

A Son's Meaningful Tribute
Daf Yomi Message for Parshas Chayai Sarah
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Sarah's death occupies a major portion of the Sedrah. The Torah elaborates upon Abraham's involvement: the bewailment, the eulogy, the task of finding a suitable place for burial. No less than twelve times is Abraham's name mentioned in this connection (Braishis ch.23) What about Yitzchok? Not once is his name mentioned. Yitzchok was 37 years old when his mother died, an accomplished person, with the experience of an Akaidah. Surely did he have much to say, to express his emotions at the tragic death of his mother, who prepared him for an AKAIDAH.. Why the complete omission of any role for Yitzchok?

The Midrash states that for the three years following the AKAIDAH, from the age of 37 to the age of 40, Yitzchok spent at the Bais Medrash of Shem studying Torah. This is indicated at the end of the AKAIDAH in the passage "And Abraham returned to his young men" (ibid, 22:19). And where was Yitzchok? He was sent to Shem to study Torah, and remained there for three years (Rabba 56:11, Targum Jonathan 22:19 and see R. Bachaya). Yitzchok, then did not return with his father, but remained in the vicinity of Mt. Moriah in the study hall of Shem. The name Moriah is indicative of "Haraah", Halachic directives, which emanate from there to the world (Taanith 16a). Remaining in the Beth Hamedrash is thus equivalent to remain at Moriah.

It may be assumed that Yitzchok was present at his mother's funeral, which took place after the AKAIDAH, and only following her death did he enter the Beth Hamedrash of Shem, though some commentators are of the opinion that he entered the Beth Hamedrash prior to her death. Whatever the case may be, there is a paramount teaching conveyed in the omission of Yitzchok's name in the eulogies and the burial procedures.

The eulogies, the words of praise, the assessment of the great loss, all this well befits the husband of the deceased. All that is left for the widower if the aftermath of the demise of his beloved wife is to bask in the glory that has been, in the harmoniousness and happiness of the past, in the righteousness of the personality that has been torn away. Not so a son. For the son the expression of praise and of the magnitude of his loss are insignificant compared with awesome task at hand which

first then begins to unfold.

A son can bring merit to a parent (Sanhedrin 104a). While the deeds of a child reflect upon the parent in his lifetime, it is more consequential to the parent after death, when the parent can no more perform deeds of his own. There could have been no better tribute for Yitzchok to offer his mother than to go to Shem and dedicate three years to the study of Torah for her sainted memory.

Though the period of recital of Kaddish is twelve months, the period of three years is found to be a complete entity of time. The Talmud speaks of a certain group who completed reading the entire Chumosh once every three years, (Megilah29b), though the Halacha follows the view to complete it once every year. The period of "Orlo" is three years (Vayikra 19:23). The period of three years that Yitzchok spent in the Beth Hamedrash was thus not a period of mourning, but a period of dedication to Torah study.(Likutai Sichos of Lubavitcher Rebbe, vol. 5 p. 369, 370) Only after this achievement for his mother's Neshama did Yitzchok find consolation (see Braishis 24:67)

The entire chapter AISHES CHAYIL, woman of valor (Mishlai 31), is a reference to Sarah, according to the Midrash Tanchuma (Braishis 24:1). Among the felicitous praises of this woman of valor, one passage refers to her disappearance from this earth: "Strength and majesty are her clothing, and she laughed on her last day", (31:25) Rashi explains the use of the phrase "she laughed", VaTISCHAK, that it expresses a certain assuredness and fearlessness. Sarah had no reason to fear death, for she prepared well for it during her life on this earth. One ventures to add that the word VaTISCHAK herein chosen to indicate the paramount factor in the confidence, i.e. the righteousness of her son whose name, Yitzchok, also means "laugheth", and who is also called YIS-CHAK (Tehillim 105:9), even more reminiscent of TIS-CHAK. It is comprehensible to exit from this world with a smile when it is with the equanimity of leaving behind a son, a Tzadik, like Yitzchok, who not only has already reached a high level of sanctity, but would continue after her demise to bring bliss and blessing to her departed soul.

The bestowal of praise on the last day has a place, but that is not the role of the son. The chapter AISHES CHAYIL continues: "Her children rise up and strengthen her, her husband, also, and he praises her, but her children strengthen her. Most translations read: "Her children rise up and call her happy." A better translation of the

word "VayeASHRUHO" is and MAKE her happy" One may also translate, as above "strengthen her" as in ASHRU CHOMOTZ (Isiah 1:17 see Rashi ibid, and Haktov Vehakbala Devorim 33:29). While the husband can only shower praise upon her, the children can actually make her happy, and give her strength by studying Torah and performing good deeds for the merit of the soul.

The Kaddish de Rabonon is regarded by some as the most important Kaddish. It is also the Kaddish that is recited following learning Mishnayoth for the Neshama of a deceased. The significance of this Kaddish lies in the concern "for the sages and their disciples, and discples' disciple, and ALL who occupy themselves with the study of Torah," for whom it is supplicated: may they have peace, long life..." Even the worry and concern for this element in Jewry is so great a virtue, and such a great merit to the Neshama, that the son recited it daily for the course of a year. How much more so when the son himself becomes a Torah disciple. Yitzchok "acted out" the Kaddish de Rabonon for his mother. He did it superbly, at the Beth Medrash of Shem.