

And Avraham weighed out to Ephron... four hundred silver shekel ...and afterwards Avraham buried Sarah his wife. (23:16,19)

Chazal (*Pirkei Avos* 5:3) state that Avraham *Avinu* withstood – and emerged successful from – the trials/challenges (to his faith) with which Hashem tested him. This indicates the greatness and deep-rooted faith which our first Patriarch manifested. In his commentary to *Avos*, *Rabbeinu Yonah* delineates the ten *nisyonos*, trials, in ascending order of conviction demonstrated. He places the *Akeidas Yitzchak*, Binding of Yitzchak (when Avraham *Avinu* was prepared to slaughter his son to fulfill Hashem's command), as number nine, with (the travail surrounding) the selecting a gravesite and burying his beloved wife, Sarah *Imeinu*, as number ten. How are we to understand this? We have no question that having to deal with a lowlife like Ephron was a trying experience, but how could this trial indicate greater conviction than the *Akeidah*? Veritably, Hashem promised Avraham that *Eretz Yisrael* would belong to him and afterwards be handed down to his descendants. Yet, when he came to bury his wife, he was compelled to pay a pretty penny for the land. Nonetheless, he neither complained nor questioned Hashem. The Almighty promised, so it would have to work. One does not question the Divine.

Horav Chaim Keller, zl, explains this based on a remark made by *Horav Eliyahu Meir Bloch, zl*, concerning a certain *bachur*, student, in the *yeshivah* (Telshe). He said, *Ehr iz mesugal ois'tzuhalten groisa nisyonos, aber kleine nisyonos veis ich nisht oib er ken oishalten*; "He is able to withstand [the pressure] of great, demanding challenges, but when it comes to the lesser, simpler tests, he may falter and fail."

We derive from here that some people perform best under intense pressure, when they are up against a wall. When they confront a dangerous enemy, they are able to shore up strength which they did not even know that they possessed. Some are blessed with the ability to solve complex problems with critical thinking and creativity. These same people, however, struggle with simpler tasks which rely on basic knowledge and average skills. Others will risk their lives to undertake a hazardous mission, but will shy away from accepting everyday responsibilities. Some go out of their way to help those in need when they are confronting an extraordinary tragedy. When the needs are not exotic, however, to help raise funds for an average charity which does not garner much attention, it is just not their cup of tea.

When Hashem commanded Avraham to sacrifice his son's life to prove his commitment to Hashem, he was able to stand up to the challenge. How would he act under a simple test, such as dealing with the corrupt Ephron, to purchase land for a gravesite for Sarah? Would he demonstrate his overarching conviction and not lose it during the transaction? It takes a big person to undertake the small, insignificant tasks, while a small person only rises to the fore when it is a great attention-grabbing endeavor. Avraham showed that big or small, it was all about fulfilling Hashem's command.