

B”H

*Lichvod Rabbi Lipskier,*

*Over the past week, my WhatsApp chats were overflowing with videos and images of the horrific tragedy in Meron. It got too much for me so I respectfully asked to change the subject. In response, I got berated for being insensitive. “Our brothers are mourning but you ‘had enough of this topic?!”*

*No one on that chat shared my sentiment, so I now wonder if maybe I’m totally off the wall. Any insight you can provide will be appreciated.*

*Sincerely,*

*Confused.*

Dear Confused,

As a rule, pain is experienced and expressed differently by everyone, as the *Gemara* says, “A person is not held responsible [for what he says] when he is in distress.”<sup>1</sup> So, from an emotional standpoint, there isn’t much I can say. But from a Torah standpoint, here is some perspective that may be useful.

Regarding Sarah Imeinu’s passing, the Torah says “And Sarah died in Kiryas Arba, which is Chevron, in the land of Canaan, and Avraham came to eulogize Sarah and to bewail her.” But there’s no mention of an actual eulogy. Instead, the Torah continues by relaying how Avraham purchased Me’aras Hamachpelah for 400 silver shekels.

The *medrash* explains that Avraham actually *didn’t* eulogize Sarah, because when he tried to, “the *malach hamavess* stood defiantly against him.”

What’s the meaning of this?

When tragedy befalls a Jew, *Rachmana litzlan*, it’s natural for people to ask questions about Hashem’s actions. At this stage, they’re absorbed in the loss and can’t see beyond it. The agenda of the *malach hamavess*, who doubles as the *yetzer hara*,<sup>2</sup> is to *keep* a person at this stage. As Avraham began talking about Sarah he heard the voice of the *malach hamavess* saying, “Listen to your own words! She was such a *tzadekess*, and Hashem ripped her away from you! How can you believe in such a G-d?!” Avraham realized that this is a trap, aimed at paralyzing him from moving on, so he immediately “arose from before his dead,” and went on to do something.<sup>3</sup>

The *malach hamavess* tries to keep the “face of the dead” in front of us. It wants us to keep searching and circulating disturbing images and painful encounters of the Meron tragedy. He knows that as long as we’re wallowing in pain, we won’t have strength to move on.

However, as children of Avraham Avinu, we know better!

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<sup>1</sup> Bava Basra 16b.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid 16a.

<sup>3</sup> Tiferes Shlomo to Chayei Sarah.

Words cannot describe the powerful wave of *emunah*, *bitachon* and *teshuvah* that has been generated by the families of the deceased. Watch just one video of them talking and you'll know that they are bravely defying the *malach hamavess*'s plan. They don't want anyone to spend time and energy finding out how it happened, why it happened, or who is to blame for what happened. With inexplicable strength, they're holding on to their *emunah*, and want us to do the same.

So, if you want the *malach hamavess* to stop waving images of the tragedy, it doesn't mean you're insensitive. In fact, the families of the deceased support your sentiment. Moreover, the very people posting these images don't necessarily mean anything negative, they simply need somewhere to channel their pain. And they berated you only because they misunderstood and thought that you don't feel any pain.

However, this doesn't mean that we should change the subject. Instead, we must change its trajectory.

We can follow Avraham Avinu's example.

In Shevat of 5748 (1988), Rabbi Meir Amsal came to be *menachem avel* the Rebbe after the passing of Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka. During the visit, he asked the Rebbe: "Where do we find the actual eulogy that Avraham gave for Sarah?" The Rebbe responded: "The very act of paying an extravagant amount of money for her burial was the greatest proclamation of how highly he thought of her."

Perhaps you can convey to those on your WhatsApp chat that the best thing we can do for the deceased, for their families, and for ourselves is to *do* something. Anything in the realm of Torah, *avodah* or *gemilas chassadim* is the truest statement of how highly we think of our fellow Jew, and the best way to channel our feelings of pain and sorrow. Let this become the talk on your chat.

I hope these few words are helpful. May we all merit to see and experience only clear and revealed good, and be reunited with our loved ones with the coming of Moshiach speedily in our days.