

## Chayai Sarah-Avrahm's Hespel for Sarah Emainu

By Rabbi Eliyahu Kirsh

Parshas Chayai Sarah opens with the demise of Sarah Emainu, acquisition of her burial plot, and her burial. Avraham comes to Chevron to eulogize and cry for Sara. Rashi on this verse brings the Midrash that the akeidah of was the cause for Sarah's death. Since the two events are placed near each other, it is understood that the death was brought on by the Akeidah. There are various ways that this can be understood. There is a Midrash that states that Sarah asked Og the giant to use his height to see where Avraham and Yitzchak were. He found them and told Sarah that Avraham was about to slaughter Yitzchak. Until he had the chance to tell Sarah that Avraham did not slaughter Yitzchak, her soul departed from her.

There is a Midrash that tells us that Avraham recited the words of Eishes Chayil, a woman of valor, which we sing on Friday night and is taken from the end of the book of Mishlei. While the inference to one's wife is obvious, it is not to be understood as a romantic ballad. The words of our *kisvai kodesh*, holy writings are not to be taken in this way. It is to be understood as praise to the shechina, divine presence which at times manifests itself as feminine. Of course, the praise to one's wife is there as well but it should be understood as praise for one's wife virtues and her maintenance of our mesorah in our homes and not as romantic poetry. Surely, Sarah Emainu epitomized all the virtues of the righteous wife.

The Sefer Hadrush V'haiyun understands from the fact that this Rashi is on the words *lispod*, to eulogize that Rashi is giving us a hint as to the content of Avraham's eulogy. Avraham told everyone present that the entire incident of the Akeidah took place due to Sarah's influence. Clearly, it was his wife Sarah that was able to maintain the home and raise her son in such a way that he would be willing to go to the Akeidah and to sanctify Hashem's name on such a level. Avraham stated that all of the credit belonged to her and this is the *Eishes Choyil* that we are gathered here to pay our last respects to. Indeed, throughout our history, our women have played a major role in *chinuch*, education of our children. While the father gives the formal lessons, the mother gives the child the messages of *ahavas Hashem*, love of Hashem and *Yiras Hashem* fear of Hashem subliminally. Chazal clearly understood this when they stated that in merit of the righteous women we were redeemed from Mitzrayim and in merit of the righteous women the final *geulah*, redemption will take place.