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Parashat Chayei Sarah 5771

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## On the Parashah...

### Me'arat Ha-Machpelah: The Double Cave

[Tal Chermon]

Avraham began by simply asking for a burial site for Sarah (Bereshit 23:4). The Hittites willingly complied, offering any grave that he desired (ibid. v. 6). Avraham then launched his sudden bid specifically for the Cave of Machpelah. A prolonged bargaining process ensued which concluded with the sale of the cave to Avraham. The Torah then states twice that the cave was "raised up" to Avraham as a burial site (see Bereshit 23:5-20), which our Sages explain to mean that it rose in importance by its transfer from a commoner (Efron) to the possession of a king (Avraham) (Bereshit Rabbah 58:8 quoted by Rashi on Bereshit 23:20).

Why does the Torah focus so much attention on the sale of Me'arat Ha-Machpelah, which on the face of it was a simple commercial transaction? Both Avraham and the Hittites knew that the progenitors of all mankind, Adam and Chavah, were buried in the cave (Eruvim 53). To be buried in this cave meant that you are their successors. In Avraham's eulogy for Sarah he explained her essence and shows that she is the direct spiritual descendant of the mother of all humanity (Chavah). She is not just "Sarai" – my Sarah – but Sarah, the princess of the entire world (Rashi on Bereshit 17:15). She was Chavah's successor and remedied her error. Chavah had brought death into the world by misleading her husband and convincing him to listen to her. Sarah corrected this and thus Hashem instructed Avraham: "Whatever Sarah, your wife, tells you to do, listen" (Bereshit 21:12)! This was said in response to Avraham's doubts when Sarah demanded: "Expel this maidservant and her son" (Bereshit 21:10). At first, Avraham had serious reservations, since in the past mankind had already suffered greatly when a husband was misguided by his wife. Hashem therefore gave Avraham the above-mentioned reassurance. In contrast to Chavah, who had been cursed that "you shall give birth in pain" (Bereshit 3:16), birth for Sarah became a joyful event of miraculous youthful rejuvenation (Bereshit 18:12).

Avraham similarly continued the task of Adam in the world. There were ten generations between Adam and Noach, when the deluge wiped out humanity. The ten generation between Noach and Avraham were saved by virtue of Avraham who was destined to descend from

them. He was the purpose and the *raison d'etre* of all these generations. Until then there was no meaning to the world. Avraham's appearance on the scene imbues the existence of the world with significance. Our Sages express this idea in their interpretation of the verse: "And these are the events of the of heaven and earth 'behibara'am' (when they were created)" (Bereshit 2:4). Rabbi Yehoshua ben Korchah says: "The (Hebrew) letters of 'behibara'am' are the same as 'be-Avraham,' indicating that the world was created for the sake of Avraham" (Bereshit Rabbah 19:6). Avraham and Israel are here to salvage the world from the state of crisis that Adam had created by his sin. Their purpose is to return the world to the spiritual status that existed in the Garden of Eden. Only Israel still retains a spark of the brilliance that shone from Adam's countenance, and their task is to return it to the rest of the world.

The sons of Chet whom Avraham addressed were not simply ordinary people; they were important. Firstly, they lived in the Land of Israel which shows that in some way they were connected to Israel. Archeological finds and historical records indicate that they had a highly developed civilization. They posed themselves as an alternative to Avraham and the "culture" that he was spreading. They apparently understood why he was set on acquiring Me'arat Ha-Machepaleh as a burial site. It was no longer a generous and friendly discussion, but became very difficult bargaining. Behind the scenes there was a hard-hitting debate about who was the real successor to Adam.

The desire to be buried together with one's forefathers shows that one identifies with them and wants to walk in their footsteps. From several sources we learn that it is a significant where and with whom a person is buried. All of the kings made a point of being buried in their family regal burial site (Divrei Ha-Yamim 2 21:20. 24:25). Similarly, when Shevna reckoned that the Nation would side with him against the ruling king, Chizkiyahu, he went and conspicuously dug himself a burial site at the kingly site which demonstrated his intent to seize the kingship (Sanhedrin 26a). It is so important to be buried in one's ancestral burial site that it is permissible to re-bury a person for that purpose even though relocating a dead body is usually forbidden because it is disrespectful to the deceased (Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Dead 363). Even in the burial of executed criminals, the worst criminals who are given the most severe form of execution are buried separately from lesser criminals (Mishnah Sanhedrin 6:5). There is also an important custom to pray at the gravesites of the righteous.

It is clear from all of these cases that by connecting to a person's grave, one is linked to the person, to his spirit and to his soul (see Sotah 34b). The grave is a person's last contact with this earthly world, and his soul still has some faint lines of attachment to it after his death. The soul comes "to visit" the body and the spirits of the deceased and of the visitors to his gravesite meet and connect there. This is why Avraham made such an effort to be attached to the burial site of Adam and Chavah. He knew that he and Sarah were the "founding fathers" of mankind and they should thus be buried in their "family" tomb together with the originators of humanity.

