

Avraham came to eulogize Sarah and to bewail her. Avraham rose up from the presence of his dead. (23:2,3)

Avraham *Avinu* eulogized his life's partner: the woman with whom he had shared his spiritual goals; the mother of his son, Yitzchak; the first Matriarch of the Jewish Nation. This is a tall order. There must have been so much to say, so much to emphasize about a woman who had lived life so well, who was such a vital component of Avraham's success as leader of the world, father of the Jewish People, paradigm of the morally perfect, ethically correct, spiritually replete individual. Yet, when one peruses the *pesukim*, not one word is mentioned concerning the eulogy Avraham must have given for Sarah *Imeinu*. Clearly, a eulogy of such import should find its way into the Torah. *Horav Yosef Berger, Shlita*, quotes **Horav Shlomo, zl, m'Munkatch**, grandson of the *Bnei Yissaschar*, who asked this question when he eulogized his own *Rebbetzin*. "What was Avraham's *hesped*, eulogy?" he wondered.

Vayakam mei'al pnei meiso, "Avraham rose up from the presence of his dead." This was the gist of Avraham's eulogy. The Patriarch realized and expounded upon the fact that his *tekumah*, rising up, spiritual elevation, success as a person, teacher, leader, was due to *pnei meiso*, "the presence of his dead." Sarah was the reason that Avraham achieved such success. The Patriarch recognized this. It was all in his noble wife's merit. He attributed nothing to himself. This was truly an impressive and inspiring eulogy.

When one reads the *pasuk*, "Avraham came to eulogize Sarah," the *lamed*, which actually means "to" as in "to Sarah," seems out of place. Obviously, since Sarah was the deceased, he was coming to eulogize her and no one else. **Horav Elazar M. Shach, zl**, explains this practically. Avraham was the *gadol ha'dor*, preeminent leader of the generation. As such, it is certain that Sarah's funeral was well-attended by every noble and distinguished personage. Quite possibly, many of these illustrious leaders were asked to speak – which they probably did. They spoke with great fanfare, relating the many accolades and praises of Avraham *Avinu*. Sarah was praised for being the wife, helpmate, life's companion of the *gadol ha'dor*, but they mentioned very little about Sarah herself. It was Sarah's funeral; yet, they spoke about Avraham! What about Sarah – as a person in her own right?

Thus, the Torah tells us, "Avraham came to eulogize *l'Sarah*," only Sarah, her values, her attributes, her virtue, her character refinement, her nobility. He spoke about the deceased - in her own right – not as her husband's partner in life. Sarah had achieved her own personal significance.

In his *Ohel Rachel*, thoughts on the month of *Elul* and the *Yamim Noraim*, **Horav Shmuel Auerbach, Shlita**, has a section entitled, *Alon Bachus*, which is the eulogy he gave for his *Rebbetzin*. It is an inspiring *mussar shmuess*, discourse, which portrays the Torah's attitude concerning the esteem that a *gadol ha'dor* had for his wife. The *Rosh Yeshivah* explains that his

distinction in the field of Torah and as *rosh yeshivah* should be attributed to the direction he received from his wife. She was involved in every aspect of his life, encouraging a number of his decisions vis-à-vis the *yeshivah* and his students. To her, it was all about learning Torah, which was paramount in her life.

His *Rebbetzin* was integrity personified, unable to grasp anything that was not totally “true.” She never thought of herself - only of others. She had no needs; others had needs. The *Rosh Yeshivah* relates that, during one of her more difficult, painful days, as she was slowly succumbing to her illness, one of his students became engaged. The ceremony honoring the engagement was being celebrated that night. *Rav Shmuel* was not planning to attend. How could he leave his wife when she was in such excruciating pain?

The *Rebbetzin* replied with complete equanimity, “You must go! You do not mix two situations. My pain is my pain. It is not the *chassan’s* pain. Why should he suffer because of my pain? He is waiting for you to attend as his *rebbe*, his *Rosh Yeshivah*, and his spiritual father. Why should his *simchah*, joyous occasion, be marred because of your absence? I am in pain, and he is experiencing great joy. What does one have to do with the other? You are going!” It was as simple as that. These two distinct situations were exclusive of one another. The pain that she was enduring should have no effect on the life of anyone other than herself – and her husband. The subject was closed.

Her illness did not deter her from her many acts of *chesed*, kindness. Toward the end of her life, the *Rebbetzin* attended a *Shabbos Sheva Berachos*, which required traveling and staying as a guest at someone’s house. She arrived before the *Rosh Yeshivah*. After spending part of the day helping to prepare for the festivities, she insisted that the *Rosh Yeshivah* partake of the sweets that had been set aside for them. The hostess worked hard to prepare a fitting welcome for the guests, how could he not eat? Also, she said, to be careful not to leave any crumbs! This is what went through her mind – and this is what was important to him to remember at her funeral!

I think her life was aptly summed up in the phrase on her *matzeivah*, gravestone: *Evlah b’libah v’tzahalasah al panehah*, “Her sadness (was) in her heart; her joy (was) on her face.” This was the *Rosh Yeshivah’s* tribute to his *Rebbetzin*.