

# He Changed the World—But He Never Forgot His Wife

R' Yehuda Zev Klein

Avrohom Avinu is seventy-five years old, and Hashem **speaks to him** and tells him, “Leave your hometown, leave everything behind, and set out on your journey.” So Avrohom takes his wife Sarah, his nephew Loit, all of their possessions (Bereshis 12:5), וְאֶת־הַנֶּפֶשׁ אֲשֶׁר־עָשָׂן בְּחָרָן, “and the souls that they had made in Charan,” and they set out to the Land of Canaan. Avrohom’s goal in life was to spread the idea of monotheism, the concept of **ONE G-d**.

The *pasuk* says (Bereshis 12:8) that Avrohom relocated מִקְדָּם לְבֵית־אֵל, to the mountain east of Beis-el, וַיִּטֵּא אֹהֶלָה, “and pitched his tent.” Avrohom was seeking a well-traveled area so that he could carry on his life’s mission. Rashi notes that the word *ahalo* is *lashon nekeivah*, in feminine form, to intimate that Avrohom first pitched a tent for his wife and only afterward one for himself. **What is the significance of Avrohom setting up his wife’s tent first? How long does it take to pitch a tent - five minutes? What difference does it make whose tent went up first?**

Avrohom is teaching us a life lesson in how one is to respect his wife. Avrohom was the world’s first influencer. He had a tremendous following; everybody knew his name. He was a legend. He made all the headlines. He traveled from town to town and commanded the pulpit. He was on all the talk shows; his picture and his message were in every newspaper and every media outlet. Avrohom was very visible. He was, and still is, the אֲבִי־הָמוֹן גּוֹיִם, the progenitor of many nations. **He was a big deal! But he never forgot Sarah, the most important person in his life.**

People have a tendency, when they climb the corporate ladder or attain a certain status, to forget the people who stood by them when they were just starting out - when times were challenging and they leaned on those people for support. **But not Avrohom.** Avrohom was the most influential person in world history, but he himself was influenced by his wife Sarah. He never forgot her. And that is why the Torah is telling us that Avrohom honored her in every way possible, even with small gestures, like pitching her tent before his. *Ma’aseh Avos siman l’banim* - the deeds of the fathers are signs for the children. A husband must always be sensitive to the feelings of his wife.

The Gemara says (Bava Metzia 59a), **לעולם יהא אדם זהיר בכבוד אשתו שאין ברכה מצויה בתוך ביתו של אדם אלא בשביל אשתו**. A person must always be careful to honor his wife, since blessing is found in a person's house only because of his wife. The Gemara concludes that Rava told the people of his town, **"Honor your wives, so that you will become rich."** We spend money, travel the world, and spend days and weeks away from our family looking for a *segulah* for parnassah - and here the Gemara gives a simple solution, a surefire remedy: **יהא אדם זהיר בכבוד אשתו. That's all it takes.**

A story is told that one year, back in the seventies, on the yahrzeit of Rochel Imeinu, a group of bachurim went to daven at Kever Rochel. They asked the venerable Mirrer Rosh Yeshiva, **Rav Chaim Shmuelewitz**, if he wanted to come along. He said, "Sure, but first let's find a public phone so that I can tell my wife that I'll be home half an hour late." They arrived at Kever Rochel and overheard Rav Chaim Shmuelewitz saying, *"Momma, Chaim'ke iz do"* (Momma, Chaim is here). Then he said, "Even though Hashem has instructed you not to cry, as the pasuk says (Yirmiyahu 31:16), **מִנְעִי קוֹלְךָ מִבְּכִי** - 'Refrain your voice from weeping' - Chaim is telling you: cry, cry for your children!" On the trip home, his talmidim asked him, "Rebbe, how can you go against that pasuk?" He explained that while a **FATHER** (Hashem) could tell his daughter Rochel to calm down and not cry, a **CHILD** can always ask his mother to show sympathy and concern for her children. A son or daughter can always request anything from their mother, and she will oblige. "And that is why I asked our mother Rochel to beg and plead on our behalf."

So they once recounted this story to Reb Nosson Tzvi Finkel, the legendary Rosh Yeshiva of the Mirrer Yeshiva. He asked his talmidim, **"What lesson do you take from this story?"** They said, "We see the tremendous *hartz* (heart) and devotion Reb Chaim had for Klal Yisroel." Reb Nosson Tzvi told them something that has entered the realm of legend: "While it's true what you said about Reb Chaim, I'll tell you what lesson I see. **If you have to come home late one day, call your wife and let her know, and don't let her sit around worrying.**" Reb Nosson Tzvi understood what it means to **יהא אדם זהיר בכבוד אשתו**.