

פרשת חיי שרה

It is most likely that everyone who is reading this Dvar Torah has been to a funeral; many have been to many funerals and some of us have had to arrange funerals.

Despite the above, I find it hard to imagine that anyone was ever at a funeral like the one with which our Parshas Chaye Sarah opens.

Now, many are familiar with the question that the meforshim raise about the order in which we read of the actions of Avraham Ovinu Olov Hashalom (B'reishis Perek 23/Posuk 2) at the death of Sarah l'meinu:

וַתָּמָת שָׂרָה בְּקִרְיַת אַרְבַּע הוּא חֶבְרוֹן בְּאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן וַיָּבֵא אַבְרָהָם לְסָפֵד לְשָׂרָה וּלְבַכְתָּהּ:

Sarah died in Kiryas Arba which is Chevron and Avraham came to eulogize Sarah and to cry for her.

Kli Yokor summarizes the difficulty that many of the commentators found in this verse. He writes here:

...בכל מקום הבכי קודם להספד וכאן מוחלפת השיטה, כי בכל מקום שלושה לבכי שבעה להספד (מועד קטן כז ב)

Always, crying precedes the eulogy and here the order is reversed. Everywhere there is three days for crying and seven days for eulogy as it says in Masseches Moed Koton.

The Gemara there (27 b) interprets the verse (Yirmiyahu Perek 22/Posuk 10):

אַל תִּבְכּוּ לְמֵת וְאַל תִּנְדְּדוּ לוֹ בְּכֹוּ בְּכֹוּ לְהִלֵּךְ כִּי לֹא יָשׁוּב עוֹד וְרָאָה אֶת אֶרֶץ מוֹלְדֹתוֹ:

Do not cry for the dead and do not move¹ for him; you shall surely cry for the one who goes because he will not return again and see the land of his birth².

The Gemara learns from this verse:

¹ The one who eulogizes may make very visible motions during the eulogy; the Novi cautions against that.

² The commentators teach that the specific reference is to the Kings of Yehuda prior to the destruction of the first Beis HaMikdosh.

אל תבכו למת ואל תנדו לו, אל תבכו למת - יותר מדאי ואל תנדו לו - יותר מכשיעור.
הא כיצד? שלשה ימים - לבכי, ושבעה - להספד,

*Do not cry for the dead and do not move for him – ‘do not cry for the dead’-
excessively and ‘do not move for him’ – more than the appropriate amount.
How is it to be done? Three days for crying and seven days for eulogy.*

Various answers are presented to resolve this question. But it seems that another question may have been ignored. And that takes us to our statement that the funeral of Sarah I’meinu was unique.

What was that uniqueness?

Imagine being at a funeral, the mourners are present as well as those who came to give *kovod* to the deceased and to bring comfort to the mourners. Tears are shed; eulogies are recited.

Imagine if following the tears and eulogies the lead mourner would say: I will now go and arrange the burial!

Shocking, yes? Incomprehensible, correct?

But that is what happened some 3695 years ago as we read (ibid. P’sukim 3-4):

וַיִּקָּם אַבְרָהָם מֵעַל פְּנֵי מֵתוֹ וַיְדַבֵּר אֶל בְּנֵי חֵת לֵאמֹר: גֵּר וְתוֹשָׁב אָנֹכִי עִמָּכֶם תָּנוּ לִי
אַחֲזִית קֶבֶר עִמָּכֶם וְאֶקְבְּרָה מֵתִי מִלְפָּנַי:

Avraham arose from over his deceased and he spoke to the Hittites saying: I am a stranger and a resident with you; give me a permanent burial place with you and I will bury my deceased from before me.

How are we to understand this absence of appropriate order? There is a Mitzvah to bury the dead as quickly as possible and to avoid unnecessary delays. The prohibition of delaying the burial is called *הלנת המת*, literally leaving the ‘dead overnight’.

That prohibition is learned from the Posuk in Parshas Ki Setze. We read there

לֹא תִלִּין נַבְלָתוֹ עַל הָעֵץ כִּי קְבוּרַתְוֹ בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא כִּי קָלִילָתָא...לִקִּים תָּלוּי וְלֹא
תִטְמֵא אֶת אֲדָמָתְךָ אֲשֶׁר הִיא...לִקִּיךָ נִתַּן לְךָ נַחְלָה:

Do not leave the dead body on the wood but you should surely bury him on that day because it is a curse of G-d that is hanging³; do not defile your land that Hashem your G-d gives to you as an inheritance.

