

The Torah writes of Sarah's death.

**וַתָּמָת שָׂרָה בְּקִרְיַת אַרְבַּע הוּא חֶבְרוֹן בְּאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן וַיָּבֵא אַבְרָהָם לְסַפֵּד לְשָׂרָה וּלְבִנְתָּהּ:**

“And Sarah died in Kiryas Arba, it is Chevron, in the Land of Canaan. And Avraham came to eulogize for Sarah, and to bewail her.” (Bereishis 23:2).

What was Sarah doing in Kiryas Arba? Where was Avraham coming from? What does it mean he eulogized for her, instead of eulogizing her? He bewailed her. Is that different than eulogizing? Avraham came, but where was Yitzchok?

Gemara Bava Kamma 93a learns, *Sarah put a judgment between her and Avraham when she threw Hagar out of the house after the handmaiden conceiving a child. Sarah then died before Avraham. Gemara Rosh Hashana 16b explains this further, three things make a person sinful. Sitting next to an inclining wall, expecting prayers to be answered immediately, and judging others. The latter we see from Sarah.*

Gemara Sanhedrin 46b points out, *Sarah's burial was delayed as an honor to her. It was for her honor that her burial wait until Avraham could come and eulogize her.*

Midrash says, *Sarah died immediately after the binding of Yitzchok because she died from the shock of the news.* (Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer 32).

Rashi says, *Avraham came from Beer Sheva.*

Ibin Ezra says, *Avraham came, because he was elsewhere.*

Ramban says, *Avraham was coming back from Beer Sheva from a daytrip. He must have moved or went to Kiryas Arba where Sarah then died. According to the Midrash, he was returning from the binding of Yitzchok. He lived in Beer Sheva before and after the test, because Beer Sheva is in the land of the Philistines. (21:34). He returned to Chevron and that is when Sarah died. Following the burial, he then returned to Beer Sheva. That is what it means he dwelled in the land of the Philistines many days, even though it was interrupted by a brief sojourn in Chevron.*

Ramban speaks at length how Avraham lived in the land of the Philistines before and after the binding. With respect to Ramban, his entire interpretation here is based on erroneous geographical information. The “south” near Kadesh is not anywhere near Beer Sheva. It is also not near the Philistines that lived on the western coastline. Beer Sheva is also not the land of the Philistines, being to the east and much further inland. I will agree with Ramban, Beer Sheva is further from Yerushalayim so the journey from Beer Sheva (a two-day's journey) to the land of Moriah is more logical than Avraham leaving from Kiryas Arba (a one-day journey), if the land of Moriah was actually Yerushalayim. “On the third day...” (Ibid 22:3). If Yerushalayim was the destination of “the Land of Moriah” then traveling from Beer Sheva is logical – travel two days and on

the third day it was revealed. Traveling from the actual land of the Philistines, the coast, makes even more sense.

*Sforno says, Sarah only died after Rivkah was born. And Avraham eulogized for her because it was for her honor.*

*Chizkuni says, it is unusual for the Torah to mention a woman's death. It is a great compliment to Sarah. She was in Kiryas Arba at Avraham's behest so she would not learn of the binding of Yitzchok. Thus, when she died, Avraham had to then travel from Beer Sheva back to her, a burden he put on himself for sending her away.*

However, according to the Torah, Avraham had the vision then got up early in the morning. (22:3). There was no time to send Sarah away.

*Kli Yakar says, usually eulogizing is after weeping. With Sarah, her absence was felt more each passing day.*

“And Sarah died in Kiryas Arba.” What was she doing there? For this answer, it is important to follow Avraham's journey.

After Sodom's destruction, Avraham settled in the south, between Kadesh and Shur. (Ibid 20:1). Kadesh is at the southern border of Eretz Yisroel, on the border of the Sinai Peninsula. (See Bamidbar 20:14,23, 27:14). Shur is a desert town further north, facing Mitzrayim. (Bereishis 25:18). When Sarah ousted Hagar after Hagar conceived, Hagar, the Egyptian, fled back toward Mitzrayim. The Malakh of Hashem found her on the road to Shur. (Bereishis 16:4). Shur is in the desert to the east of Mitzrayim that is just north of the Yam Suf. (Shmos 15:22). Between Kadesh and Shur would be on the southern border of the Land of Canaan, near the Mediterranean coast. Avraham then traveled north to Gerar. (Bereishis 20:1). That is in the land of the Philistines.

