

Session 70

Chayei Sarah – How Much Life in our Years?

31 October 2021

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DpcQAYPL3UI>

Ari

Shalom my friends! Hello everybody! Give me a wave! Good to see you. It is so good to see you. Scrolling through your faces today has brought me particular joy because today is a little bit of a special day for me. It is a special day. And by the way, as far as points go for coming early, Brandon, you are always there way ahead of time. Cal and Ardelle, Stefanie, Pat and Rich, you guys are rocking it. Maybe we'll start giving prizes for coming early, even though I don't know what the value of that is necessarily. Rich, you were conspicuously absent. Let's see there, Tana, I'm very happy to see you, but it's quite clear that you're driving, so I hope that you cannot see me because that would be dangerous, but I'm not judging. I'm not the guy to does that, but I'm pretty sure you made an illegal left-hand turn there. Anyways, James, it's good to see you. I'm not sure who Klong is, but it's good to see you, Klong. The name on the screen is Klong. And Rhonda and George and Erica. Ryan, can I keep going on, just a few. Johan, Yohan I guess. Sheen, Sheilo, Mike Eisley, everybody. It's just great to see you. And it's great to see really all of you.

Anyways, as I was looking to you I was sending particularly blessed energy and vibes because today is my birthday, the 26<sup>th</sup> of Cheshvan. My Gregorian birthday, the secular birthday, the Western birthday is November 16<sup>th</sup>. But my Hebrew birthday is today. Now Yishai Fleisher, he says that your Western birthday is the birthday of your body and your Hebrew birthday is the birthday of your soul. Whatever that means, I don't even know what that means. It doesn't make any sense to me because it pretty much...whatever, I like it. I like Yishai Fleisher so I accept it fully.

Anyways, it was 42 years ago today that I came into the world, well as about a half hour ago. For as you know, the day begins at night and the night just began. So all of you are the very first people I am with on my birthday. And this is quite a time to have a birthday as we're here together learning about the death of Sarah which is a little bit ironic because the Torah portion begins with the words Veyihyu Chayei Sarah, and there's the life of Sarah, not about her death. It's about her life, but it actually is commemorating her death. But we'll get into that soon. But I'll tell you it's interesting that as Jews, the day we commemorate our ancestors and our sages and just anyone who's passed away that we want to commemorate is not on their birthday. We don't commemorate that at all. It's on the day that they passed away. So by and large, we don't even mark birthdays for the deceased at all or nearly at all. There are a few exceptions, but we don't mark birthdays because, yes, they did come into the world on their birthdays, but that you're born with this raw, unrealized, latent potential. Who knows if it's going to be fulfilled? Who knows whether you're going to realize this great potential within you? So it's a

little bit of a...it's too early to start celebrating a birthday. So, it's not a foregone conclusion what that's going to look like. But, when you leave this world, well then we celebrate and remember and continue to be inspired by the life you lived. And that's the day you left the world. The day you left the world is the culmination of your extraordinary life. So that's the day we celebrate.

Anyways, I'm going on and on, but after we pass on...what? Oh, Jeremy's right here. Sorry. Jeremy's making noises. He says I'm talking about the birthday for too long. But I think back in the day in the times of the Torah, they did celebrate birthdays. I think so. I don't know, what do you think? I can imagine that Avraham and Sarah were kneading pancakes and throwing a party for Yitzchak's birthday, particularly his third birthday when it's the custom to first cut his hair. Just this past Friday at the farm, we had a beautiful family that was celebrating exactly that, their three-year-old's birthday by cutting his hair and letting him lick the honey from each of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet so that the words of the Torah would always be sweet in his mouth. Anyways, nowadays in my world, we do. We do celebrate birthdays in general. Jeremy doesn't celebrate my birthday because he's just too self-absorbed a friend to think about me.

Anyways, we celebrate them...how do we celebrate them? By blessing each other. Because it's a Jewish tradition that on our birthdays we're endowed with a special power to bless. It's an auspicious time for us to turn to our family and our friends, to our people, to the whole world. There are no limits. It's just a time where you have the power to bless powerfully. We can always bless, right? Tradition says that on our birthday, that day is made for blessing. Which is sort of interesting because growing up in the West, I remember my birthday was always marked by the presents that were given to me. It was sort of an expectation. But here in the Land of Israel in the world of Torah, our birthdays are not marked by what we receive, but by what we can give. And our birthdays are the only time that we receive this special power, so I want to bless all of you because it's fitting that we're all together when my birthday is actually started and launched because you're such a blessing to me and to all of us out here – to Jeremy, to Tehila, to Shaena, to Dvash, to our families. So I want to bless all of you. My first blessing on my birthday.