In Masseches Sanhedrin we learn that the body that is hanged is put in that position immediately before sunset so that when sunset arrives it is removed. Therefore לא תלין does not mean only 'not to leave the body overnight' but it means not even to leave it 'into the night'.

Therefore, as we know, before the hespedim take place the burial site is arranged and prepared so that as soon as the eulogies are completed the body can be taken and placed in its permanent site⁴. Would we not have expected Avraham Ovinu to have made certain that the burial would proceed unimpeded and then begin the funeral with his eulogies?

To approach an understanding of the events that occurred and why they occurred we must first relate to the nature of the *hesped*-eulogy.

³ The context of this Posuk is a person who has been killed by Beis Din and whom the Torah requires that his body be displayed by Halachic 'hanging'. The Halachah is that he is 'hanged' for a brief moment and then buried by sundown. If even if this person must be buried immediately, certainly those who die not by a Beis Din punishment must be buried quickly.

⁴ I will never forget the funeral of Rav Moshe Soloveichik ZT"l of Zurich. Rav Soloveichik was brought from Switzerland to Eretz Yisroel following his death in Iyar, 1995. The hespedim were after midnight in Mattersdorf at Yeshivas Torah Or. Even at that late hour there were some 10,000 people on the sidewalks and the streets. The police had repeatedly requested that people stand on the sidewalks and not on the street so that emergency vehicles could access the location in case of need. The crowd was not so responsive and the police delayed the start of the funeral.

After about 20 minutes of police cajoling without success, the Rosh HaYeshiva the Gaon Rav Chaim Pinchas Sheinberg ZT"l approached the microphone and said in a loud, but broken voice, 'Everyone, must move to the sidewalks and adhere to the directions. You are preventing the funeral from proceeding and you do not know how much *tzaar* and pain that you are causing the niftar by not allowing him to be buried as swiftly as possible!'

With these words, the crowd immediately found their proper place and the funeral began.

We read in Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Deah (Siman 344/s'if 10):

מי שצוה שלא יספדוהו שומעין לו.

If someone instructed that no eulogies should be recited for him after his death – we listen to him [and no eulogies are to be recited]⁵.

It could very well be that in such an instance the family wants eulogies to be said. They may want the eulogies to be said because they feel that such would be the honor due the deceased or, perhaps, they will be embarrassed if they are perceived as not giving proper honor to their relative.

Nonetheless, the Halachah (Masseches Taanis 21 a) reminds us that

מצוה לקיים דברי המת

One is obligated to fulfill the wishes of the deceased.

The application of this principle in an instance when the deceased had instructed not to eulogize him is found in Masseches Sanhedrin 46 b.

The Gemara queries:

איבעיא להו: הספידא, יקרא דחיי הוי או יקרא דשכבי הוי? - למאי נפקא מינה? דאמר לא תספדוהו להווא גברא. אי נמי - לאפוקי מיורשין.

There was a question to the *talmidim* in the Beis HaMidrash: Is the purpose of a eulogy to give honor to the living or to give honor to the dead? What is the difference – in any case a eulogy is said? The difference between these two reasons would be if the deceased had given instructions that he should not be eulogized. Another difference is whether the heirs have to pay the wages of one who was hired to eulogize.

Of course, a *hesped* can serve both functions, honoring the dead by describing his merits and the way in which his life can be an inspiration to others. It can honor

⁵ The Rama writes there:

אבל אם צוה שלא לנהוג עליו שבעה וגזירת שלשים, אין שומעין לו:

But if a person instructed that the mourners should not observe the 7 and 30 days of mourning, *shiva* and *shloshim*, we do not listen to him [and the mourners observe *shiva* and *shloshim*.]

the living by adding importance to the family of the deceased, encouraging the community to comfort them.

However, if the purpose of the eulogy is primarily to honor the dead, then the deceased can defer that honor. At the same time, if that is the purpose of the *hesped*, to honor the dead, then the deceased retains that right even after his death to be properly eulogized and his heirs, those who inherit his estate, can be required by Beis Din to provide a proper funeral, and pay all of its attendant expenses, from the funds that they received as their inheritance.

