

פרשת חיי שרה

השם ינקום דמם!

May Hashem avenge their death!

Such is the response that we are to have when confronted by the tragedy of Jews being killed because they are Jews.

We are G-d's people and thus when we are attacked because we are His People, we can turn to Him and ask for His intervention.

As unique as the slaughter that occurred in Pittsburgh, USA this past week may be in the lifetime of most of the readers, in the course of Jewish history, tragically enough, it was not unique at all.

The *Tefilah* that we recited before Musaf on Shabbos mornings, אב הרחמים, was composed during the Crusades as city after city and village after village were decimated by the onslaught of Christians who wished to free the Holy City from the infidels.

The theme of that prayer is based on the verse in Tehillim (Perek 9/Posuk 13) that reads:

כִּי דִרְשׁ דְּמִים אוֹתָם זָכַר לֹא שָׁכַח צַעֲקַת עֲנָוִים:

Hashem seeks the blood – He remembers them; He did not forget the cry of the humble.

And, undoubtedly, many will wish to connect the events of Shabbos Parshas Vayera 5779 with the conclusion of that Parsha – *Akeidas Yitzchak*.

And, perhaps when we come to our Parshas Chaye Sarah others will see death as well – the death of Sarah l'meinu followed, many decades later, by the loss of Avraham Ovinu.

But, I would like to suggest that even in death, there can be more than one outlook. There can be the outlook of the finality of death, of the lost lives and the shattered lives of survivors. That is, of course, expected and natural.

But, there is another aspect – at the same time that we mourn and are bereaved, there is a Torah outlook that extols life even at the time of death.

Let us examine that outlook as presented to us by our teachers, contemporary and ancient.

The negotiations and conversations regarding the purchase of *Machpelah* make us notice and be sensitive to the various nuances that exist, the words of one and the words of the other.

In *Nesivos Shalom* on our Parsha, the Slonimer Rebbe draws our attention to subtle differences in the way that Avraham Ovinu presented his request and the response of the *Chittites* that indicated that they did not understand the underlying message of Avraham Ovinu – and the philosophy underlying it.

We read (B'reishis Perek 23/P'sukim 3-6):

וַיָּקָם אַבְרָהָם מֵעַל פְּנֵי מֵתוֹ וַיְדַבֵּר אֶל בְּנֵי חֵת לֵאמֹר: גֵּר וְתוֹשֵׁב אָנֹכִי עִמָּכֶם תָּנוּ לִי
אֶחָזֶזֶת קֶבֶר עִמָּכֶם וְאֶקְבְּרָה מִתִּי מִלְּפָנַי: וַיַּעֲנוּ בְנֵי חֵת אֶת אַבְרָהָם לֵאמֹר לוֹ: שְׁמַעֲנוּ
אֲדֹנָי נְשִׂיא אָ...ל"קִים אֶתָּה בְּתוֹכֵנוּ בְּמִבְחָר קֶבְרֵינוּ קֶבֶר אֶת מֵתְךָ אִישׁ מִמֶּנּוּ אֶת קֶבְרוֹ
לֹא יִקָּלָה מִמֶּךָ מִקֶּבֶר מֵתְךָ:

Avraham arose from upon his dead person and he spoke to the Chittites saying. 'I am a stranger and a dweller with you; give me a grave as a permanent possession with you and I will bury my dead person from before me.' The Chittites answered Avraham saying to him. 'Listen, sir, you are a prince of G-d in our midst, with the best of our graves, bury your dead. No one among us will withhold his grave from you from burying your dead.'

Avraham Ovinu doesn't express a desire to acquire a grave alone. He emphasizes multiple times his desire for an *אחוזת קבר*, a grave that will be a permanent possession of his and his future generations.

However, when we read the response of the Chittites we see that they do not relate to the acquisition of a grave as being *אחוזת קבר*, a permanent possession. They refer to a grave only.

The difference between the attitude of Avraham Ovinu and that of the Chittites is, explains the *Nesivos Shalom*, the difference between viewing death as finality and viewing death as a transition from one world to the next.

If the dead are gone, vanished permanently from our presence, then any grave will do. If, on the other hand, we view the loss of the dead as not being permanent,

then those who are alive wish to maintain that connection – because there is a connection to be maintained. Not only do those who are alive wish to maintain their connection with the dead, but, also, after *they* die, they want to remain connected to *their* survivors.

That is the meaning of an אַחוּזָה which we have translated as ‘permanent’.