HaShem, please bless the holy souls in this fellowship with health and with happiness. Bless them and bless their families. Shine Your light of love upon them and shelter them under Your protective wings. Protect them from physical harm and from sickness. Protect them from spiritual harm and from the darkness that seems to be spreading throughout the world. HaShem, all of the people in this fellowship, they love You and they're seeking You. Walk with them and hold them and comfort them and strengthen them for the times ahead. Bless each and every one of them individually and bless their families. And bless this fellowship as a whole. Strengthen our mission together to illuminate the world with Your light of coming together in our mission to walk in Your way and to follow in Your path. Bless us, HaShem, with

humble hearts that are open to receiving Your light and learning Your truths. And bless us that the light of this fellowship shouldn't only be for us, but may it serve as a source of love and compassion and healing and redemption for all of mankind. Amen.

Now, before I go on, let me say there have been a number of you who have sent me prayer requests over the past week and the past while. And I thank you for that, and I pray for each and every one of you. I know Jeremy does too. But please do not hold back over the next 24 hours. Send me your prayer requests, your blessing requests. Give me the opportunity to bless you personally on my birthday. That would be the greatest birthday present you could give me. So again, my email is [ari@thelandofisrael.com](mailto:ari@thelandofisrael.com). And my WhatsApp is 011 972 054 6462082. I don't know if that works from every country, but my number here in Israel is 054 646 2082. Anyways, WhatsApp, I know it's sad, but it is the best and most reliable way to reach me. Email sometimes can be hit or miss. Anyways, we have a lot to learn together today and I've already used up a lot of our time talking about my birthday, but it's just such a beautiful parsha. And I really tried to focus on including it all in this fellowship. But before we dive in, allow me to introduce my beloved friend and my great inspiration for so many ways. Jeremy Gimpel. Jeremy, get over here and share some wisdom and inspiration with us.

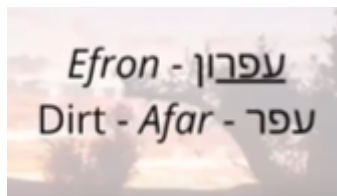
Jeremy

Hey everybody. The internet on the farm is so rocky right now that we had to move into Jerusalem and we're broadcasting now from our, I guess our Jerusalem office, our Jerusalem studio. The winter is officially here. I think that that's fair to say. We really felt it this morning. And you know, I walked out this morning and it was dark outside, it was still before the sunrise, they moved the clocks back. And so, I just woke up at a normal hour and it came out to be very early. And I was just walking through the Land and this week's parsha is just so connected to the Land. This is the first time that we purchased, we acquired the Land. Abraham purchases Maarat Hamachpela. It's the first time we acquired the Land of Israel. And it happened in Chevron.

Now of course Jerusalem is our capital. It's the capital of every believer in the world. It's the capital of all of Israel. But the capital of Judea is Chevron. And there's so much that goes on here. You know, it was where Abraham decided to live. The midrash says that there was a marital conflict between Abraham and Sarah. And first of all, that's good to know because all of us have marital conflicts every once in a while. At least I do. And so it's good to know that Abraham and Sarah, they had their differences, they had their opinions. Abraham wanted to live in Be'er Sheva. He says, "Listen, we're here reaching out to the nations and we've already been accepted by the King Avimelech. He sees me as a prophet of God. We will be able to influence the people here because of my esteemed position." And Sarah says, "No, I don't think that that's the right position for our family. If we want to become a nation that's going to change the entire world, we can't be the prophet within some other king. We eventually are

going to need our own king, our own kingdom. And the kingdom is going to be established in Chevron.”

And so, Sarah gets her wish. And Abraham, after her death, follows her advice. As he did when she was alive, so he did after she passed away. And he bought Maarat Hamachpela in Chevron, and then we see that King David, then years later, when he first established the kingdom. That was the beginning of Mashiach. That’s where it all started. Where did it start? It started in Judea. It started in Chevron for seven years. Only then, King David moved to Jerusalem. And then, of course we have at the very end of days, God is talking all about Judea and Jerusalem. The tents of Judah will be saved first. God will take Judea as an inheritance. And Jerusalem will become His city. Somehow the Land, it’s all like...it starts with the Land and it ends with the Land. In fact, when Avraham is going to purchase the Land, he purchases it from a man named Efron. Efron the Hittite. Without knowing Hebrew, you can’t really understand what’s going on here because Efron, if we could put up the slide. Efron comes from the Hebrew word, afar. Afar literally means dirt.