The Gemara brings many proofs that the purpose of the *hesped* is יקרא דשכבי, to give honor to the deceased. The very first proof is from our Parsha. The Gemara writes:

- תא שמע: ויבא אברהם לספד לשרה ולבכתה, ואי אמרת משום יקרא דחיי הוא - משום יקרא דאברהם משהו לה לשרה?

Come and hear – the Posuk says, ‘Avraham came to eulogize Sarah and to cry over her’. If the reason for the *hesped* was to give honor to the living, to Avraham – is that a reason to post the burial of Sarah – for the benefit of her survivors?

The Gemara finds a reason to show that this proof, and the others that follow it, is inconclusive. But the conclusion there final proof is:

שמע מינה: יקרא דשכבי הוא, שמע מינה.

We hear from this – the *hesped* is to give honor to the deceased. That is what hear from this⁶.

Thus, we understand why an instruction given by the deceased not to have *hespedim* is honored, even when the surviving family objects⁷.

⁶ According to the style in which the *Talmud Bavli* was written, a Halachic statement preceded by and concluded with the phrase שמע מינה, we hear from this, indicates a Halachic decision.

⁷ We mentioned above, in note 5, that if the deceased would instruct his survivors that the Halachic mourning periods, *aveilus*, should not be observed, we ignore those instructions. The *shiva* and *shloshim*, the seven and thirty mourning periods are observed no matter.

And thus, the *hesped* for Sarah l'meinu was certainly in her honor and the burial could be delayed until after the *hesped*, but the question remains – why didn't Avraham Ovinu arrange for the burial prior to his eulogy so that immediately following the requisite eulogies she could be brought to her resting place?

Midrash HaGodol comments on the Posuk:

וַיִּקָּם אַבְרָהָם מֵעַל פְּנֵי מֵתוֹ וַיְדַבֵּר אֶל בְּנֵי חֵת לֵאמֹר:

Avraham arose from over his deceased and he spoke to the Hittites saying.

The Midrash writes:

אין דבור אלא לשון תנחומין כמא דאת אמר (ישעיה מ/ב⁸) דברו על לב ירושלים. מגיד הכתוב שכשהיתה שרה קימת היו אנשי המדינה מצליחין בכל דרכיהם, כיון שמתה אפס כל יופי ונתבלבלו כולם. עמדו כולם בבכייה ואבל וצרה עד שעמד אברהם אבינו ודבר על ליבם ואמר, בניי אל ירע לכם, כך הוא מנהג העולם לצדיקים ולרשעים שנאמר (קוהלת ט/ב⁹) הכל אשר לכל מקרה אחד לצדיק ולרשע אלא לרצונכם שמתנו לי מקום קבורה ולא בחינם אלא בדמים ודיבר להם בלשון רכה.

The reason for not attending to the wishes of the deceased in this case is that mourning is not for the deceased alone. There is an obligation upon the living, the immediate family members to mourn; the deceased's instructions cannot eliminate the obligations of his family members.

It should be noted though that there is a distinction between the *shiva* and *shloshim* mourning periods which are incumbent upon all mourners and the twelve-month mourning period that is incumbent upon the children of the deceased only.

That latter mourning period was instituted as part of the Mitzvah of **אב ואם**, honoring one's parents, and it applies even after death. There are many *Poskim* who say that if the deceased instructed that that period not be observed, we follow his instructions because, unlike the *Shiva* and *Shloshim*, the 12 month mourning is to honor the deceased and the deceased can decline that honor.

⁸ The entire verse reads:

דַּבְּרוּ עַל לֵב יְרוּשָׁלַם וְקִרְאוּ אֵלֶיהָ כִּי מְלָאָה צָבָאָה כִּי נִרְצָה עֲוֹנָהּ כִּי לָקְחָה מִיַּד ה' כְּפָלִים בְּכָל חַטָּאתֶיהָ:

Speak upon the heart of Yerushalayim, call to it; because its host is full, because its sin has been appeased; because it took from the Hand of G-d double for all of its sins.

⁹ The entire verse reads:

Dibbur is an expression of consolation¹⁰. That is as we say ‘Speak to the heart of Yerushalayim [and offer comfort].’