However, the word אַחוּזָה, literally means more than permanent. Rav Shimshon Rafael Hirsch on our verse, as well as elsewhere in the Torah, points out that this term really means ‘holding’ as those familiar with the Mishnah that opens Masseches Bava Metzia (2 a) writes:

שנים אוחזין בטלית...¹

Two people are holding a garment.

However, there is an important distinction between אַחוּזָה, as is written in that Mishnah, meaning ‘holding’ and אַחוּזָה as is written here in our Parsha.

The former term does mean ‘holding’, a person is holding on to an object.

The latter term אַחוּזָה, means ‘being held onto’; a person who is אַחוּזָה is being held by something else. It thus follows that the literal translation of אַחוּזָה קרקע is that the individual, Avraham Ovinu in the present instance, is being possessed by the land, not vice-versa.

Rav Hirsch expresses this idea thusly:

...אלא הבעל נאחז על - ידי החפץ; ואכן זו דרכה של נחלת קרקע. האדמה נושאת את בעליה, והוא נאסר בכבליה...

...rather the owner is grasped by the object. And, in fact, that is the nature of a permanent holding of land which is an inheritance. The land ‘carries’ its owner. The owner is bound to the land...¹

¹ As is well-known, like the Malbim and *HaKsav vHaKabbalah* who preceded him and Rav Dovid Tzvi Hoffman who succeeded him, Rav Hirsch’s commentary seeks to show the inherent connection between Torah ShebiChtav and the interpretations and the Masorah in Torah She Ba’al Peh.

With this explanation of אַחוּזָה, Rav Hirsch demonstrates the logic of a number of Halachos. One example of this is:

What does it mean for land to be passed on from generation to generation? If the original generation, the one that first acquired this land, is gone from this world for generations and centuries, who is passing it on? Rather, the individual and his descendants are bound to this object and it does not leave them² unless they decide to sever their tie to it by transferring ownership.

משום כך קרקעותיו של אדם אחראין לו

Because of this [literal meaning of אחוזה], we understand how and why a person's land serves to guarantee his debts.

That is, there is a Halachah that teaches of a case when a person has a debt and that after he incurred that debt he sold his land to a third party. If the debt becomes uncollectable because the borrower has no funds or property to cover the monies owed, the lender can go to the third party and demand that the land sold by the debtor should be used to pay off this debt.

Certainly, the Halachos are more involved than this brief presentation. But the general point is clear. The property is a guarantee for the debt. Or, more literally, the land is אחראית, 'responsible' to pay the debt.

Obviously, we cannot say that the land is 'responsible'. It is inanimate. It did not incur the debt; its owner did.

But, explains Rav Hirsch, if we see the owner being possessed by the land then the land becomes the owner in some sense and then the debt incurred by *its* possession – *its person* - is transferred to the owner who has a 'hold' upon the individual.

Rav Hirsch continues there with other Halachos that conceptually stem from this idea of the relationship between man and his land-possession.

² It is this very approach that Rav Hirsch uses to explain the verse at the end of Parshas Vayigash. We read there (B'reishis Perek 47/Posuk 27):

וַיֵּשְׁבּוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם בְּאֶרֶץ גֹּשֶׁן וַיֵּאָחֲזוּ בָּהּ וַיִּפְרוּ וַיִּרְבוּ מְאֹד:

Israel dwelled in the Land of Egypt, in the Land of Goshen, and they possessed and they were abundantly fruitful and multiplied.

Of course, the precise translation of this verse according to Rav Hirsch would be, 'they were possessed by the land. And it is that precise translation that Rav Hirsch uses to explain the fact that this verse foreshadows dire statements in Sefer Yechezkel. We read there (Perek 20/P'sukim 6-8);

This, explains *Nesivos Shalom* is the foundation of Avraham's request to purchase a permanent possession. Life does not conclude with death.

And that brings us to the question of 'why Machpelah'? Presumably, if the thesis of *Nesivos Shalom* is correct, any piece of property that Avraham Ovinu would have purchased as an *achuza* should meet the test. But, it is very clear that Avraham Ovinu had already chosen Machpelah as the desired place to bury Sarah l'meinu.

