

# INSIGHTS

## Into The Weekly Parsha

NOVEMBER 15, 2025

This week's Insights is dedicated in loving memory of Joseph ben Avraham, Joseph Kaplan. "May his Neshama have an Aliya!"

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24 CHESHVAN

Based on the Torah of our Rosh HaYeshiva HaRav Yochanan Zweig

PARSHAS CHAYEI SARAH

## A Universal Loss

**Sarah died in Kiryat Arbah, which is in Chevron in the land of Canaan. Avraham came to eulogize Sarah and to weep for her (23:2).**

This week's *parsha* opens with the death of our matriarch Sarah and the details surrounding her burial. The Torah recounts that Avraham came to eulogize and weep for her. The word "weep" is written with a small letter "כ" ("kaf") and Chazal tell us that this hints to the fact that Avraham curtailed his crying (see *Bal Haturim* ad loc). Why did Avraham lessen his crying?

Furthermore, the commentaries (see Riva, Ohr Hachaim, Klei Yakar, and others on this verse) are troubled with three other issues in the construct of the *possuk*: 1) The beginning of the verse informs us that Sarah died and yet the Torah, which budgets its words and letters so carefully, repeats her name again at the end of the *possuk*. Why? 2) Why does the Torah place her name in between Avraham eulogizing for her and his crying? 3) Finally, doesn't crying usually come before the eulogizing? In other words, why didn't the Torah simply write, "Avraham came to weep and eulogize her"?

The name Sarah has its root in the Hebrew word "sar," meaning "prince." Initially, her name was Sarai, but Hashem changed her name to Sarah when she was ninety. The Talmud (*Brachos* 13a) explains why Hashem changed her name from Sarai to Sarah; "originally, she was a princess only to her own nation (i.e. Aram), and in the end she became a princess for the entire world." Clearly, Sarah had gone from

being a locally respected personality to one whose impact was felt the world over.

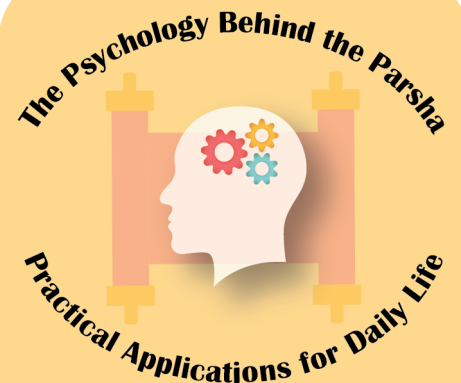
This public persona was what Avraham was coming to eulogize. Sarah wasn't merely his wife, she was an important person in her own right. Sarah's death left a void in the world. This is why the Torah repeats her name again; Avraham wasn't coming to eulogize his wife, he was coming to articulate a communal loss. He was explaining who "Sarah" was and what she meant to the world. He wanted people to understand what they had lost.

There is an important lesson in this story. Funerals are a meaningful time to reflect on the value of the deceased's life accomplishments. Yet often eulogies mostly reflect personal memories of the deceased (e.g. Bubby's "amazing" cookie recipe). This causes those in attendance to be saddened not by the loss of the deceased, but rather by the grief and loss of the bereaved. Eulogies should ideally extoll virtues of the deceased, thereby making the loss relevant to all.

This is the lesson that the Torah is conveying about what Avraham was trying to accomplish. His personal loss wasn't the focus at this time and therefore he lessened his own weeping. There is always time for personal grieving, but Avraham's goal at that moment was to explain to those in attendance what they had lost by the death of a princess of the world.



**Miami Edition**



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# Efron Memorial Gardens?

***And Efron's field that was in Machpeilah, which was opposite Mamre, the field and the cave contained therein and all the trees in the boundary around it, was acquired by Avraham as a purchase [...] (23:17-18).***

Avraham Avinu goes to great lengths to acquire a suitable property to bury his deceased wife Sarah. The Torah gives us an unusually detailed account of the negotiation between Avraham and Efron who was the owner of the cave that Avraham wished to buy.

Initially, Efron offers to give it to Avraham for free. In fact, Efron goes a step further; he offers not only the cave but the entire field surrounding the cave as well. Avraham graciously appreciates his offer, but insists on paying for the land. Efron then changes gears and asks for an exorbitant sum (see Ramban ad loc) because he understood that Avraham had his heart set on this piece of property. What made Efron suddenly change from being a benevolent individual to a shrewd businessman?

Additionally, when Avraham dies thirty-eight years later, the Torah makes a remarkable statement: *"His sons Yitzchak and Yishmael buried him in the cave of Machpeilah, in the field of Efron"* (25:9). In

other words, thirty-eight years later the field was still known as once belonging to Efron. Stranger still, 170 years later, when Yaakov Avinu is buried in the cave of Machpeilah by his sons, the Torah once again refers to it as the field that Avraham bought from Efron. What is special about Efron's role here that entitles him to continuously be associated with the cave and its surrounding field?

Sarah's passing wasn't just a loss to Avraham and his nuclear family; it was a communal and national loss (see previous article, "A Universal Loss"). Efron, the consummate businessman, recognized this and had a brilliant insight. He realized that her death was a loss felt by many and therefore her burial site would be significant forevermore. He convinces Avraham Avinu that merely acquiring the Machpeilah cave wouldn't be sufficient to properly pay homage to Sarah. He insists that Avraham needs the entire surrounding area to create a memorial park in her memory.\*

Efron genuinely offers to give the entire area to Avraham as a memorial park. Why? Efron wants the honor of donating the land and being eternally remembered in this way, i.e. Sarah being buried in "Efron's Memorial Gardens." But Avraham insists on buying the land because he wants to have her buried in "his" land – i.e. Eretz Yisroel. Once Efron feels that this is solely a business transaction and that Sarah wasn't going to be buried in "Efron's Memorial Gardens," he charges Avraham an exorbitant sum (see accompanying Did You Know column) to remove his name from the deed.

However, Efron still gets credit for the idea of creating a historical site where many people can come and visit forevermore, which is why his name continues to be associated with the transaction throughout the Torah.

\*We find the same sentiment regarding the burial site of Lady Diana, a woman who was an internationally beloved icon.

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