הַכֹּל כְּאִשֶּׁר לְכָל מְקָרָה אֶחָד לְצַדִּיק וְלְרָשָׁע לְטוֹב וְלְרָע וְלְטָמֵא וְלְזָבֵחַ וְלְאִשֶּׁר אֵינָנוּ זֹבְחֵי כְּטוֹב
כְּחֹטָא הַנְּשָׁבַע כְּאִשֶּׁר שְׂבוּעָה יֵרָא:

Everything is for all; one event occurs for the righteous and for the wicked, for the good, for the pure, for the impure, for the one who brings offerings and for the one who does not bring offerings; like for the good, like for the sinner, like for the one who takes oaths and like for the one who is afraid to take an oath.

¹⁰ This statement may seem surprising. In general, we find that *dibbur* is used to connote harsh speech. That is what the Midrash (Lekach Tov, Parshata 6) writes at the beginning of Parshas Vo'eira:

אין דבור אלא לשון קשה

Dibbur is only an expressing of harsh language.

The Midrash is commenting on the opening verse in that Parsha (Sh'mos Perek 6/Posuk 2) that reads:

וַיְדַבֵּר אֲלֵי...לְקִים אֶל מֹשֶׁה וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו אֲנִי ה'.

Hashem spoke (*dibbur*) to Moshe and He said (*a'mira*) to him, 'I am Hashem'.

As surprising as the *drasha* of Midrash HaGodol on our Parsha may be, it is certainly has precedents.

See for example Midrash Tanchuma at the beginning of Parshas Acharei Mos that writes:

ואין דבור אלא ניחומים, כדאת אמרת דברו על לב ירושלים וגו'.

Dibbur is only an expression of comfort, at it says, 'Speak upon the heart of Yerushalayim, etc.'

Regarding the Posuk in Parsha Voera, Rashi writes:

וידבר א...ל'קים אל משה - דבר אתו משפט על שהקשה לדבר ולומר (שמות ה/כב) למה הרעותה לעם הזה:

G-d spoke to Moshe – Hashem spoke to Moshe with judgment because Moshe spoke harshly when he said, 'Why have You done bad to this people?'

Sifsei Chachamim writes there:

דייק מדכתיב א...ל'קים שהוא מדת הדין. אי נמי יש לומר דרש"י דייק מדכתיב וידבר לשון קשה הוא. רא"ם. ואל תקשה לך דהא הרבה פעמים כתיב בתורה וידבר ה' אל משה לאמר ואין פירושו לשון קשה דיש לומר דהתם כתיב אחריו לאמר ואם כן וידבר הוי כלל ולאמר הוא פרט שמפרש מה הוא הכלל דהיינו הדבור אבל כאן אין כתיב אחריו לאמר דוידבר אליו אני ה' דכתיב כאן לאו פרט של וידבר הוא אלא מלתא באפי נפשיה הוא דקאי על מה שאמר משה למה זה שלחתי כדמפרש רש"י. (מהרש"ל) מדכתיב אחריו אני ה' היפך זה לכך דרשו פה ולא במקומות אחרים:

This verse [that implies that Avraham spoke words of comfort to the Hittites] teaches that when Sarah was living, the people of that country were successful in all of their ways. When Sarah died, all the beauty of the country dissipated and all of the people became confused and Avraham offered them consolation.

They all stood and cried and were mournful and in distress until Avraham stood before them and spoke to their hearts and said, 'My sons, this should not be bad for you because such is the way of the world for the righteous and the wicked as it says, "Everything happens to all, one event is for the righteous and for the wicked". But, is it your will that you will give me a place for burial – but not for free – but for money?'

He spoke with them softly.

Rashi's explanation that Hashem spoke to Moshe 'with judgment' is based on the implication of the use of the Name E...lokim which refers to the Divine attribute of law [in contrast to mercy].

Another explanation is that Rashi saw the emphasis stemming from the word *Va'yedaber* which is a harsh word for 'speaking' – that is the explanation of the Mizrachi.

You should not question the fact that many times the Torah writes Hashem spoke (*dibbur*) to Moshe saying (*amira*) and it does not mean that He spoke harshly. The explanation is that in other places after *dibbur* it says *leimor*, as in 'Hashem said to him, I am Hashem'. And thus, *vayedaber* is a general statement that is specified by *Amira* – which is not harsh and that teaches that the *dibbur* in those places is also not harsh.

But here, there is no word *leimor* and the phrase that follows, 'He said (*Amira*) to him, 'I am Hashem' is not a specification of the word *vayedaber* at the beginning of the verse, but an independent statement that refers back to what Moshe said, 'why did You send me?', as Rashi explains.

