

## And Avraham expired and died at a good old age. (25:8)

The *Talmud Bava Basra* 91a, relates that, on the day of Avraham Avinu's passing, the leaders of the world lamented his death with the following eulogy. "Woe to the world which lost its *manhig*, leader/guide; woe to the ship that lost its *kavarnit*, captain." In his *Derech Tamim*, **Horav Avraham, Rav of Berezdiv**, Western Ukraine, explains the meaning of what appears to be a double eulogy. Avraham was the *manhig*, leader, of the world. He guided and cared for each individual person, his needs: physical, material and spiritual. He saw to it that no one infringed on his fellowman. Whatever property belonged to a person – stayed that way. He cared for the "little guy," as well as the most powerful, influential individual.

Second, as the primary expounder of the monotheistic belief, he was Hashem's number one proponent in the world. He preached belief in the Creator of Heaven and earth; maintaining that the G-d of Creation was also the G-d of history. He was ship's captain. Life in the world was like a journey across the sea in a turbulent storm. The winds are pushing the ship to and fro, with the possibility of capsizing very real. A captain guides the ship and disciplines its sailors. He knows when to turn right and when to veer left. A leader must, likewise, know when to say yes and when to say no.

The journey of life can allegorically be compared to someone standing on a thin, long board in the sea during a great storm. He must balance himself perfectly, since any sway to the left or right will cause him to fall and drown. Without help to balance himself, he stands little chance of survival. We go through life balancing ourselves on that thin board. One wrong move, and we drown in the sea of contemporary society with its bankrupt morals and misplaced sense of ethics. We need a strong captain, someone to tell us, to guide us, without whom we do not stand a chance of survival. This is what Avraham was to the world. This is what every *gadol*, Torah leader, is to the Jewish world.

To supplement the above, *K'Motzei Shalal Rav*, quotes the *Eshel Avraham*, who goes one step further. When the world loses its leader – it is not the end of the world. Other leaders will step into place and take over. Indeed, before the "sun" of one leader sets, the "sun" of the next leader is already beginning to shine, but "woe" to the ship that has lost its captain. When the ship is at sea in the midst of a storm – who will be the captain's replacement?