ביום ההוא נשאתי יְדִי לָהֶם לְהוֹצִיאֵם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם אֶל אֶרֶץ אֲשֶׁר תִּרְתִּי לָהֶם זָבַת חֵלֶב וְדָבַשׁ צָבִי
היא לְכֹל הָאֲרָצוֹת: וְאָמַר אֲלֵהֶם אִישׁ שְׁקוּצֵי עֵינָיו הַשְּׁלִיכוּ וּבְגִלּוּלֵי מִצְרַיִם אֶל תִּטְמְאוּ אֲנִי ה'
א...לִיקְיָם: וַיִּמְרוּ בִי וְלֹא אָבוּ לִשְׁמֹעַ אֵלַי אִישׁ אֶת שְׁקוּצֵי עֵינֵיהֶם לֹא הַשְּׁלִיכוּ וְאֶת גִּלּוּלֵי מִצְרַיִם לֹא
עָזְבוּ: וְאָמַר לְשַׁפֵּךְ חֲמָתִי עֲלֵיהֶם לְכָלוֹת אֹפִי בָהֶם בְּתוֹךְ אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם:

On that day I Hashem raised My hand [in an oath] to take them out from the Land of Egypt to the land that I scouted for them, flowing with milk and honey, desirous of all of the lands. And I said to them, 'Each person, the disgusting items [idols] of your eyes – cast away and with the idolatry of Egypt do not become impure; I am Hashem your G-d.' They rebelled against Me and they did not want to listen to Me, each person the disgusting items of their eyes they did not cast away and the idols of Egypt they did not forsake. And I Hashem said to pour out My wrath upon them, to finish off My anger upon them in the Land of Egypt.

Rav Hirsch writes in Parshas Vayigash:

ויאחזו בה: נאחזו ונאסרו לקרקע. הרי כאן רמז לאותו חטא, השמור לנו בדברי יחזקאל (פרק כ).
בהכרה המתוקה להתיישב ולהשתקע כאן, קרובה היתה הסכנה במשך הזמן לבגוד במסורת
השבט ולהתנכר לתעודתו הגדולה.

They possessed it – [It literally means] 'they were possessed by it'; they were tied to the Land [of Egypt].

We have here a hint for that sin that was preserved for us in Sefer Yechezkel Perek 20.

With the pleasant awareness of living and being settled here [in Egypt], the danger was very likely that over time they would come to act traitorously with the traditions of their tribe and to make themselves foreign to its goal.

[I feel the need to note, that although I did not plan it this way, this discussion of *Toras Rav Hirsch* is being written as I approach the city of Frankfurt, Germany where the Hirschian revolution occurred.]

In fact, the Zohar to our Parsha describes at length the negotiating tactics³ that Avraham Ovinu employed in order that Efron would not take advantage of the fact that Avraham had his mind set on that particular location⁴.

But the question is valid. Rashi has pointed out that there is nothing in the geographical location or the topology of Machpelah that makes it an inviting location.

When the Torah tells us of the *m'raglim* and Kalev in particular, it seems that it wishes to give us a history lesson. We read in Parshas Sh'lach Lecha (Perek 13/Posuk 22):

וַיַּעֲלוּ בְּנֵגֶב וַיָּבֹאוּ עַד חֶבְרוֹן וְשָׁם אַחִימָן שֵׁשִׁי וְתַלְמִי יְלִידֵי הָעֵנָק וְחֶבְרוֹן שִׁבְעַת שָׁנִים
נִבְנְתָה לְפָנָי צֶעַן מִצְרָיִם:

They went up in the south [of Eretz Yisroel] and he came to Chevron; there [lived] *Achiman, Shei'shai* and *Talmi*, the children of the giant; Chevron was built seven years prior to *Tzoan* in Egypt.

Rashi rejects the possibility that the Torah wanted to give us a history lesson and thus explains that the Torah is teaching that Chevron was far superior in quality than *Tzoan*, even though *Tzoan* was a symbol of Egypt's city-planning prowess.

What is the lesson to be learned? Rashi writes:

ובא להודיעך שבחה של ארץ ישראל, שאין לך טרשין בארץ ישראל יותר מחברון,
לפיכך הקצוה לקברות מתים

This verse is coming to let you know the praise of Eretz Yisroel. No place in Eretz Yisroel was rockier than Chevron and therefore it was set aside for the burial of the dead.

³ The Zohar wonders that if Avraham Ovinu was looking for any possible grave location, how could it be that he would want Sarah I'meinu to be buried with idolaters, טמאים, 'impure', in the language of the Zohar.

Thus, the Zohar concludes Avraham's failure to mention *Machpelah* from the outset was a tactic, not an end-goal.

⁴ As we know, despite his best efforts, Efron won that battle and did, at the end, take advantage of Avraham.