And so, on a deeper level, when Abraham is talking to Efron, in some ways he’s talking to the earth itself. He’s talking to afar, it’s like a play on words. I mean, if we were talking about English, it’s like the man’s name would be Dusty. He’s talking to the dust of the earth. He’s talking to Efron, which is afar. Avraham is now entering into a relationship with the Land itself. And it’s almost like a throwback to the Garden of Eden. Efron says, “Here take me. I’m free. You can just come, it’s ok. Here, I put you in the garden, you got it.”

And Abraham says, “No, I don’t really want it for free. I want to earn it. I want to buy it. I want to acquire it.” And it’s like Adam said, listen you know, he chose to chew, to eat, from the fruit of knowledge of good and evil. And all of a sudden, he’s in a totally different relationship with the Land. Now it’s a restoration. Now it’s going back to the Garden of Eden. And Abraham says, “Listen, I’m choosing this now. I am choosing to acquire the Land. I’m choosing to work on the Land, I’m choosing to work on myself.” And that’s really a teaching for all generations. You want to enter into a real covenant with God? You’re going to have to own that. You’re going to have to work for that. It’s not going to come easy. We are in the world of action. And only by owning it, by acquiring it, by working on yourself, by working toward your destiny can you acquire the Land of Israel. It’s not free.

Abraham chose that and he’s teaching us, so should we. We should also own that. But more importantly, the Torah is teaching us something really deep. God is not just a transcendent reality in the Torah. He’s not just the Creator, but He’s a God who lives in covenant. He lives in a covenant with His people. What does that mean? A brit in Hebrew literally means a relationship. It’s like God chose to express His relationship with His people through the Land of

Israel. The base covenant that God made with Avraham is, “I’m going to give you this Land to you and your offspring throughout their generations as an everlasting covenant. I’m going to express Myself to every believer in the world through the Land. If they’re living righteously and they’re walking in the light, you’re going to see My blessing manifest in the Land. It’ll just start to rain, the Land will start giving its fruit. You’ll see life coming from out the Land. If you don’t behave in the Land, the Land itself is going to spit you out. The Land is going to go to sleep, the Land will go into barren exile as you will. And one day, you’ll be brought back to the Land to fulfill your ultimate destiny, the work you’ll have to do to eventually restore yourself to the Land. To restore the captivity of Israel, to restore the barren Land back to the Garden of Eden. That process you will become who you need to become and God’s Presence will return to the Land itself.”

God is teaching us, you know, if you want to know if God is in a covenant with His people, look at the Land of Israel. You want to know where God’s move is? Look at the Land of Israel. Watch Jerusalem. Watch Judea. Pray for Jerusalem. As the Land goes, so too God goes. And God’s Presence is slowly now being restored into the Land. The people of Israel are slowly being restored to the Land. The Land is slowly coming back to life. That’s what makes the Arugot Farm such a marvel and wonder. Because it’s as if we are literally living the covenant. We’ve come to the barren desert and just slowly but surely, it’s coming back to life and becoming one of the most beautiful places in all of the Land.

And so, it’s through this Land that God’s light is going to spread to the ends of the earth. And so, in this week’s parsha, in Chevron, it’s like our fellowship is an online virtual reality. Very soon, hopefully we’re all going to meet in the Land to celebrate Sukkot together one way or another. But in the meantime, all of us, somehow, what has brought us all together? Our fellowship is called the Land of Israel fellowship. Because it is the Land that unites all of us. It’s the Land that God’s eyes are upon. And ultimately, that is where the kingdom is going to be built. There’s going to be a country, not a State of Israel. There’s going to be a country. There’s going to be a Kingdom. There’s going to be a place that is going to illuminate the entire world. And our goal is to help facilitate that, to bring as much light as we can from this Land to the rest of the world.