### Rav Aviner on... “Our Camp” – The Jewish People

[Be-Ahavah U-Be-Emunah – Vayera 5771 – translated by R. Blumberg]

Sometimes people talk with me and use the expression “our camp,” so I respond, “Hold it right there! Who is ‘our camp’? Our camp is the Jewish People!” Certainly, within our

Nation, different Jews are different from one another. The Jewish People includes all kinds. Yet they all belong to 'our camp.'

By contrast, the non-Jews are not "our camp". They, too, were created in G-d's image, and when we recite the "Aleinu" prayer, we are praying for them as well. But they're not our camp. Avraham was called the Hebrew, the "Ivri", because he, so to speak, stood on one side [ever] of the river, and all the rest of mankind stood on the other. They, too, have righteous people, and the righteous of the nations have a place in the World-to-Come, but even they are not our camp. And within the Jewish People, there are individuals who do sins, and sometimes there are even wicked people, but they are our camp. If your son does not behave well, he remains your son. Yet your neighbor's son, even if he behaves well, is not your son.

As was first noted by Rabbi Yitzchak Luria, the Arizal, the Hebrew word for Jewish community is "Tzibur", the letters of which constitute an acronym for Tzadikim [righteous people], Benonim [people in the middle] and Resha'im [evildoers]. Indeed, some Jews are great saints, others are in the middle, and still others are worse. Yet they are all part of our Tzibbur, our camp.

In the Pesach Haggadah, we read how the Torah was addressing four types of sons, wise and wicked, simple, and too ignorant to ask questions. Yet all four are sons, and the Torah addressed all four. All four are our camp.

Moreover, the division into righteous, wicked and in-between is a personal division and not a communal division. A person may wear a Kipah but be wicked – heaven help us – and the opposite is possible as well.

Therefore, one should not divide up the Jewish People into groups and sectors. We already suffered from such divisions during the Destruction of the Second Temple. As the Netziv teaches in his introduction to his "Ha-Emek Davar," at that time the Jewish People was divided up into groups, and whoever was not like one's own group was deemed a Saducee or a heretic who had to fought and killed. During the First Temple Period as well, the split became so bad that we had two separate nations.

There was also a division by tribes, with each tribe considering itself a separate country and its own camp. Therefore, when one tribe was attacked, other tribes did not always go into battle to defend it, because that didn't interest them. Neither did they want marriages between tribes. You have certainly noticed that today no one knows what tribe he comes from, besides the Kohanim and Levi'im, for whom this bears halachic ramifications. We remember many things about our origins. How can it be that no one remembers what tribe he came from?

The answer is found in Rav Kook's work "Orot" (page 43). There Rav Kook explained that G-d made a decision that our tribalism should be forgotten. In the future it will be restored. As is explained at the end of Yechezkiel, our country will once more be divided up into tribes. Presently, however, G-d does not want tribalism, but a single Nation. When we live as one people, in love and brotherhood, peace and friendship, then our tribal divisions will resurface as different shades of a single, great nation.

Rav Kook, in his article "Masa Ha-Machanot" declared his total dissatisfaction with our division into "religious vs. secular" or "Chareidi vs. free-thinker." These, he said, are "the names of [the pagan deity] Ba'al" – that's what he called it (Ma'amarei HaRe'iyah 76).

Rather, we are one people. The proof of this is that even if in the past, as I said, when one tribe was attacked by the enemy, other tribes did not go forth to help them, today, by contrast, when a Jew is attacked, a million Jews go forth to defend him. Neither do they make calculations of who is called religious, secular, right wing or left wing. Chareidi or National Religious. That doesn't interest them!

Rather, all fight for all. All for one and one for all!

That is a sign that we have overcome our tribalism. This million people comprises the largest youth movement in the Jewish People, larger than Bnei Akiva, Ezra, and Ariel combined. This movement is the I.D.F.. The Israel army is synonymous with unity.

This is our camp! Let's not start dividing up the Jewish People into "camps". Rather, let us say,

"Who is like Your people, Israel, one Nation in the Land!" (Divrei Ha-Yamim 117:21).

## Kitzur Tefilat Amecha - #15

[adapted for middle-schoolers by Rabbi Shmuel Jablon from Rav Aviner's three-volume commentary on the siddur "Tefilat Amecha"]

At the end of "Le-Olam Yehei Adam," we say: "Blessed is Hashem...for sanctifying His name in public." Being able to make a Kiddush Hashem is a huge mitzvah. Sometimes Jews do it in how they die. But here we're talking about being able to do it in the way that we live. In every situation we are in, we can sanctify Hashem's Name. Often we don't get to choose our situation. Sometimes we have hard times. But whatever our situation, we want to live and act in a way that makes Hashem proud and that shows the world the Holy way in which we live.

## **Shut She'eilat Shlomo - Questions of Jewish Law**

### Mourning for a Non-Jewish Parent

Q: Should a convert mourn for his non-Jewish parent?