But, I imagine that the reader knows why Avraham Ovinu chose Machpelah – because it was *already* chosen.

We learn in Masseches Eiruvim (53 a):

...מאי מכפלה? - שכפולה בזוגות...אדם וחווה, אברהם ושרה, יצחק ורבקה, יעקב וראה

...Why is it called *Machpelah* – ‘double’? Because it was doubled with pairs [of spouses] Adam and Chava, Avraham and Sarah, Yitzchak and Rivka and Yaakov and Leah.

I don't know how much Avraham Ovinu knew the future in regard to who would be buried there in the future, but he did know that Odom and Chava were buried there.

That is, from the very beginning of history, Machpelah was designated as a burial place? And for whom? It is designated for the people about whom it is said in Parshas B'reishis (Perek 3/Posuk 22):

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ...לְקִיּוֹם הֵן הָאָדָם הָיָה כְּאֶחָד מִמֶּנּוּ לְדַעַת טוֹב וְרָע וְעֵתָהּ פֶּן יִשְׁלַח יְדוֹ וְלִקַּח גַּם מִעֵץ הַחַיִּים וְאָכַל וַחֲיֵי לְעֹלָם:

Hashem E...lokim said, ‘Behold the Odom has because like one of us to know good and bad; and now, lest he send his hand and also take from the Tree of Life and eat and live forever.

Man does not live forever – but he does not necessarily die forever either. What better place would there be to demonstrate the ongoingness of life than the burial place of the first living persons?

But it was not only the burial place chosen for Sarah I'meinu that indicates that the theme of our Parsha is life. The very way that the Torah describes the life of Sarah also points to the fact we celebrate the extraordinary life that she lived.

The Torah tells us of the age of Sarah in a way that is far from concise. We read at the beginning of our Parsha (B'reishis Perek 23/Posuk 1):

וַיְהִי־חַיֵּי שָׂרָה מֵאָה שָׁנָה וְעֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה וְשִׁבְעַת שָׁנִים⁵ שָׁנֵי חַיֵּי שָׂרָה:

The life of Sarah was one hundred years and twenty years and seven years, the years of the life of Sarah.

ויהיו חיי שרה מאה שנה ועשרים שנה ושבע שנים - לכך נכתב שנה בכל כלל וכלל, לומר לך שכל אחד נדרש לעצמו, בת מאה כבת עשרים לחטא, מה בת עשרים לא חטאה, שהרי אינה בת עונשין, אף בת מאה בלא חטא, ובת עשרים כבת שבע ליופי:

The life of Sarah was one hundred years and twenty years and seven years – Why was the word ‘year’ written after each summation of her years? It is to say to you that each summation of her years is to be interpreted on its own.

When Sarah was 100 years old she was like a twenty-year old in regard to sin: just like a twenty-year old hasn't sin, because the twenty-year old does not yet receive heavenly punishment, so Sarah at the age of one-hundred was not liable for heavenly punishment.

When Sarah was twenty-years old she was like a seven-year old in regard to beauty.

In her death, her life is celebrated. The impact of the greatness of Sarah I'meinu upon those who wish to be inspired by her life gains emphasis from the explanation given by my Rebbe Rav Aharon Soloveichik ZT"L.

The Rosh HaYeshiva asked: How can we extol the beauty of Sarah I'meinu by saying that at the age of twenty she was as beautiful as a seven-year old? Isn't it apparent that a grown woman who is truly beautiful will be far more so than a most pretty seven year old child?

⁵ Although in the English translation it is not apparent, it is striking that sometimes multiple years are expressed in the plural, as we would expect such as שבע שנים, seven years, that is noted here and unexpectedly as שנה, in the singular as in the first two instance of this verse where we read מאה שנה and עשרים שנה, one-hundred year(s) and twenty year(s), respectively.

The rule of *L'shon HaKodesh* is that 'days' and 'years' are written in the plural, ימים and שנים, respectively in regard to numbers one through ten. Past the number 'ten', they are written in the singular.

Rav Soloveichik explained that the Torah here is not coming to extol the beauty of Sarah l'meinu. It would seem inconceivable that such would be considered a virtue for which to write the epitaph of our first Matriarch?

Did we not learn (Mishlei Perek 31/Posuk 30):

שָׁקֵר הַחַן וְהַבֵּל הַיִּפִּי אִשָּׁה יִרְאֵת ה' הִיא תִתְהַלֵּל:

It is false to praise attractiveness and it is vanity to praise beauty; a woman who possesses awe of G-d, she should be praised.