Maharshal explains that that since following the opening phrase of *Vayedaber* it says 'I am Hashem', implying mercy, that is in distinction to the opening phrase of *vayedaber* and that is why here *vayedaber* is interpreted as harsh speaking, but not in other places.

However, this Midrash needs further explanation and explication. What is the flow of the words of comfort that Avraham Ovinu shares with the Hittites that lead to his request for a burial place for Sarah I'meinu?

When I read the P'sukim in our Parsha that 'Avraham arose' from his eulogy, I originally understood it as being a separate phase, unrelated to the *hesped*. However, the Midrash ties the two parts, *hesped* and request for a grave, into one phase.

What is the connection?

The commentary of Chasam Sofer (*Chasam Sofer al HaTorah* Parshas Chaye Sarah d.h. *ger v'so'shov* 5560), based on a section of Ramban here will help us understand the events that occurred after the death of Sarah I'meinu.

Ramban is commenting on Posuk 4 that reads:

גַּר וְתוֹשֵׁב אֲנִי עִמָּכֶם תָּנוּ לִי אַחֲזֵת קֶבֶר עִמָּכֶם וְאֶקְבְּרָה יְמֵי מִלְפָּנַי:

I am a stranger and a resident with you; give me a permanent burial place as with you and I will bury my deceased from before me.

Ramban presents the following scenario:

גר ותושב אנכי עמכם - היה המנהג להיות להם בתי קברות, איש לבית אבותיו, ושדה קבורה אחד יקברו בו כל הגרים. והנה אברהם אמר אל בני חת, אני גר מארץ אחרת ולא הנחלתי מאבותי בית הקברות בארץ הזאת, והנה עתה אני תושב עמכם, כי חפצתי לשבת בארץ הזאת, ולכן תנו קבר להיות לי לאחזת עולם כאחד מכם,

I am a stranger and a sojourner with you – The custom was that there were separate cemeteries for each family line. There was field designated to bury strangers-foreigners. Behold, Avraham said to the Hittites, 'I am a stranger/foreigner from another land and I did not have an inheritance of a cemetery from my ancestors in this land. But now I am a *toshav* – I am a citizen here with you because I wish to dwell in this land. Therefore, [I request] that you give me a permanent cemetery like every one of you has¹¹.

¹¹ Ramban continues to explain the unfolding of the event based on the response of the Hittites to his request. That response (Posuk 6) reads:

שָׁמְעוּ אֲדֹנָי נְשִׂיא אֲנִי...לִקְיָם אֶתְּהָ בְּתוֹכֵנוּ בְּמִבְחָר קִבְרֵינוּ קֶבֶר אֶת מֵתְךָ אִישׁ מִמֶּנּוּ אֶת קִבְרוֹ לֹא יְכַלֶּה מִמֶּךָ מִקֶּבֶר מֵתְךָ:

Chasam Sofer writes:

גר ותושב אנכי עמכם – פירוש כי הם הקפידו שלא לקבור איש נכרי בקברם כמו שכתב הרמב"ן, והוא פתיות שכל זמן שהאדם חי על פני האדמה הרי הוא גר גם בארץ מולדתו, וכשמת האדם הרי הוא תושב בכל מקום על דרך שאמרו חז"ל בפרק קמא דמועד קטן (ט ב) לחרוב ביתך וליתוב אושפיזך ואם כן מה טעם לומר שלא יקברו נכרי בקבורתם והיינו דאמר אברהם אבינו מעליו השלום גר ותושב אנכי עמכם פירוש גם אנכי גם אתם שנינו גרים וגם תושבים, בעולם הזה הרינו גרים, ולאחר מיתה שנינו תושבים, על כן תנו לי אחזת קבר עמכם.

I am a stranger and a sojourner with you – The explanation is that the Hittites were very particular not to bury a foreigner in their graves, as Ramban wrote. Such an attitude is foolish because as long as a person lives on the face of the land he is a stranger in the land of his birth and when a person dies becomes a sojourner wherever he will be as Chazal said, 'Destroy your house and make a place for the guest to live'¹². If so, what reason is there to say that a foreigner should not be buried in their graves?

Hear us, master –you are a prince of G-d in our midst, bury your dead in the best of our graves; no one among us will withhold his grave from you from burying your dead.