A: One should mourn in the accepted manner of mourning by non-Jews over their parents in that place, in order that people do not say that one went from a higher level of holiness to a lower level. Acting in this way is ethical. He is not obligated to mourn with all of the Halachot as one does for a Jew. However, when Tavi, Rabban Gamliel's servant, died, Rabban Gamliel accept consolation, as if he were Jewish. When asked about this, he responded: Tavi is not like other servants, he is kosher (Mishnah Berachot 2:7). Therefore, he is not obligated to sit shiva for them, but he may do so. It is a personal decision (see also Shut Igrot Moshe, Yoreh Deah 2:130).

Q: Should he recite Kaddish?

A: Ha-Rav Ovadiah Yosef rules that it is permissible and proper to recite Kaddish (Shut Yechaveh Da'at 6:60).

### **Family Matters - Ha-Rav writes weekly for**

*the parashah sheet "Rosh Yehudi" on family relationships*

#### To Be Loved

*It is essential for a baby to love and be loved. Both of these are included in one concept: Connection of love. This is essential like milk, water, and food. But we are not angels, and sometimes we express a lack of patience, lack of relationship, or lack of a smile, and the baby is disappointed and hurt.*

*Sometimes we do not show joy of our faces for all sorts of reasons, none of which he is responsible for: We are sick, worried about making a living, or concerned about some other problems. But the baby cannot figure out that it does not relate to him. He feels that he is the center of the world. If the parents laugh because they heard a joke, he thinks it is because of him, and he is happy. And if they are sad, he thinks they are distancing themselves from him. It is therefore always essential to smile at him, rub his skin or hair, kiss and hug him.*

*As we said, we are not angels, but human beings, and we make mistakes. But we can also fix them. When we do make a mistake, we must turn to him with love and explain that we will*

*always love him. Does he understand? A little. Even if he does not understand our words, he understands our tone and our smile.*

*By the way, everything we said about the need to love and be loved also applies to adults.*

## Text Message Responsa

Ha-Rav answers hundreds of text message questions a week. Some appear in the parashah sheets "Ma'ayanei Ha-Yeshu'ah" and "Olam Ha-Katan." Here's a sample:

Arrogance

Q: Is arrogance an evil character trait in and of itself or because it causes others bad things?

A: Both. See Musar Avicha of Maran Ha-Rav Kook.

Home-Birth

Q: Is it proper to have a planned home-birth?

A: No. The risk of the baby's death is 3 times higher than in a hospital. Research of the AJOC vol. #201.

Brit Milah

Q: I read research that a Brit Milah decreases a person's pleasure. How does this fit with the idea that Judaism is a religion which sanctifies pleasures?

A: The Rambam already mentions in Moreh Nevuchim that a Brit Milah weakens the evil inclination for forbidden relations. But where is the source that the Torah sanctifies pleasures? This is the outlook of idol worship. And we sanctify by fulfilling our obligations and the Mitzvot. Mesilat Yesharim chap. 1.

Prayer

Q: I davened with great Kavana and tears, but forgot Yaale Ve-Yavo. Does this prayer have value?

A: It certainly has value, but you need to daven again.

Prayer

Q: I asked Hashem for something, but He did not give it to me. What can I do?

A: Teshuvah, Tzedakah and more prayer. But remember that Hashem is not enslaved to us, G-d forbid.

Removing Hair

Q: Is it permissible for a man to trim the hair from his nose or is it a violation of "Lo Tilbash" (the prohibition of men dressing or appearing as women)?

A: It is permissible, since it is not to beautify himself but to remove an ugliness. Tosafot on Shabbat 50b.

Directions to Non-Jew on Shabbat

Q: Is it permissible to give directions to a non-Jew who is driving on Shabbat?

A: Yes, there is no issue of "placing a stumbling block before the blind," since it is permissible for him to drive on Shabbat.

## Pig

Q: Is it permissible to wear gloves made from pig skin?

A: Yes. As well as any other piece of clothing. It is forbidden to eat and engaged in business with pigs, but there is no prohibition to benefit from it in this way (Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah 117).

## Guarding One's Tongue

Q: If my parents are speaking Lashon Ha-Ra at a meal, what should I do?

A: Try to steer the conversation in a different direction, humbly point it out, or leave in an inconspicuous manner.

## Kiddush for a Girl

Q: If a girl's parents did not have a Kiddush for her when she was born, will it impede her ability to find a match?

A: No (There was once a Kiddush in shul for a 25 year old woman, since her parents did not have a Kiddush for her when she was born, and it was said in the name of Ha-Rav Yaakov Yisrael Kanievski, the Steipler Gaon, that she would not otherwise find a match... When this was related to his son, Ha-Rav Chaim Kanievski, he said: Who made this up? Wouldn't I have heard this in my house? My father never said that we should made a Kiddush for the birth of a girl!... – Derech Sichah vol. 1 p. 33).

## Singing Kaddish

Q: Is it permissible to sing Kaddish along with the person leading the davening?

A: Yes, if the voice of the person davening can be heard above the people singing along.

## Kashrut

Q: If I am invited to eat at someone's home, how do I ask which type of Kosher certification they buy and how they wash their lettuce?

A: This is chutzpa! You are not obligated to eat at their house, but if you come do not insult them (Tosafot on Avodah Zarah 36a. Ve-Alehu Lo Yibol vol. 2 p. 66).

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