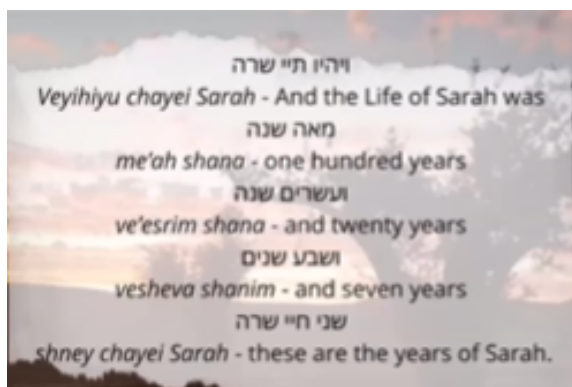
And so, I feel very blessed today that it is Ari’s Hebrew birthday, and that we all got that blessing from this Land. But you know, we have a mission to inspire the world, to ingather the exiles, to strengthen and unify the Jewish people and to settle the Land of Israel. And all of us together have somehow been brought together on this incredible mission. And together, from all over the world, we’re all working together in our own ways to build the Kingdom. In England and in South Africa and in Colorado. But our capital is Jerusalem and our heart is Chevron. And so, that’s what I wanted to share with you today. Is just the unbelievable importance of the work that we’re doing here in Judea in the Land, all of us are doing it together. Next week, I

have some very exciting news, I'm just going to put out a teaser. It's really, really exciting. And so, until then, shalom friends.

Ari

Hello, hello. Jeremy, that was phenomenal, truly phenomenal. Jeremy, you here? Ok. Ok. I never heard that idea about afar in the Garden of Eden. That was like multi.... that wasn't your original idea? Nothing is your original idea, that sounds right. It's true for me also. But anyways, that was really, really powerful. I've never heard that before. I'm a little taller than Jeremy, so I'm going to do a little adjustment here.

Anyways, whenever I get to this portion of the Torah, the first verse I can't help but thinking of my third grade Rabbi, his name was Rabbi Levitt. Because for a full month of his class, each day we spent the first, I don't remember 20 to 30 minutes chanting that first verse as a song which has been the tradition in yeshivas and places of Torah learning for many generations. It's actually called the Zilberman Approach. Not every single rabbi follows this path, but Rabbi Levitt did. And I can testify to its effectiveness. So we started each class chanting like this, do it with me:



And literally, every day, we do that again and again and again, to the degree that I'm 42 years old today and I know that verse cold. Cold! And you know when you walk through the ancient winding pathways of the old city, there's a good chance that you're going to hear chanting exactly like that, emanating from the yeshivot. And it works. Their entire yeshivot of young boys who memorize the entirety of the Torah, all of it, in exactly that way. Just chanting, chanting, in

exactly that way.

And that's the beginning of the parsha. We talk about Sarah as she leaves the world. And for me, there's always a certain amount of grief, sorrow, longing in this portion for it seems like we just met our patriarch and matriarch, our mother, our father, Abraham and Sarah. It feels like we've just begun to meet them, to seek this deeper insight into the beautiful light they shine into the world. And we're already saying goodbye! And you know, both of them at the same time! It's the same parsha. At least to their physical bodies.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe, I'm going to be quoting him a lot. I've just been diving into his Torah and it's speaking to me and it's just so good for my soul. And he shines a little bit of light on this. Because how can the portion that begins by speaking of Sarah's death be called the Life of Sarah. Shouldn't it be called the death of Sarah? And you'd think that a portion starting that

way would talk about her life and reflect on it. That it would be like reading some kind of eulogy for her. But instead, it just goes on to talk about Abraham's purchase of the cave of Machpelah. And about Eliezer's mission to find a suitable wife for Isaac, and about Abraham remarrying Ketura, who the sages explain is another name for Hagar. By the way, there's entire ideas that we're not even delving into. Every time before I do the fellowship, I make sure to look at last year's. To make sure that I'm not saying the same ideas. And it's worth it sometimes, just to revisit last year's if you have time and you want to. To revisit last year's, maybe before Shabbat you could listen to the last years on this Torah portion. And then right after Shabbat, we do this one together. And it's just an idea.

Anyways, all these things that we're talking about right now, they all follow, these are the years of Sarah. So why? Well the rebbe explains an idea that we've touched on before in this fellowship, that the righteous live more after their physical deaths than they actually do while their souls are within their bodies in this world. So all of these events and really all of Jewish history is a continuation of the words, "these are the years of Sarah." Because all of it, all of it happened because of her. In her merit. All of this happened because of the light that she brought into the world. And this is true not only for Sarah, but Avraham as well. For really for all of our forefathers and foremothers, but really the most, Abraham and Sarah. They are the origin story.