Ramban tells us to understand the dialogue as follows:

ומפני שאמר "תנו", חשבו שבקש אותה מהם במתנה, וענו אותו אינך נחשב בעינינו כגר ותושב, אבל אתה מלך, המליכך הא...ל"קים עלינו ואנחנו ואדמתנו עבדים לך, תקח כל בית הקברות שתחפוץ בו וקבור מתך שם, ויהיה לך לאחזת קבר לעולם, כי איש ממנו לא ימנעהו ממך:
Because Avraham said 'give the burial site' the Hittites thought that Avraham was requesting a gift. Their response was that they did not consider Avraham as a stranger/foreigner and sojourner. They said to him 'but you are a king that G-d appointed you as a king over us and we and our lands are in servitude to you. Take any cemetery that you wish and bury your dead there and you will have a permanent cemetery, because no one among us will prevent you from burying your dead.'

¹² Rashi explains there that the 'house' is the grave and those words were expressed as a blessing that a person should not die and need his 'house'. Rather he should continue to live.

Chazal expressed the burial place as being one's 'home' – implying permanence and prior to death one is a 'guest' – implying lack of permanence.

And that is what Avraham said, 'I am a stranger and a sojourner *with you*. That means that both you and I are both strangers and sojourners. In this world we are strangers and after death we are all sojourners. Therefore, I ask for a permanent cemetery with you.

It may seem strange to think of Avraham Ovinu presenting a philosophical/theological argument to the Hittites. We certainly do not have a sense of their being a community of intellectuals that were ready to contemplate man's place on earth and his existence in life and in death.

Of course, it is true that Avraham wanted to spread the true Divine message throughout Eretz Yisroel but it hardly seems that this was the proper time to do anything other than to assure the swift burial of Sarah I'meinu.

But the explanation seems to be that the *hesped* that Avraham delivered was a requisite prelude to his seeking a burial place for Sarah I'meinu.

The Midrash that was cited taught that Sarah I'meinu's life provided a bountiful blessing for all those who surrounded her, whether they knew her or not.

We already saw the blessing that she brought at the birth of Yitzchak Ovinu. When her nasty neighbors and guests questioned the maternity of Yitzchak, whether Sarah really did give birth to him or did she adopt some abandoned baby, she was able to nurse many children, proving conclusively that she had given birth.

At the end of the Parsha we learn (Rashi to Perek 24/Posuk 67) that one of the blessings that Sarah I'meinu brought to her home was that

ברכה מצויה בעיסה

The dough that she baked into bread contained a special *brachah*.

Bracha implies bounty. The food that Sarah I'meinu had was bountiful in terms of the fact that even a small amount brought satiation. That uniqueness was not limited to her home alone, says the Midrash. It was shared with others.

And thus it seems strange that despite the gratitude that the Hittites had for Sarah I'meinu, despite their recognition of the blessings that she brought them, there was a strong measure of recalcitrance and refusal to allow her burial. The Hittites cried but that did not change their mind.

Therefore, Avraham Ovinu undertook a two-part campaign to obtain the proper burial for his wife.

The first part of that campaign was personal. It was to remind the Hittites of the goodness of Sarah I'meinu, the benefits that she provided that and not let find excuses to ignore the proper response to her death – by a willingness to allow Avraham Ovinu to bury Sarah I'meinu in the plot that he chose.

We may term that first step as 'emotional outreach'. There was certainly no manipulation on the part of Avraham Ovinu. All that he said was true and the Hittites knew it. But the message had to sink in.

And for those for whom the 'emotional outreach' was not moving enough, Avraham Ovinu presented an intellectual approach that would perhaps convince those who did not wish to allow emotional arguments to break the long-standing traditions that they followed.

[Of course, the end result was that Avraham was able to obtain the portion of land that he wished, but only after paying an outlandish price.]

If this approach, synthesizing the Midrash, Ramban and Chasam Sofer is correct, it will answer the famous questions noted at the very beginning of these words and the secondary question that we posed.

- Crying should precede the eulogy, not come afterwards. Why is the order here different?
- Whoever heard of a eulogy being delivered and then followed by making arrangements for burial?

The answer that we can suggest is that the eulogy that Avraham delivered for Sarah I'meinu was not a eulogy only for the purpose of giving her the proper *kavod* that she deserved.

Avraham Ovinu used the *hesped* that he delivered to be a means by which the Hittites would allow him to bury her in the grave that he had chosen. And, certainly, that would be exceptional *k'vod ha'meis* – bringing honor to the dead.