Therefore Rav Soloveichik explained that the intent of the verse, as explained by Rashi is not to discuss Sarah's objective beauty. Rather the goal was to explain to us how Sarah l'meinu related to her beauty. Just like a seven-year who may be very pretty and her beauty is recognized by others – but she is unaware of her looks, so Sarah l'meinu, as a grown woman when others are very conscious regarding their looks – she was unaware!

Of course, the theme of 'life' is given strong and clear expression with the marriage of Yitzchak and Rivka. No one will disagree with that statement but it still remains to be investigated to what time-period of their marriage does that unopposed statement refer?

Perhaps some will say, the statement that reflects the theme of life regarding Yitzchak and Rivka was said when they married. That is indisputable. However, there is another statement that in some ways is even more powerful and it was made some three years prior to their marriage.

Immediately following the Akeida, the Torah writes in last week's Parshas Vayera (Perek 22/Posuk 20):

וַיְהִי אַחֲרֵי הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה וַיֵּגַד לְאַבְרָהָם לְאֵמֹר הִנֵּה יֵלְדָה מְלָכָה גַם הוּא בְּנִים לְנָחוֹר
אַחִיר:

It was after these things that it was told to Avraham saying, 'Behold, Milkah also she gave birth to Nochor, your brother.

The following verses list those who were born, including Rivka l'meinu.

Rashi writes:

אחרי הדברים האלה ויגד וגו' - בשובו מהר המוריה היה אברהם מהרהר ואומר אילו היה בני שחוט כבר היה הולך בלא בנים, היה לי להשיאו אשה מבנות ענר אשכול וממרא, בשרו הקדוש ברוך הוא שנולדה רבקה בת זוגו, וזהו אחרי הדברים האלה הרהורי דברים שהיו על ידי עקידה:

It was after these things, it was told etc. – with his return from Mt. Moriah, Avraham was thinking and saying, “If my son was actually killed, he would have died without children. I should have married him to one of the daughters of Oner, Eshkol or Mamre.’

At that moment Hashem let Avraham know that Rivka, the future wife of Yitzchak was born. That is the meaning of ‘after these things/words’- after these thoughts that arose because of the Akeida.

It is simple to say that a wedding is a celebration of life. It requires consideration to see in the statement of Avraham, which led to Hashem informing Avraham of Rivka’s birth, an affirmation that life is to continue, no matter what the circumstances were⁶.

⁶ At first, it may appear to be macabre to learn of Avraham’s words as he offered the ram that was in place of his son Yitzchak.

We read in Parshas Vayera (Perek 22/Posuk 13):

וַיִּשָּׂא אַבְרָהָם אֶת עֵינָיו וַיֵּרָא וְהִנֵּה אֵיל אַחֵר נֶאֱחָז בְּסֹבֵב בְּקִרְנָיו וַיִּלֶךְ אַבְרָהָם וַיִּקַּח אֶת הָאֵיל וַיַּעֲלֵהוּ לְעֹלָה תַּחַת בְּנוֹ:

Avraham raised his eyes and he saw and behold another ram was held by its horns in the bramble bush; Avraham went and he took the ram and he raised it as a burnt-offering in place of his son.

Rashi writes:

תחת בנו - מאחר שכתוב ויעלהו לעולה, לא חסר המקרא כלום, מהו תחת בנו, על כל עבודה שעשה ממנו היה מתפלל ואומר יהי רצון שתהא זו כאלו היא עשויה בבני, כאלו בני שחוט, כאלו דמו זרוק, כאלו הוא מופשט, כאלו הוא נקטר ונעשה דשן:

In place of his son Since the Torah wrote that Avraham brought the ram up as a burnt-offering, the Posuk is complete. What does ‘in place of his son’ come to teach?

The answer is that on each act of service that Avraham performed on the ram, he prayed to Hashem and said, ‘May it be Your Will that what is being done to the ram should be considered as if it was done to my son: as if my son was slaughtered, as if his blood was cast, as if he was flayed, as if he was put on the altar; as if he became ashes.

However, we can revisit the wedding of Yitzchak and Rivka and see a lesson that goes beyond 'they married'.

The Torah writes (Perek 24/Posuk 67):

וַיְבִאֶהָ יִצְחָק הָאֵהָלָה שָׂרָה אִמּוֹ וַיִּקַּח אֶת רִבְקָה וַתְּהִי לוֹ לְאִשָּׁה וַיִּיָּאֶהְבֶּה וַיִּנָּחֵם יִצְחָק
אֶחְרֵי אִמּוֹ:

Yitzchak brought her to the tent of his mother Sarah and he married Rivka and she became his wife and he loved her and Yitzchak was comforted after his mother.

