her father, Haran, had died as a result of being flung into a fiery cauldron upon the command of Nimrod. Sadly, his own father, Terach, played a role in his son's death, since Terach was an idolator whose vocation was making and selling idols. Avraham and, by extension, his brother, Haran, had a problem with this. They believed in Hashem unequivocally, thus maintaining that idols were composed of nothing more than worthless stone. Terach could not allow his son to continue with this slander of his precious gods. It was bad for business. He went to King Nimrod who immediately gave Avraham a choice: to live as a pagan, or die as a monotheistic believer. Haran had the same choice, but being less of a gambler and less of a believer, he opted to see what would transpire with Avraham. If the Patriarch lived, Haran would jump into the cauldron. If Avraham perished, Haran would take the easy way out. Avraham entered and exited the flames unscathed; Haran did not exit. His daughter was sent to live with his father, Terach.

Being the chief idolator, he certainly must have raised his granddaughter with the appropriate *hashkafos*, principles and outlook, of a pagan. Terach was out of his league, and was as unsuccessful with Sarah as he was with Avraham. Sarah left this pagan house and reached out to the world, converting thousands of women, while Avraham did the same with the men. Despite the unacceptable, morally repugnant education which Sarah received in Terach's home, she was able to go on to raise her only son to become a Patriarch. Sarah's *chinuch* prepared Yitzchak to be an *olah temimah*, perfect sacrifice. How did this apparent paradox happen? How could it have succeeded?

We underestimate our Matriarch, Sarah. She transcended it all. She was not influenced by the pagan home of her surrogate father, Terach. Avraham took one look at Yitzchak and saw a son that would have made any mother proud, a son who was willing to lay down his life for his beliefs. When *Chazal* say that Avraham buried Terach, they mean that the Patriarch buried everything

which Terach represented: his idols, his paraphernalia; everything that even remotely carried the “smell” of Terach. He did this at *Har HaMoriah* when he saw the results of the excellent *chinuch* Sarah had imparted to Yitzchak. *Har HaMoriah* was the scene of Terach’s second burial. Here was laid to rest the man and his pagan ideas. Yitzchak was living proof that Terach was dead. This is how Terach’s “burial” and Yitzchak’s *akeidah* inspired Avraham’s eulogy.

I personally experienced a similar situation, and, by extension, so does each and every *ben Torah* attest to the burial of the Terachs, the Amaleks, and all of the wicked people throughout the generations. My mother, Glicka *bas* R’Avraham Alter, *a”h*, lived a full life. It was a difficult life, as she survived a number of Hitler’s death camps. She, together with my father, *zl*, lost their first set of children during the war and came to America following the liberation, to rebuild their lives and family.

They raised three children who, in turn, raised two more generations of Torah-abiding Jews. My mother was widowed early on, and she was left to raise her family alone. She did so with perseverance, dedication and love, never once faltering in her commitment to Torah observance. At her funeral, I insisted that she be carried out only by her grandsons, who were mature *bnei* Torah. As the coffin was raised up, one of the bystanders, an elderly “landsman,” friend from Europe, remarked, “She has just taken her revenge on Hitler!”

When we maintain our allegiance to Hashem, His Torah, and *mitzvos*, we bury all of those enemies who have attempted to destroy our beliefs throughout the ages. Every Jewish child who receives a Torah education, who lives a life of Torah values, represents another nail in Amalek’s coffin. Every *bar mitzvah*, wedding, *simchah* adds more dirt to his grave. By acting like Torah-committed Jews, we take our revenge on our enemies. We also inspire those who are on the line, whose Jewish lives are filled with ambiguity and uncertainty. They know that the lives they lead are void of Jewish values and morals; yet, they are afraid to take the plunge. When they observe the *simchas ha’chaim*, joy of life, *joie d’vivre*, that is inherent in Jewish observance, they may finally be tempted to take the next step.