Avraham Ovinu did not involve himself in the purchase of the grave before delivering his *hesped* because it was impossible to do so. The *hesped* itself was to

be a vehicle through which he would attempt to persuade the Hittites to cooperate with him.

And, if this is so, we understand why the order of crying and eulogy was reversed here.

A person cries first to release his emotions in order that he will be able to deliver a more orderly eulogy. Avraham Ovinu had no time to release his emotions. The burial of Sarah took precedence and the means to enable that burial took precedence and thus the *hesped* had to come first.

Had Avraham cried prior to the *hesped* he would have been postponing his wife's burial that was to have taken place as immediately as possible.

It may certainly appear that this explanation stretches our understanding and that it may be far from what is apparent in the Parsha.

However, Midrash Tanchuma on our Parsha (Parshata 3) lends strength to our hypothesis. The beginning of that section reads:

זה שאמר הכתוב אשת חיל מי ימצא (משלי לא/י), הדברים על מי נאמרו, לפי שכתוב למעלה ויבא אברהם לספוד לשרה ולבכותה (בראשית כג/ב), התחיל בוכה ומספיד, ואמר אימתי יש לי ליטול כיוצא בך, אשת חיל זו שרה, שנאמר הנה נא ידעתי כי אשה יפת מראה את (בראשית יב/יא¹³). ורחוק מפנינים מכרה, שבאת ממרחק, שנאמר קורא ממזרח עיט מארץ מרחק איש עצתי (ישעיה מו/יא¹⁴).

¹³ The entire verse reads:

וַיְהִי כִּשְׂאֵר הַקְּרִיב לְבוֹא מִצְרַיִם וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל שָׂרַי אִשְׁתּוֹ הִנֵּה נָא יָדַעְתִּי כִּי אִשָּׁה יְפֹת מְרֹאֶה אַתְּ:
When Avraham approached Egypt he said to Sarai his wife, 'behold now I know that you are a beautiful woman.'

¹⁴ The entire verse reads:

קָרָא מִמְּזָרְח עֵיט מֵאֶרֶץ מְרֹחֵק אִישׁ עֲצָתִי אֶף דְּבַרְתִּי אֶף אֲבִיאַנָה יְצַרְתִּי אֶף אֶעֱשֶׂנָה:
He calls from the east, advice from a distant land, the man of My counsel; I also spoke; I also brought him; I formed him I will also make him.

Rashi writes there:

קורא ממזרח עיט - מארץ ארם שהיא במזרח קראתי לי את אברהם להיות נמלך בעצתי...
He calls advice from the east – From the Land of Aram which is in the east. I Hashem called Avraham to take advice from My counsel.

That which the Posuk writes, 'A woman of valor, who can find?' About whom were these words said? Since it says above in our Parsha, 'Avraham came to eulogize Sarah and to cry for her', Avraham began to cry and eulogize¹⁵.

He said, 'When can I take a wife like you?' [The words] *eishes chayil* refer to Sarah as it says, 'Behold I know that you are a beautiful woman.'

[The continuation of the verse reads] 'Her value far outdistances pearls.' This also refers to Sarah who came [to Eretz Yisroel] from a great distance as it says, 'Hashem calls from the east, advice from a distant land, the man of My counsel.'

Midrash Tanchuma continues and interprets each Posuk and phrase of *Eishel Chayil*¹⁶ as referring to Sarah I'meinu.

The Midrash interprets this verse (Posuk 16):

זָמְמָה שָׂדֵה וַתִּקְחֶהּ מִפְּרֵי כַפֵּיהָ נָטְעָה כָּרֶם:

She initiated thought about the field and she took it; from the fruit of her hands she planted the vineyard.

The Midrash writes:

מרחק - קראתי לאיש עצתי ועמו יעצתי בין הבתרים ארבע גליות כמו שמפורש בבראשית רבה (בראשית טו/יב) והנה אימה חשיכה גדולה וגו':

A distance – I Hashem called to the man of My counsel and with him I consulted at *Bris bein HaBesorim* regarding the four exiles as it is written in Midrash B'reishis Rabba on the verse, 'behold fright, great darkness.'

אף דברתי - עמו הגליות וגאולתן אף אביאנה:

I also spoke – with Avraham regarding the exiles and their redemption. I will also bring him.

