

And Avraham came to eulogize Sarah and to bewail her. (23:2)

In his *Sefer Chareidim*, *Horav Elazar Azkari, zl*, writes, “It is a *mitzvah* to eulogize an *adam kasher*, a proper, upright man, as it is written, ‘And Avraham came to eulogize Sarah and to bewail her.’” This is part of *gemillas chassadim*, acts of lovingkindness. While it is the correct and proper thing to do, the sequence of events in the *Parshah* seems out of order. One would think that the first reaction to hearing the news of someone’s sudden passing would be weeping. Only later, after the emotion of the day has settled, does the mourner eulogize the individual, which appears to be an intellectual appreciation of the deceased. Avraham *Avinu* did the opposite, first eulogizing Sarah *Imeinu*, and only afterwards did he cry.

Horav Zalman Sorotzkin, zl, explains this practically. People respond to death with immediate weeping, because it is the natural reaction to the loss of a loved one – regardless of the individual’s stature, pedigree, achievement, etc. Later, after the grieving is subdued, one begins to formulate an appreciation of the deceased, his or her distinct individuality. Personal loss precedes public loss; thus, weeping precedes eulogy.

In Sarah’s case, as well as in the case of a world leader, one whose impact on the *klal*, community, is profound, the sequence is different. Avraham *Avinu* was acutely aware that Sarah’s passing was not just a personal loss. It was a world tragedy. She impacted humanity. Her passing was felt by every living soul with whom she had come in contact and by all the others who never had this singular opportunity. Avraham’s tears for his personal loss had to be choked back in order to allow for the communal expression over their collective loss.

Perhaps, we might offer another insight into the change in sequence that appears in the *pasuk*. *Horav Elazar M. Shach, zl*, wonders why the Torah repeats Sarah’s name: “And **Sarah** died... and Avraham came to eulogize **Sarah** and to bewail her.” Clearly, he was eulogizing Sarah; after all, she was the one who had died! *Rav Shach* explains that, given Avraham’s world position, understandably the most distinguished members of that generation came to eulogize her out of respect to Avraham – the *gadol ha’dor*, preeminent leader of the generation. Their words reflected Sarah’s distinction because of – and in relation to – her esteemed husband. They lauded the support she gave him, her constant encouragement, her readiness always to be present for him. The eulogies were impressive, but, regrettably, they only addressed Sarah’s role as Avraham’s wife. She was secondary to him. Her own personal distinction, her myriad acts of *chesed*, her supremacy in *nevuah*, prophecy, were not addressed. This is why Avraham made a point to eulogize “**Sarah**” the woman – the individual, the mother, the matriarch. This is why the Torah emphasizes the name, “Sarah.”

This might be why Avraham first eulogized Sarah before expressing his personal grief. He needed to set the record straight, notifying everyone that Sarah was a giant in her own right, that his

spiritual level was overshadowed by hers. Then he allowed his personal grief to set in and he wept over his own individual loss.