



Parshas Chayei Sarah 2018, response to a tragedy

This week's Parsha Perspective is dedicated in memory of Shlomo Ben Edward, and Yosef Ben Zev Wolf. May their souls be uplifted and their memories a blessing.

Our Parsha begins with the passing of Sarah at 127 years old. Avraham negotiated with Ephron to buy a plot of land in Chevron, known as Mearas HaMachpelah for 400 shekels, to use as a family burial plot for the next generations.

When Avraham finished mourning for Sarah, he sent his most trusted servant, Eliezer, to find a wife for his son Yitzchak. When Eliezer arrived in the city, he went to a well and encountered a young girl who offered to give him and his camels water to drink. When Eliezer asked who she was, he discovered that her name was Rivkah, and she was a great-niece of Avraham; at that moment, he knew she would marry Yitzchak.

When Rivkah told her family what had occurred, her brother Lavan went outside to greet Eliezer and invited him to stay the night. With her family's blessings the next morning, Eliezer and Rivkah traveled back together to the land of Canaan, where she married Yitzchak and went into Sarah's tent.

However, a question comes to mind: The parsha is called Chayei Sarah, the life of Sarah. And yet, she passes away in the second verse of this week's parsha. How come the Torah names a whole portion after the life of Sarah when she passes away in the beginning of this week's Torah portion, and we speak about her burial?

Furthermore, after she passes away, the pasuk says that Avraham came and wept for Sarah and mourned for her. **Five words:** the Torah doesn't have more than five words to mourn for our first matriarch, Sarah Emeinu? Why was the Torah not more outspoken about his mourning?

The way the Jewish people respond to tragedy, such as the unfortunate event in Pittsburgh last week, is to draw inspiration from our history. Just as Abraham mourned the loss of Sarah but also took action to continue her legacy through their son Isaac, we too, must find ways to carry on and uphold the values and promises that bind our

community. Abraham sent his servant promptly to ensure his son's marriage, thus continuing the lineage that God had promised to multiply as numerous as the stars and the sands of the earth. In times of sorrow, we look to our traditions and our commitment to building a brighter future for our people.

We can observe how Abraham carried on Sarah's legacy by arranging the marriage between his son Isaac and Rebekah. When Rebekah entered Sarah's tent, the miracles associated with Sarah returned: the ever-lit candle, the perpetually fresh dough, and the cloud of glory above the tent. In tragedy, the Jewish response is to create and continue legacies.

This entails preserving the enduring marks of our identity and Jewish history. We must not allow evil to triumph or consume our lives. Instead, we should establish and perpetuate legacies, initiating movements in their memory to ensure that their names remain etched in the collective memory of the Jewish people.

This Jewish approach to tragedy revolves around the preservation of our heritage and the construction of new legacies, ensuring their indelible place in history. It is the reason why, when a loved one tragically passes away, we commemorate them by commissioning the writing of a Torah in their honor, for the Torah symbolizes eternity, thus making their legacy everlasting.

In our daily lives, it is our responsibility to create legacies that extend far beyond our own lifetimes. While we must grieve and mourn our losses, we should also seize the opportunity to establish legacies that will endure among the Jewish people. We cannot allow darkness and evil to prevail. Instead, we must transform adversity into strength and unity.

Today, let us take on a Mitzvah, offer more charity, or engage in a special act in memory of our loved ones, thus commencing our own legacies. These legacies will persist long after we and our children are gone, ensuring that people two hundred years from now will say, "I know who they were" because of the institutions they established. This idea is forever etched into Jewish history.

“If you do not want to be forgotten. Do something worth writing about or write something worth reading about.”

-Benjamin Franklin

Have an inspirational Shabbos!
Rabbi Sholom Yemini