

## And Avraham came to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her. (23:2)

*Chazal* teach that the initial three days of *shiva* (the mourning period), are to be dedicated to *be'chi*, weeping. These days are followed by the remaining days, designated for *hesped*, eulogy. First one lets himself go by crying, dramatically demonstrating the feeling of loss he has experienced with the passing of the deceased. This is followed by an intellectual appreciation of the deceased. Therefore, it seems puzzling that Avraham transposed the sequence by first eulogizing and afterwards weeping.

*Rabbi A.M. Shach, Shlita*, explains this change in the following manner. Situations sometimes occur in which the *hesped* must precede *be'chi*. Only through an intellectual penetration into the character and accomplishments of the deceased is one brought to tears. When Sarah *Imeinu* passed away, the typical person was not quite moved to a dramatic show of mourning. After all, she did live to a ripe old age. She had lived a rich life filled with numerous accomplishment. Her time had come! Avraham responded to this concept with a

profound, yet sensitive, portrayal of the "Sarah" that he knew. When the world was given an understanding of Sarah's character, her devotion to Hashem and His Creations, and her unparalleled love for people, only then did they become truly cognizant of the irreparable void left by her passing.

With this idea in mind, we may add the following. Whenever someone of advanced age passes on, we do not demonstrate the same degree of grief that we would have if, heaven forbid, this had happened to a younger person. Regrettably, we forget that this individual had still been a husband or wife to someone with whom they had spent a major portion of their life. They had been a loving parent who would surely be missed. Loss is relative, and one must be sensitive to all its ramifications.

We may suggest another explanation for the sequence of Avraham's mourning. *Rabbi E. Lopian z.t.l.* once visited *Reb Nochum Zev z.t.l.*, son of *Reb Simcha Zissel M'kelm z.t.l.* This incident occurred a short while after his brother-in-law, *Rabbi Z.H. Broide*, had passed away. *Reb Nochum Zev* was still grieving over his brother-in-law's death. *Rabbi Lopian* questioned his prolonged grief. *Reb Nochum* responded, explaining, "The amount of time allotted for weeping, eulogy, and mourning are in regard to one's expressed grief for the deceased. I am mourning for my personal loss and that of *Klal Yisrael*. For such a loss there is no *shiur*, prescribed measure. As time goes on, the loss becomes greater, actually exacerbating the grief."

Perhaps this is the meaning of the weeping which followed the eulogy. Avraham followed the prescribed schedule for mourning. He wanted, however, to teach that the loss of Sarah had become more profound and that the weeping, in a sense, should continue. Understandably, one

cannot grieve indefinitely. One must nonetheless reflect upon the tragic losses of the great Torah scholars throughout the generations who have passed away, and the spiritual void which has resulted.