

Avraham rose up from the presence of his dead. (23:3)

In his *Tiferes Yehonasan*, *Horav Yehonasan Eibeshutz, zl*, explains this *pasuk* based upon an original idea that only those righteous who died through the medium of *missas neshikah*, kiss from Hashem – and not through the *Malach HaMaves*, Angel of Death – were allowed burial in the *Meoras HaMachpeilah*. Thus, when Avraham *Avinu* petitioned to have Sarah *Imeinu* buried in the *Meoras HaMachpeilah*, he was certain that she was worthy of acceptance. *Chazal* describe the Angel of Death's manner of taking a person's life. "He stands over the head of the soon-to-be-deceased. In his hand is a sword; the tip of the blade of the sword has been dipped in a bitter solution. The sick person looks up, and the moment that he notices the *Satan* over him, he becomes frightened and opens his mouth (as if to scream). At that instance, *Satan* allows the bitter solution to enter the mouth of the sick person. This causes his death."

Having said this, *Rav Eibeshutz* posits that Avraham gazed upon Sarah's face and saw that, unlike other deceased, whose countenance appeared "washed out and green in color," Sarah's countenance shined. This made him rationalize that Sarah died of *missas neshikah*. This is to be interpreted into the *pasuk*, "Avraham rose, *"mei al pnei meiso*, "from the presence/face of his dead." Avraham saw from Sarah's face that she was worthy of gaining entrance into the *Meoras HaMachpeilah*. He now approached *Bnei Cheis* for the "keys" to the holy site.

Why were only those who died through the medium of *neshikah* permitted in the Cave – and no others? The *Zohar Hakadosh*, quoted by *Horav Pinchas Friedman, Shlita*, relates the following: "When Avraham entered the Cave, prepared to bury Sarah, he was challenged by Adam and Chavah who refused him entrance. They said, "Through our sin with the *Eitz HaDaas*, Tree of knowledge, we caused death on all mankind. Once Avraham and Sarah are buried here with us, we will be ashamed, because of all the wonderful deeds that the two of you have performed." Avraham responded that he would intercede on their behalf that they not become embarrassed in the Heavenly realm.

When Avraham offered his assurance, Adam returned to his place of rest. Chavah, however, did not. After all (explains the *Chidah*), she instigated the original sin, unlike Sarah, who had performed countless acts of good deeds. When Avraham took upon himself to pray, especially on her behalf, she, too, returned to her place of rest.

How did Avraham assuage Adam and Chavah? They, too, could pray. What about his prayer was so unique? The *Chida* explains that Adam *HaRishon's* *chet*, sin, embodied within it all three cardinal sins: murder; adultery; and idol worship. First, he listened to the serpent, thus defying Hashem's command – idol worship. Second, the serpent cohabited with Chavah (*Shabbos* 146a). (This probably means that the relationship Adam and Chavah had with one another following the serpent's evil counsel was a form of adultery: *Rav Friedman*.) Third, as a result of the sin, death was decreed against humanity. There is no greater act of murder than that.

The *Avos*, Patriarchs, repaired the sin of eating of the *Eitz HaDaas*. By reaching out to a world society attached to pagan worship, Avraham corrected the *avodah zarah*, idol worship, aspect of Adam's sin. By willingly accepting to have his life sacrificed on the *Akeidah*, Yitzchak Avinu repaired the *shefichas damim*, murder, aspect of the sin. Yaakov Avinu's sanctity in producing a *mitah sheleimah*, complete, perfect bed, whereby all twelve of his sons were righteous, was *mesakein*, corrected, the *gilui arayas*, adultery, aspect of the sin.

The *Chida* explains that Avraham calmed Adam by intimating to him that he should not be embarrassed over his sin; since the *Avos* were each a *gilgul nefesh*, transmigrative soul, of Adam, they took his place, thus collectively correcting his sin of eating of the *Eitz HaDaas*. This addressed Adam, but how did they soothe Sarah? To this, Avraham responded that he would address the issue. How? *Rav Friedman* suggests (based upon the *Arizal* who says, as the *Avos* were a *gilgul* of Adam, so, too, the *Imahos*, Matriarchs, were a *gilgul* of Chavah) that the *Imahos* repaired Chavah's sin, thus allowing for the four couples to repose together in the *Meoras HaMachpeilah*.

In conclusion: A distinct relationship exists between the four couples that are buried in the *Meoras HaMachpeilah*. The first couple, Adam and Chavah, committed an indiscretion which embodied the three cardinal sins. The next three couples each repaired one of the three sins, expunging Adam and Chavah's guilt and shame. Thus, their burial together in the *Meoras HaMachpeilah* is the complete *tikun*, repair, of the sin of the *Eitz HaDaas*. Therefore, Avraham gazed upon Sarah's face to see whether she had died via *neshikah*, or had fallen victim to the powerful sword of the Angel of Death. When he saw that she had died through a kiss, it indicated that the Angel had no reign over her. His power is derived from Chavah's sin, which caused death. Sarah superseded the Angel of Death, because she had repaired Chavah's sin. She was now worthy of burial in the *Meorah*.

The *Zohar HaKadosh (Lech Lecha 81)* writes: "When a *neshamah*, soul, departs from this world, it 'stops' by the *Meoras HaMachpeilah*, which is the gateway to *Gan Eden*. The *Avos* and *Imahos*, together with Adam and Chavah, receive the *neshamah*. If it is worthy, they welcome it and open the 'doors' to *Gan Eden*. Otherwise, if it is unworthy, the *neshamah* is sent away." *Rav Friedman* explains that the onus of guilt of Adam's sin rests on every *neshamah* that is created. Therefore, his violation of the commandment not to eat of the *Eitz HaDaas* has repercussions throughout time, to the tune that each of us, every Jew, must atone for his personal guilt. While it is true that the four couples repaired the sin, they only repaired the *shoresh*, root, of the sin, but each individual Jew has his/her own obligation to atone the sin (which embodies the three cardinal sins), so that he/she can enter into *Gan Eden*. In other words, each one of us – exclusive of our responsibility to maintain an observant lifestyle, committed to Hashem and His Torah – must also see to it that nary a taint of the three cardinal sins can be attributed to us. Our Patriarchs and Matriarchs paved the way to *Gan Eden* for us. Are we able to follow along the path which they forged?