Now, the Rebbe goes on to point out that the Talmud actually explicitly states that Jacob, that Yaakov did not die. It says he did not die. Now how could it be that he didn't die? Because he lived on through his progeny. Through the 12 tribes of Israel. And he continues to live through us. At least those of us who seek to follow His path and to fulfill his mission. Now this is not only true for the forefathers and the foremothers, but really for all the righteous throughout history. And God-willing, it could be true for each and every one of us as well. That the death of our physical bodies does not mean the death of us. I'm actually even thinking about the Rebbe himself, of the Lubavitcher Rebbe. He did not have any children. He and his wife were not blessed with any children. Does that mean that his light and his message and his life force and his soul died with him? No, I mean, I consider myself one of his children. And there are hundreds of thousands, millions of Jews around the world who do the same. Just by his teachings and his ideas and his blessings. So, I bless all of us that it should be so with us, that when our physical bodies expire and return to dirt, our souls live on stronger than even during our lifetimes.

Ok, but to understand a little bit more deeply how Sarah lives on, I want to first reflect on Abraham's life, on Avraham's life and what the Rebbe taught about him in last week's Torah portion. So the Rebbe asked a question and I've had this question myself throughout my own life. He asks why the nation of Israel in our prayers and in our hearts, when we're praying especially on Yom Kippur, when we feel like we're without any merits left, any personal merits, we dip into the reserves of our forefathers, particularly Abraham, who bound us all in this

covenant of self-sacrifice for HaShem. But the Rebbe asks, “Why? Why do we have to dip into Abraham’s self-sacrifice?” Because this is what I always thought. There are untold myriads, hundreds of thousands, millions of Jews throughout history who have faced exactly the same sacrifice. The stories of many of them we know, right? But the vast majority of them we don’t know.

One of the most famous which came to my mind immediately and then the Rebbe actually goes on to mention is the story of Chana, who encouraged her seven children to be sent to their torturous deaths rather than to merely bow to a Greek idol. Have you heard the story of Chana? I remember from when I’m a little boy. And she was known to have proclaimed to them. She shouted to them, “My children. Go to Abraham your father and say to him, you bound one offering upon the altar, and I have bound seven offerings.” And she was right, there’s holocausts, pogroms, inquisitions, it’s impossible to imagine how many sacrificed their lives, willingly sacrificed their lives and the lives of their families rather than give in and compromise on the truth of the one true God.

So, if that’s true, why is it only Abraham’s merits that we tap into? When there’s so many others? And to be fair, many of these others seem to have done so, if we’re going to be honest, in more difficult circumstances than even Abraham. Because they didn’t have this prophetic revelation that strengthened and fortified this unimaginably painful decision. They just had to go based on their intuition and their gut. They didn’t have a Divine voice speaking to them. And so, that’s the question. And the answer that the Rebbe gives is just so beautiful. And here’s what he says. And this is the way that the story was presented. The Rebbe brings a metaphor that was passed down from the Chassidic sages. And so this is how it goes.

All right, there was an unexplored wilderness that had yet to be traveled through. Right? There were no trails, it was just wild. And it seemed untraversable, this wilderness. And there were no maps of course, there were no markings, no one had ever been there. It had never encountered the soul of a foot. But then, one man came and he accomplished that which not only seemed completely impossible, but no one even dared to try. And he forged a path through this impossible and unexplored terrain.

All right, so the metaphor goes on to explain that others, future people were able to take this same difficult, dangerous and extraordinarily painful path that this first pioneer forged. But no matter how brutal it seemed, they always had his map to follow. You see where I’m going here? That many of them traversed the path through even more difficult circumstances while he did it in daylight. Maybe the weather was good. They did it at night, in stormy weather. Nonetheless, they all recognized that their success in traveling this path was due to his first blazing this trail. And therefore, their tremendous sacrifices were in some way, they were an extension of his own.



And so we learned from this that Abraham was the first pioneer of self-sacrifice, true self-sacrifice, in which he was fully willing to sacrifice not only his beloved son, and not only his future and his legacy, but also his mission in the world. The very truth of his message, right? One of the great messages that he had was to these child-sacrificing, idolatrous pagans. And his message was that the one true God of Israel despises child-sacrifice. And here he was on the verge of negating that truth of his fundamental message as well. He was willing to sacrifice his son, his future, his message, everything. So he blazed that first trail of self-sacrifice for HaShem. Is that a beautiful metaphor?