¹⁵ We note that the Midrash writes that the 'crying' preceded the eulogy.

¹⁶ Mishlei Perek 31/P'sukim 10-31.

זממה שדה ותקחהו, שעד שהיא בחיים זממה ליטול את מערת המכפלה, ותקחהו שהרי נקברה בה. מפרי כפיה נטעה כרם, שנאמר ויטע אשל (בראשית כא/לג¹⁷), מהו ויטע, כמו דאת אמרת ויטע כרם (בראשית ט/כ¹⁸).

She initiated thought about the field - While Sarah was yet alive she thought to take *Meoras HaMachpelah*, and she took it – because she was buried there.

From the fruit of her hands she planted a vineyard – As it says, Avraham planted an *eishel* tree. What does *planted* imply? We learn from the verse ‘*he planted a vineyard*’.

The Midrash does not explain what that ‘vineyard’ of Eishes Chayil was and its purpose.

In his notes to the Midrash, Rav Shlomo Buber¹⁹ who edited an edition of the Tanchuma among many other works, shares variant texts that explain this *kerem*-

¹⁷ The entire verse reads:

וַיִּטַע אֶשֶׁל בְּבֵאֵר שֶׁבַע וַיִּקְרָא שָׁם בְּשֵׁם ה' א... ל עוֹלָם:
He planted an eishel in B'er Sheva and he proclaimed there the Name of Hashem, G-d eternal.

Rashi explains there:

אשל - רב ושמואל, חד אמר פרדס להביא ממנו פירות לאורחים בסעודה, וחד אמר פונדק לאכסניא ובו כל מיני פירות.

Eishel – Rav and Shmuel disputed. One said that *eishel* means an orchard from which Avraham would give his guests fruit for their meal. One says that it was guest house that had much fruit.

¹⁸ The entire verse reads:

וַיַּחַל נֹחַ אִישׁ הָאֲדָמָה וַיִּטַע כָּרְם:
Noach, a man of the ground, profaned and he planted a vineyard.

¹⁹ In the 19th Century, alongside the *Haskalah*, a group of scholars formed a group called מקיצי נרדמים – ‘they who awaken those who slumber’.

The נרדמים, those who slumber, were Sefarim, often manuscripts, that were ignored for centuries or had texts that had many errors. With their scholarship, they edited and published corrected editions with copious notes that expressed unique and comprehensive erudition.

vineyard. One text brings a verse from Yeshaya Perek 5. That Perek describes the song of one who works his vineyard with care and devotion and performs all of the necessary actions to make it successful. The Novi then explains why he wrote these descriptive sentences about a vineyard and its care:

כִּי כָרַם ה' צְבָאוֹת בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאִישׁ יְהוּדָה נָטַע שְׁעֵשׂוּעִיו וַיִּקֹּוּ לְמִשְׁפָּט וְהִנֵּה מִשְׁפַּח
לְצַדִּיקָה וְהִנֵּה צָעֲקָה:

Because the vineyard of Hashem of hosts is the House of Israel; a man from Yehuda planted it with pleasure and he hoped that they would act justly but behold they turned from righteousness and there was an outcry.

According to this text, in Avraham's *hesped* for her, Sarah I'meinu is inaugurating G-d's vineyard upon the land. She is preparing it, nurturing it and removing that which would interfere with its growth.

She nurtured it by raising Yitzchak and removed the interferences by banishing Yishmael.

And in this *hesped*, sanctified by Shlomo HaMelech in Sefer Mishlei, Meoras HaMachpela, representing the history of Israel and its founding fathers, is eternally connected with its future – the vineyard that was tended with care, concern and intelligence that was to produce Am Yisroel.

Yes, in the path of history there were disappointments and outcry. Even today, more than 3,500 years later, there are disappointments as we know so well.

But, we are empowered by *ישני חברון*, those who slumber in the Machpelah. There is no question that when we daven to the G-d of our Fathers and Mothers that their *z'chus* stands with us throughout the generations.

Our Parshas Chaye Sarah connects our past with our present and our future.

May we merit speedily in our days to see the complete fruition of the hopes and aspirations of Sarah I'meinu and all of Ovos and I'mahos.

Shabbat Shalom

Reb Shlomo Buber was one of the prime members of that illustrious group from whom we continue to benefit to this day.

Chodesh Tov

Rabbi Pollock