Rashi writes:

האהלה שרה אמו - ויביאה האהלה ונעשית דוגמת שרה אמו, כלומר והרי היא שרה אמו, שכל זמן ששרה קיימת היה נר דלוק מערב שבת לערב שבת, וברכה מצויה בעיסה, וענן קשור על האהל ומשמתה פסקו, וכשבאת רבקה חזרו:

The tent of his mother Sarah – He brought her to the tent and she became the one who modeled after his mother Sarah.

This means to say, 'Rivka was his mother Sarah' – while Sarah was alive, the flame in her tent stayed lit from each Erev Shabbos to the next and the dough for bread was blessed [that even small amounts were satiating] and a Divine cloud was fixed above the tent; when Sarah died, all of this ceased.

When Rivka entered her tent, they all resumed.

It is possible to preserve the life-work of an individual even after their death.

The Piatzetzner Rebbe ZT”L Hashem Yikom Domo tells us that the letters of the name of יצחק can be rearranged to form two words חַי קץ, the 'end is life'.

That is, Avraham Ovinu Olov HaShalom understood that the Akeida was to be a merit for Israel for all generations.

When the Akeida was interrupted by the angel, Avraham Ovinu was not willing to forego that merit and thus he prayed to the Ribbono Shel Olom that his willingness to perform the Akeida should not be dismissed and his fealty to the rule of Hashem should be remembered for Israel for all generations as he offered the ram בְּנוֹ, in place of his son.

The telling of the death of Avraham Ovinu towards the conclusion of our Parsha certainly parallels that of Sarah I'meinu and intimates what we need to explore. We read toward the end of our Parsha:

וְאֵלֶּה יְמֵי שְׁנֵי חַיֵּי אַבְרָהָם אֲשֶׁר חָיָה מֵאֵת שָׁנָה וְשִׁבְעִים שָׁנָה וְחֲמִשׁ שָׁנִים:

These are the days of the life of Avraham Ovinu that he lived, one hundred years and seventy years and five years.

Rashi writes:

מאת שנה ושבעים שנה וחמש שנים - בן מאה כבן שבעים, ובן שבעים כבן חמשה
בלא חטא:

One hundred years and seventy years and five years – When he was one-hundred years old he was like a seventy-year old; when he was seventy he was like a five-year old without sin⁷.

The life of Avraham was celebrated at his death and that celebration was marked as well by a verse that may have surprised us.

We read (Perek 25/Posuk 9):

וַיִּקְבְּרוּ אֹתוֹ יִצְחָק וַיְשָׁמְעֵאל בְּנָיו אֶל מְעַרַת הַמַּכְפֵּלָה אֶל שְׂדֵה עֶפְרָן בֶּן צַחַר הַחִתִּי
אֲשֶׁר עַל פְּנֵי מַמְרֵא:

Yitzchak and Yishmael, his sons, buried Avraham in the Machpelah Cave, to the field of Efron ben Tzochar the Chittite that was facing Mamre:

Perhaps Yishmael's presence is surprising. Did we expect to see him participate at a 'Jewish funeral'?

⁷ See the various commentators on Rashi who discuss why no value is assigned to the 'seventy-year old' citation as well as why that even though in regard to Yishmael the same form of describing his age is used, Rashi does not bring any unique interpretation whatsoever.

The Posuk regarding Yishmael, found at the very end of our Parshas Chaye Sarah, reads (Perek 26/Posuk 17):

וְאֵלֶּה שְׁנֵי חַיֵּי יִשְׁמָעֵאל מֵאֵת שָׁנָה וְשָׁלְשִׁים שָׁנָה וְשִׁבְעִים שָׁנִים וַיָּגַע וַיָּמָת וַיֵּאָסֶף אֶל עַמּוּיוֹ:

These are the years of the life of Yishmael – one hundred years and thirty years and seven years; He died and he was ingathered to his people.

Rashi writes:

יצחק וישמעאל - מכאן שעשה ישמעאל תשובה והוליך את יצחק לפניו והיא שיבה טובה שנאמר באברהם:

Yitzchak and Yishmael – from here we learn that Yishmael did Teshuva and had Yitzchak go in front of him [even though Yishmael was older]. This is what ‘the good old age’ (Posuk 8) that was said about Avraham was referring.

