

Parshas Chayei Sarah

This week's Parsha is Chayei Sara, where we learn of Sarah's passing and Avraham's subsequent search for a wife for Yitzchak. It is generally contemplated that Sarah passed away due to the shock of hearing the news of Yitzchak, and many Mepharshim say she passed before hearing the end of the news, that it was part of the test of Avraham, which he passed, and Yitzchak was not sacrificed. This commonly accepted explanation ought to be more confusing than an alternative approach that Sarah passed away because her mission on earth was complete.

The evidence for this can be in the choice of words of Rashi to explain that Avraham eulogized for Sarah: "Sarah's death is written immediately following the binding of Yitzchak, because through her hearing about the binding- that her son had been designated to be slaughtered and was indeed almost sacrificed- her soul departed from her, and she died¹." Notice Rashi says "her son had been designated to be slaughtered and was indeed almost sacrificed- her soul departed, and she died..." meaning if it were clear that she died on the news of just the sacrifice, Rashi would have stated that. Furthermore, if she died of this shock, Rashi likely wouldn't choose to use the words, and her soul departed, as if to say, the soul's purpose here was completed, and now went back to Hashem...Therefore, Sarah's passing wasn't somehow a detriment. Instead, it was a completion of her task.

The posuk says that Avraham eulogized for Sarah and cried. The order of the words suggests an alternative interpretation of Sarah's passing due to shock, as does the small letter "Chof" in the word "V'Livkosah." The order of the phrase means that Avraham eulogized, composed and did his duty as Sarah's husband to act on her passing; only after he did this did he cry- where he, so to speak, felt the loss. This means that if she had passed suddenly, as if unexpectedly, normal human behaviour would be to cry and then eulogize. It must mean that her passing was meant to be – not early or late, for which Avraham eulogized, then as any loving person would do, he would cry- because even if death is expected, it is sad.

Furthermore, the small letter is a "Chof," the numerical value of 20, explained in the first Rashi, to say that Sarah was righteous as a 20-year-old—free of sin. Divine punishment is not carried out on someone before the age of 20, suggesting that Sarah was devoid of all sin, as explained by Rashi. The small Chof, therefore, reminds us to interpret Sarah's death not out of detriment or untimely but rather as completion because she wouldn't have passed for a seemingly adverse reaction.

May the merits and actions of Sarah and Avraham guide us to our freedom, where we will inherit the land that Avraham promised was devoid of our enemies.

Good Shabbos.

¹ Chayeinu translation