

“Sarah died in Kiryat Arba...And Avraham came to eulogize Sarah and to bewail her.” (23:2)

In his commentary to *Pirkei Avos*, *Rabbeinu Yona* records the *Asarah Nisyonos*, ten trials, which Avraham *Avinu* endured and from which he emerged triumphant. He lists the *Akeidas Yitzchak* as the ninth trial and the burial of Sarah *Imeinu* as the tenth and most difficult challenge to overcome. Avraham was left alone after having spent the major part of his life with his beloved *eishes chayil*. His test arose when, upon Sarah's sudden death, he had a difficult time procuring a burial site for her. Interestingly, in the *Talmud Bava Basra* 15b, *Chazal* cite *Satan's* “endorsement” of Avraham *Avinu's* faith based upon the fact that when he did not find a burial place for Sarah, he did not complain or question Hashem *Yisborach's* motives. We must endeavor to understand this. Avraham *Avinu* listens to Hashem's call and is prepared to slaughter his beloved son, Yitzchak, an act which underscores his incredible commitment and devotion to the Almighty. Yet, the courage and strength of conviction that he manifested during the *Akeidah* was secondary to the “patience” he exhibited in securing Sarah's gravesite. Furthermore, what really is the *nisayon* regarding the gravesite? In the end, he was able to purchase the plot that he desired. Hashem's promise to him that he would inherit land had been fulfilled. So he had to pay a large sum of money for the land; did Hashem not provide him with the money?

Horav Matisyahu Solomon, Shlita, explains that ostensibly Avraham believed that “buying” the land from Efron was a form of fulfillment of Hashem's promise. The challenge to his faith was actually for a short period of time – from the time Sarah passed away until he made the deal with Efron. For that period, while “*meiso mutal lefanav*,” “his loss, Sarah's corpse, lay before him,” in the midst of overwhelming sorrow at the loss of his life's partner, he did not allow depression to cloud his mind in any way. Never once did his faith and trust in Hashem falter. Not for a moment did he even feel bitterness. His emotional state did not prevail over his conviction. He was depressed, but in control. He was bitter, but he acted with dignity. Here we see his spiritual fortitude and strength of character.

Avraham's conviction, despite emotional strain, demonstrated his unwavering devotion to Hashem. Did this manifest greater devotion than he demonstrated during *Akeidas Yitzchak*? One would think that Avraham went through a more difficult test when he was told to sacrifice his son than when he had “questions” regarding inheriting the land. *Horav Solomon* makes a profound distinction between the two *nisyonos*. He first addresses the reason the *Satan* found it necessary to search for a way to precipitate Sarah *Imeinu's* death. His mission is to cause us to sin; death is simply not his domain. Going after Sarah was not “his style”. The commentators explain that his intention was to disturb Avraham, to bring him down from the zenith of *simchah shel mitzvah*, joy inherent in the *mitzvah* of carrying out Hashem's command at the *Akeidah*, to the nadir of depression, experiencing his wife's sudden death. This would surely catalyze a negative reaction from Avraham. Adding to this was the fact that Avraham was having a difficult time obtaining a burial plot for his wife, whose body lay there with no place to go. Perhaps the tension and anxiety

might provoke the Patriarch to question Hashem, to wonder why Hashem would do this to him, after all he had experienced. The *Satan* did not succeed. Avraham's faith was immovable, his conviction unquestionable, his commitment unwavering.

Akeidas Yitzchak was a test. It required Avraham to do something that was inconsistent with that in which he had believed up to this point. When Hashem asks, a Jew must respond. Avraham had the support of Hashem's command as he rose to accept the challenge. The test of Sarah's burial was of a subconscious nature. Avraham was to accept Hashem's will without being commanded, without having any idea that it was a test. Furthermore, he was "set up," placed in a frame of mind that would have destroyed a lesser human being. Being swept up in the vortex of spiritual joy, only to spiral down to the apogee of depression does not facilitate an individual's emotional well being. Certainly, one is not in the frame of mind to accept any major challenges to his faith. Avraham *Avinu* passed this test and subsequently, imbued his descendants with the ability to emulate his precedent.