The very fact that Yishmael allowed Yitzchak to take the lead in their father’s funeral was a true sign that Yishmael repented. In that act of allowing Yitzchak to take the lead, Yishmael acknowledged that it was Yitzchak who was to be their father’s successor.

And, we note in addition, the very fact that the Torah chose to write:

יצחק וישמעאל בָּנָיו

Yitzchak and Yishmael, his sons

indicates that at that moment the Torah allowed Yishmael to equally share the appellation of ‘son of Avraham’ together with Yitzchak Ovinu.

At *his* death, Avraham Ovinu was comforted with the thought that these two sons had the potential to continue his legacy, each in their own path.

However, it is not only our Parshas Chaye Sarah that provides us with the lesson that in death there is also life. Careful attention to the Haftarah that was chosen to accompany our Parshas Chaye Sarah provides us with a similar message.

Dovid HaMelech had reached the end of his life. His body was failing him. That is what we read (Melachim I Perek 1/Posuk 1):

וְהַמֶּלֶךְ דָּוִד זָקֵן בָּא בַיָּמִים וַיִּכְסְהוּ בַּבְּגָדִים וְלֹא יָחַם לוֹ:

King David was old, advanced in his days, they covered him with garments but it did not make it warm for him.

Dovid HaMelech was approaching his seventieth birthday which would fall on Shavuos. If the event described here was close to that date, which would also prove to be the date of his death, it was already summer time in Yerushalayim. Yet, he was unable to maintain an appropriate body temperature. Our king was dying.

We continue to read there (P'sukim 5-6):

וַאֲדֹנִיָּה בֶן חַגִּית מִתְנַשֵּׂא לֵאמֹר אֲנִי אֶמְלֹךְ וַיַּעַשׂ לוֹ רֶכֶב וּפָרָשִׁים וַחֲמִשִּׁים אִישׁ רָצִים
לְפָנָיו: וְלֹא עָצְבוּ אָבִיו מִיָּמָיו לֵאמֹר מִדּוּעַ כָּכָה עֹשֶׂיתָ וְגַם הוּא טוֹב תֹּאֵר מְאֹד וְאֹתוֹ
יִלְדָה אַחֲרַי אֲבָשְׁלוֹם:

[The son of Dovid HaMelech] Adoniyah ben Chagit raised himself saying, “I will rule’. He made for himself a chariot and horseman and fifty men running before him. His father never stopped or upset him saying, ‘Why do you do this?’; he also was very good-looking; his mother bore him after Avshalom.

All this was taking place behind the back of Dovid HaMelech, with ominous ramifications. In order to thwart those ramifications, Noson HaNovi and Batsheva, the wife of Dovid HaMelech, had to strategize, as we read (P'sukim 11-12):

וַיֹּאמֶר נֹתָן אֶל בֵּת שֶׁבַע אִם שְׁלֹמֹה יֵלְאֹמֶר הֲלוֹא שָׁמַעְתָּ כִּי מֶלֶךְ אֲדֹנִיָּהוּ בֶן חַגִּית וַאֲדֹנִינוּ
דָּוִד לֹא יָדַע: וְעַתָּה לְכִי אִיעֲצֶךָ נָא עֲצֵה וּמַלְטִי אֶת נַפְשְׁךָ וְאֶת נַפְשׁ בְּנֶךָ שְׁלֹמֹה:

Noson said to Batsheva, the mother of Shlomo, saying, ‘Have you not heard that Adoniyahu ben Chagit has taken the reign and our master Dovid does not know? Now, I will advise you counsel and you will save your life and the life of your son, Shlomo.’

The Novi was a strategist, a *Chochom*, in addition to his prophetic role and the means that he undertook were successful and thus we read (P'sukim 29-30):

וַיִּשָׁבַע הַמֶּלֶךְ וַיֹּאמֶר חִי ה' אֲשֶׁר פָּדָה אֶת נַפְשִׁי מִכָּל צָרָה: כִּי כַּאֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי לָךְ בַּה'
א... לְקִי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר כִּי שְׁלֹמֹה בְּנֶךָ יִמְלֹךְ אַחֲרַי וְהוּא יֵשֵׁב עַל כִּסְאִי תַחְתָּי כִּי כֵן
אֶעֱשֶׂה הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה:

The king made an oath and he said, ‘I take an oath by Hashem Who delivered my life from any trouble. Just as I took an oath to you [Batsheva] in the Name of Hashem, the G-d of Israel saying, “Shlomo your son will reign after me and he will sit on my throne in my place;” so will I do this day’.

