



RABBI SHALOM

ROSNER

Rav Kehilla, Nofei HaShemesh
Maggid Shiur, Daf Yomi, OU.org
Senior Ra"m, Kerem B'Yavneh

The Lesson of the Small “chuf”

וַיְבֹא אַבְרָהָם לְסַפֵּד לְשָׂרָה וּלְבִכְתָּהּ (בראשית כג:ב)

Abraham came to eulogize Sarah and wail for her. (Bereshit 23:2)

In the pasuk cited above the letter “chuf” “כ” in the word *וּלְבִכְתָּהּ* (*v’livkosa*) appears smaller than the other letters in the word. The *Ba’al Haturim* explains that this is to highlight that Avraham limited his crying upon hearing of Sarah’s death, since she was elderly. Typically, when someone dies suddenly and unexpectedly it is a shock and a tragedy. However, when someone passes away due to old age, although it may be a great loss, it is somewhat expected and in the natural course of events. One is somewhat comforted by knowing the deceased lived a full and long life.

Why does the Torah emphasize here that Avraham minimized his weeping for

Sarah? Is this complimentary to Avraham? Sarah influenced so many women, surely it was a tremendous loss. When Aharon HaCohen perished, we are told that all of Israel wept for thirty days. So why does the Torah underscore that Avraham minimized his crying over Sarah’s death by utilizing a small *chuf*?

The Midrash cited in Rashi on this *pasuk* indicates that the account of Sarah’s death was specifically juxtaposed right after *Akeidas Yitzhak*. As a result of the news of the “*Akeida*” that her son was prepared for slaughter and was almost slaughtered, Sarah perished (*Bereshis Rabbah* 58:5).

When Avraham arrived in Chevron and heard of Sara’s death, he understood, as the Midrash states, that he may have been the cause of her death. The *satan* or *yetzer hara* could not prevent Avraham from fulfilling God’s request and carrying out the *Akeida*, but the *satan* tried to get Avraham to regret his act since it essentially led to Sarah’s death. By regretting the performance of a *mitzva ex post facto*, it essentially uproots the fulfillment of such *mitzva*.

Avraham, aware of this, is careful to limit his crying over Sarah’s death because he believes that God would only take Sarah’s soul at the appropriate time and not due to an act he committed. As the *Baal Haturim* states – Avraham believes she died of old

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age. Had Avraham wept uncontrollably, it may be perceived as his having regretted performing the Akeida, which resulted in his wife's death (Bikure Avraham cited in Otzros Hatorah). Avraham was clearly a step ahead of the *Yetzer Hara*. Perhaps this is why the Torah also emphasizes – שני – חיי שרה – these were the years allotted to Sarah – she lived her full life. Her life was not cut short due to any act of Avraham (Shvus Yehuda cited in Otzros Hatorah).

There is an important lesson to be derived from Avraham's limited mourning over the death of his wife. After one fulfills a mitzva, one needs to be careful not to allow the *yetzer hara* take charge and cause one to feel as if they sacrificed something and "wasted" time in order to fulfill the mitzva. We must realize that there is no FOMO when one is involved in a mitzah.

It is told that the Hafetz Haim used to shut the lights in the *Beis Medrash* after a certain hour. He was adamant that his *talmidim* should not allow the *yetzer hara* to justify missing minyan in the morning due to learning late into the night. When the *yetzer hara* cannot stop us from engaging in a mitzva, he will seek to get us to transgress under the guise of another mitzva. May we be strong in our observance and performance of *mitzvos* without any remorse, even if it requires at times – a sacrifice! ■



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