

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

In his *hesped*, eulogy, of *Horav Meir Chadash zl, Horav Elazar M. Shach, zl*, quoted the words of the *Midrash, Va'yavo*, And Avraham came- Where did he come from? *Rabbi Levi* said, 'He came from the grave of his father, *Terach*, (He had attended to his father's burial) *Rabbi Yosi* asks "But *Terach* died two years before Sarah? (How could you say that he came from *Terach's* funeral?) Thus, we must say that he came from *Har Ha'Moriah* (from *Akeidas Yitzchak*"). On the surface there is no way to reconcile these two diverse opinions. Two years is a time difference that cannot be ignored. The *Rosh Yeshivah* posited that, indeed, there is no debate between the two expositions. They both answer the question: What was Sarah *Imeinu's* primary distinction? Was it her support of Avraham *Avinu*, or the manner in which she raised Yitzchak *Avinu*, her husband's successor?

Sarah *Imeinu* was 127 years old when she left this world. How does one render proper *kavod*, honor, to a woman who has achieved such extraordinary longevity? *Rabbi Levi* explained that Avraham was called Avraham *ha'Ivri*- with the word *Ivri*, derived from *eiver*, side. This implies Avraham was on one side, with the rest of the world on the other side. Avraham's beliefs were incongruent with those of the rest of the world. He believed in Hashem; they believed in any and every idol they could dig up or create. He was the Patriarch who preached monotheism. They were pagans, and never the twain shall meet. How was he able to sustain himself against the entire world society? He was a man on a mission- but a man alone. How did he do it? How was it that the pagans did not get to him?

The answer is: *Sarah Imeinu*. She gave him the fortitude to rise up and remain strong, standing resolute in his commitment to Hashem, without fear of man. The strongest person, his commitment notwithstanding, finds maintaining a status quo against external, powerful pressures too much to handle. He requires a strong immovable encouraging support system that provides him with the backing to maintain his courage in the face of dissent, even assault. Our Patriarch had his in this *Rebbetzin* who stood by his side through thick and thin. She gave him the ability to "bury *Terach*"-a reference his father's pagan beliefs. *Terach* was so suffused in Idol worship that he told *Nimrod* that Avraham was causing "trouble." This led to Avraham's planned execution. It was only by Divine miracle that he was spared from untimely death. Thus, burying *Terach* is a reference to destroying the pagan beliefs espoused by *Terach*.

Rabbi Yosi contends that Avraham arrived from the scene of *Akeidas Yitzchak*. The underlying explanation for this is the conflict that our Patriarch dealt with as he turned to *Har Ha'Moriah* to carry out *Hashem's* command concerning Yitzchak. Avraham's entire life was dedicated to acts of loving-kindness. He led a moral and ethical life committed to helping others. Hashem now asked him to act incongruously to his teaching. How does one who promotes love of fellow man and living a good life-prepare to slaughter his only son? Not only did Avraham go, but Yitzchak, who was to be sacrificed, also went with alacrity. Even at the very end, when Avraham was told to desist, he and Yitzchak were wary until they were certain that this was the *ratzon*, will, of *Hashem*.

From where does one take such *kochos*, strength? How did Yitzchok achieve such distinction? Who imbued him with such unwavering conviction and commitment? Sarah *Imeinu* infused her son with such love for Hashem that he was ready to make the ultimate sacrifice, if that was the Almighty's will. Thus, *Rabbi Yosi* contends that it was *Har Ha'Moriah* that inspired *Avraham*. It was from there that he came to bury the Matriarch who had raised such a son.

Rebbitzen Chaya Ruchamah Kopshitz a"h was a remarkable woman. who, together with her husband, raised a family of *banim rabbanban v'chasni rabbanan*, men who impacted the spiritual panorama of the Holy Land. One of her sons-in-law was *Horav Nissim Karelitz zl*, who served as head of the *Bnei Brak bais din* for over half a century. (I had the *z'chus* of meeting her, when my wife and I visited her and her husband, *Horav Tzvi, zl*.)

Early in their marriage, as their family began to grow, they had the *z'chus* to live for a week with the *Chazon Ish, zl*. (Their apartment was holy. Indeed, the *Steipler Gaon, zl*, would often relate that he heard from *Rav Tzvi*, "The architect who designed our apartment was a genius. Most apartments have a guest room, a salon, a kitchen, and bedrooms. Our architect was able to put all these rooms into the kitchen!" This was his way of intimating that his apartment was small. I was there and could not fathom how they had raised a large family in the three rooms.) At the end of their stay, *Rebbetzin Ruchama* asked the *Chazon Ish* for a *brachah*. The *Chazon Ish* asked her what type of blessing she sought. She asked if he could bless her with children who would develop a deep understanding of Torah and have a strong *cheishek*, desire, to learn and grow in learning.

The *Chazon Ish* replied, "I can bless you that your sons be endowed with acumen and lucid understanding. However, *cheishek*, wanting/desiring to learn, is dependent solely on you. When they see how much you value and appreciate Torah, they will emulate and follow suit."

The *Rebbitzen's* love of Torah and the manner in which she treated *bnei Torah* were extraordinary. Shortly after his wedding, her grandson, a young *kollel* fellow, stopped by for a short visit. The first thing she asked him was: "Have you eaten lunch yet? When he did not respond, she understood that he had not yet eaten. She immediately went to the kitchen and prepared an omelet. Now, it is not merely an omelet that a loving grandmother made for her grandson. This is so common for a grandmother. It was what she repeated to herself during the preparation that demonstrated what type of person she was. She said: "I am now preparing an omelet in honor of the Torah, so that a *yeshivah* student will be able to study this afternoon." She transformed seemingly mundane acts into an *avodas hakodesh*, holy endeavor.

Her daughter, *Rebbetzin Leah Karelitz, a"h*, was a worthy successor of her mother's legacy. Indeed, *Rav Yechezkel Levinstein, zl*, remarked, "If we have among us a distinguished *talmid chacham* such as *Rav Nissim (Karelitz)*, it is in the merit of his *Rebbetzin*. We may go to her for a blessing." (The efficacy of her blessings is on par with that of a Torah giant.) *Rav Nissim* commented that his *Rebbetzin* neither criticized him nor made demands of him whatsoever. (She refused to take him away from his learning.) She took great pains to see to it that depression and

bitterness never pervade their home. Even during times of challenge, health and economic hardships her mood did not change. She always presented an aura of joy and satisfaction. It was due to such a home environment that *Rav Nissim* was able to grow in Torah.

Rebbitzin Karelitz sent her grandson the following letter before *Rosh Hashanah*: "Every woman seeks to be among the *mezakei ha'rabim*, those who bring merit to the multitude. This is especially true prior to the *Yamim Noraim*, High Holy days. The *eitzah*, best advice, to achieve this is to be *mekabeil*, accept/greet, every person (family members and neighbors) *b'seiver panim yafos*, with a happy countenance. Thus, they too, will greet members of their respective families and their friends *b'seiver panim yafos*. As a result, an entire *kollel*, husbands of these women, will learn differently, better, as they interact joyfully with one another."

The dominant effort of *zikai ha'rabim* occurs when one person smiles to another, which, in effect, creates an air of calm, joy and content. Their feelings are contagious, spreading to others, thus setting the tone for unabated learning.