If we have followed the life of Dovid HaMelech in Sefer Sh'muel, and now at the beginning of Sefer M'lachim, we know that it is an understatement to say that his life was not what we would call simple and unencumbered.

In addition to what we read in the Novi, even a casual reading of Sefer Tehilim reveals a life that seems in turmoil, beset by continuous troubles and challenges.

And now, in the last days of his life as his body succumbs, he is presented with another instance of personal tragedy as his now oldest son rebels against his father, taking advantage of his father's precarious state of health. And, as the Novi tells us there, so many of Dovid's would-be most trusted advisors and counsellors joined in this rebellion.

What does Dovid HaMelech say for himself?

ה' אֲשֶׁר פָּדָה אֶת נַפְשִׁי מִכָּל צָרָה

Hashem Who delivered my life from any trouble:

With these words, said when a new and momentous 'trouble' was besetting him, Dovid HaMelech did not give expression to his troubles per se. He certainly acknowledged this new 'trouble', but he praised Hashem for saving him from the past troubles and prayed to be spared from the potentially disastrous results of this new and final trouble of his life.

What courage! What sense of bitachon in HaKodosh Boruch Hu. What a powerful rebuttal to the physical demise that would soon be his lot.

With this understanding are we surprised to hear the reply that we read? We read (Posuk 31):

וַתִּקַּד בַּת שֶׁבַע אֶפְיִם אֶרֶץ וַתִּשְׁתַּחוּ לַמֶּלֶךְ וַתֹּאמֶר יְחִי אֲדֹנָי הַמֶּלֶךְ דָּוִד לְעֹלָם:

Batsheva prostrated herself to the ground and bowed before the king and she said, 'May my master the King David live forever!'

Certainly, Batsheva had no pretences that Dovid HaMelech was going to survive this final illness. Rather, in the promise of the reign of Shlomo and in the vigor of the king's response, Batsheva understood that the life of Dovid HaMelech would not cease with his physical death.

And thus we can understand that which we read in Masseches Rosh Hashanah (25 a):

אמר ליה רבי רבי חייא: זיל לעין טב וקדשיה לירחא, ושלח לי סימנא: דוד מלך ישראל חי וקים.

Rabi Yehuda HaNosi said to Rabi Chiya, 'Go to *Ein Tav* and sanctify the new month'. The *siman* that you will send me that you have accomplished this mission is:

דוד מלך ישראל חי וקים⁸

Dovid, King of Israel, is alive and vital!

Rashi writes:

דוד מלך ישראל - נמשל כלבנה, שנאמר בו (תהלים פט/לז-לח⁹) כסאו כשמש נגדי כירח יכון עולם.

Dovid, King of Israel – Dovid is compared to the moon about whom it says, 'Hashem's throne is like the sun opposite me; like the moon He has established the world.

זרעו לעולם יהיה, במלוכה.

His seed will be forever – in their reign.

וכסאו כשמש נגדי, כמו שהשמש הוא קיים לעולם כן זרעו במלוכה יהיה קיים לעולם:

His throne will be like the sun opposite me – Just as the sun exists forever, so will the seed of Dovid rule and be vital forever.

In Chutz La'aretz this past week there was a national tragedy that is felt personally by each and every one of us.

In Eretz Yisroel there was a devastating personal tragedy when an entire family of 8 people, 2 parents and their six young children were killed by a driver on drugs who ran into them in a head-to-head collision. That is a national tragedy as well.

We do not deny death; we do not repudiate tragedy and mourning. It is the reality.

⁸ And, based on this Gemara, the phrase דוד מלך ישראל חי וקים is incorporated into our month recitation of *Kiddush Levana*.

⁹ These verses read in their entirety:

זרעו לעולם יהיה וכסאו כשמש נגדי: כירח יכון עולם ועד בשחק נאמן סלה:
His seed will be forever and His throne will be like the sun opposite me. Like the moon He will establish the world; a trustworthy witness in the sky forever.

At the same time we do not see 'death' as a final point, not for the individual and certainly not for the nation.

In our grief and concern and worry, let us not forget what we just learned in Masseches Rosh Hashanah:

דוד מלך ישראל חי וקים

Dovid, King of Israel, is alive and vital!

B'sorot Tovot

Shabbat Shalom

Chodesh Tov U'movrach

Rabbi Pollock