After leaving Gerar, Avraham did not travel far, as King Avimelech offered him land anywhere near the Philistines (unlike Pharaoh who evicted Avraham from his country). (Ibid 20:15). He likely chose land between Kadesh and Bered (see *infra*). Avraham had a child (ibid 21:2) and then weened him (ibid 21:8). It is logical that he did not travel with the newborn. Sarah then has her second dispute with Hagar and requests that this time Avraham evict Hagar and Yishmael. (Ibid 21:10). This displeased Avraham. (Ibid 21:11). It created a rift. At some point after this, Avraham then left his wife because at this very time Avimelech and Pichol made the treaty with Avraham. (Ibid 21:32). It took place not in the south, but in Beer Sheva. (Ibid 21:31). Even though the treaty was in Beer Sheva the pasuk says “Avraham dwelt in the land of the Philistines for many days.” (Ibid 21:34).

Beer Sheva is not in the Philistine land and he was just sojourning in Gerar. The pasuk uses the word *וַיִּגַר* and he dwelt, not the usual *וַיִּשָּׁב* and he settled. What was the urgency for Avraham to agree to get into a treaty with Avimelech? Avraham had the upper hand, as he had Hashem on his side plaguing the Philistines. Avraham was a wealthy nomad and could go wherever he pleased. The answer is in the need to settle matters for Sarah. Clearly, Sarah and Avraham were separating over the dispute with Hagar and Yishmael. Avraham set up Sarah in Kiryas Arba. Beer Sheva is in between Gerar and Kiryas Arba. That is where Avimelech found Avraham and the treaty was

struck. He then went to live apart from her – it says Avraham dwelt, not *they* dwelt. To prevent the Philistines taking revenge on Sarah while he was gone, he made the treaty. It is known that he did not live with Sarah in Kiryas Arba because he tells the authorities (Bnei Ches / Hittites) in Kiryas Arba “A sojourner and resident, I am among you.” (Ibid 23:4). He himself was a dweller, but his wife was a resident.

When Hashem tested Avraham it says, וַיֹּאמֶר קַח-בְּנֶךָ אֶת-בְּנֶךָ אֲשֶׁר-אַהֲבָהּ, אֶת-יִצְחָק וְלֶךְ-לְךָ “And He said, ‘Take please your son, your unique one, that you love, Yitzchok, and go for yourself.’” (Ibid 22:2). Hashem did not say “the son that is with you” because Yitzchok was not living with Avraham at the time. It says further, וַיִּקַּח וְנָעֲרָיו אִתּוֹ וְאֶת יִצְחָק בְּנֵוֹ וַיִּבְקַע עֵצִי עָלָהּ וַיִּקַּם וַיֵּלֶךְ אֶל-הַמְקוֹם אֲשֶׁר-אָמַר-לּוֹ הָאֱלֹקִים “And he took two attendants with him, and Yitzchok his son, and he split wood for the offering, and he got up, and he went to the place that the Lord told him.” (Ibid 22:3). This grammar is strange. It should have said “and they got up” and “they went.” It also did not need to say “and he got up” as it already said “And Avraham arose early in the morning.” (Ibid). It is understandable that it does not say “they went” when including attendants. They are part of Avraham going. If Yitzchok went with him it should have said “they.” Furthermore, the pasuk says “and he took two attendants with him, and Yitzchok, his son.” (Ibid). It should have said, “and he took his two attendants and Yitzchok, his son, with him.” He didn’t take Yitzchok because he was not there.

*And Avraham rose early in the morning, and he saddled his donkey, and he took his two attendants with him. And as to Yitzchok his son, he split wood for the offering. And Yitzchok got up and he went to the place that the Lord told him. Avraham got up, took the attendants, and split the wood – all for Yitzchok. Yitzchok got up and went where Hashem told him to go. They meet at the place and that is when “they go together.” (Ibid 22:6). At the end of the incident, it was only “Avraham” that “returned to his attendants.” (Ibid 22:19). He returned and settled וַיֵּשֶׁב in Beer Sheva. (Ibid). He settled halfway between Sarah in Kiryas Arba and Yitzchok, in the south.*

After the test, Yitzchok went elsewhere from Avraham, returning to where he came from. He lived in Be'er Lachai Ro'i. (Ibid 24:62). This place is between Kadesh and Bered. (Ibid 16:14). Bered is not mentioned elsewhere in the Torah but it believed to be further south than Kadesh, in the southern region of the Land of Canaan and Eretz Yisroel.<sup>1</sup> It is on the way where Hagar was traveling when Sarah ousted her, after the handmaiden conceived. (Ibid). It says that Yitzchok ended up settling there, after Avraham died. (Ibid 25:11). It is likely that Avraham had much wealth there still, from the treaties with the Philistines, and otherwise. Yitzchok managed it there, in the unclaimed lands.

“It is Chevron.” Hebron / Chevron is the modern name. The Torah often uses terms for places that were only named later, to give the reader reference. When the Torah was completed by Moshe, the generation then had to understand the places.

<sup>1</sup> This would be even further south of Yehuda and Shimon’s lands in the southern Eretz Yisroel, but still part of what was and should have been Eretz Yisroel. There is tradition and Midrash that Yitzchok never left the Land of Canaan / Eretz Yisroel proper. Accordingly, when Shlomo Hamelech conquered the southern lands, he was conquering what was promised to Avraham already.

Another example is the treaty that Avraham struck with the Philistines took place in Beer Sheva. At the time it was unnamed and only named "Beer Sheva" after the treaty. However, the Torah calls it Beer Sheva, even prior to the treaty, as reference. Thus, historically, the names existed when Moshe wrote down the Torah, not necessarily at the time the events occurred. This is seen throughout the Torah.

"In the Land of the Canaan." Avraham had every right to the burial plot, and yet he still paid for it with silver.

"And Avraham came." He came from Beer Sheva, where he was living, separate from Sarah. Yitzchok did not come. Yitzchok was living apart from his parents and further away.

"To eulogize for Sarah." Even though they were separated he treated her like a wife. He did not marry again until after she died. He may have disputed the treatment of his eldest son, but he respected her and treated her as a faithful companion and wife, until the day she died. He didn't eulogize her, there was still the hurt and separation. However, he did give a eulogy on her behalf, for her honor, and to honor their decades together. Also, the eulogy was not for his honor. He did it solely for her honor. Some people give eulogies to aggrandize themselves through their clever oration. However, Avraham gave it purely for Sarah's honor.

"And he bewailed her." Only after giving a eulogy, did he mourn her loss. He sat shiva. The next pasuk says, "Avraham got up." (Ibid 23:3). He got up off the ground. At that point, after eulogizing her, but before burying her, he cried over her. She was his wife and companion of many decades, and the mother of his child. Only after considering the person's life and merits is there true crying. Initially, there is crying for the loss of the person, and the shock or sadness of the news. That is a selfish crying. It is crying for how the news makes the crier feel. However, after the eulogy, and after considering the life, then is the crying *over the person*. Those tears are then for the deceased.

Avraham took a while to bury Sarah. Because she was living in a different place than where he was, he did not have a burial plot ready for her. He could not simply dig in land that he acquired or was settling in. He also waited to give Yitzchok a chance to come and mourn his mother. However, Yitzchok never made it. Yitzchok only found comfort later. After Yitzchok marries Rivkah it says, *וַיְבִיאָהּ יִצְחָק הָאֵלֶּלֶה שָׂרָה אִמּוֹ וַיִּקַּח אֶת־* *וַיְבִיאָהּ יִצְחָק הָאֵלֶּלֶה שָׂרָה אִמּוֹ וַיִּקַּח אֶת־* "And Yitzchok brought her to the tent of Sarah, his mother. And he took Rivkah, and she became to him for a wife, and he loved her. And Yitzchok was comforted after his mother." (Ibid 24:67). It was only after he married and he had a wife that could then carry on the duties and take the place of his mother, was Yitzchok comforted. Without attending the eulogy or the mourning, Yitzchok had no comfort over his mother's death. It was when he married that he was able to have closure from his mother's presence and memory. He was able to fill up his mother's tent with his own wife and love. Only then did he get comforted over Sarah's death.