So Abraham, he was this first trailblazer. He blazed the trail of self-sacrifice, but he also blazed the trail of bringing knowledge of God into the world, to all of mankind. Remember Abraham was not only the father of Isaac, but he was also the father of Yishmael. And he prayed for Yishmael to HaShem, begged HaShem, that Yishmael should be able to stand before HaShem as well. There's no question that Abraham had a universal mission.

But Sarah, right? Well she blazed a different trail. And while Abraham's trail and Sarah's trail may seem to be conflicting, I'm going to go on to explain it, they're both blazed in the collective hearts of the Jewish people. And all people who walk in Abraham's name. All people who inherit the spiritual legacy of Abraham, Jewish and not Jewish. So Abraham blazed this trail of bringing God into the world, what did Sarah blaze a trail of? How that mission would be accomplished. In a very particular way, through her son, Isaac, through the Jewish people. Just one example, right? Abraham ran to embrace the three angels that he thought were these pagan idolaters and welcomed them royally into his home, into his tent. Whereas Sarah often seemed the opposite, right? She banished Hagar and Yishmael to potential death because she was afraid that they were poisoning the environment within which she sought to nurture and cultivate Isaac for whom Jacob and the nation of Israel would emerge. Right? Abraham wanted all of his sons to inherit him, the whole world. And Sarah was tasked to ensure that it would be through Isaac. Very particular.

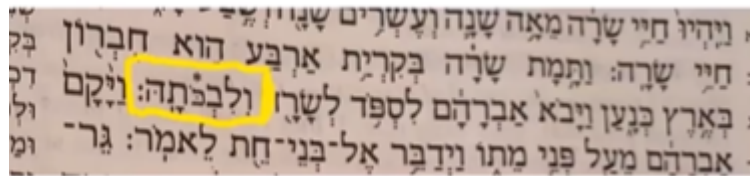
So there are many examples of this, but they point to the fact that throughout all of Jewish history, throughout all of the parsha, these points are playing out. And they're all expressions of who we are because we are both the...we're both the fulfillment of our personal mission. The Jewish mission. And the universal mission of Abraham. And in that way, both Abraham and Sarah continued to live literally in our hearts, through our lives and through the mission entrusted to the nation of Israel.

And just picture Isaac, right? Like poor Isaac. Imagine the conflict, the struggle that raged within him. The very first generation of the merging of these two paths. And Jacob, right? What's his other name, Yisrael? What does Yisrael mean? His very name means to struggle with God. My friends, by the way, this is all from the Rebbe. And I pray that I'm doing justice and accurately conveying these lofty ideas from him because this is the general truth. I'll just

say it now. It's safe to say, that if you ever hear anything outstandingly insightful from me, it's not from me, but from the great rabbis and sages whose teachings I've been so blessed to encounter and share with you. I try to share with you who I'm learning it from because that brings perfection to the world, but anyways.

So now, let's open our Tanakh, and see how far we can get. Because you know, I'm not so good at that. If I could, this fellowship would be five hours and we would just plow through it and go verse by verse. You know, I have trouble deciding what to highlight because in the end like who am I to make that decision? Who am I to make such a decision? This is just another reason I'm so eager for the day when we can have a fellowship retreat here on our mountain in Judea where time is on a different trajectory where we can just sit down and take it with serenity and give the Torah the attention it deserves. Ok.

So Sarah passes away and the Torah says,



Sarah died in Kiryat Arbah, which is Chevron in the Land of Canaan, and Abraham came to eulogize and mourn her.

Now as you see, I circled this word "livcotah," to weep for her, in a yellow marker because there's a small kaf there. Livcotah, and our sages teach this is because Abraham publicly eulogized his wife who transformed from being Sarai, which is his personal princess to Sarah, right? Who's a princess for all of humanity. So publicly he spoke of her qualities and attributes with which she is the matriarch of all of Israel, but his own personal love and intimate connection with her, he mourned privately and wept alone. And they say he wept and wept and wept, it ripped his heart in pieces. Just think about it. He came back from nearly sacrificing a son to see that his wife had passed away.

Now in order to bury her, Avraham goes to acquire the cave of Machpelah, and he enters very advanced and subtle negotiations with Efron the Hittite, right? Jeremy just talked about that, who owned that plot of Land. Now Yishai Fleisher, who you know, he does an excellent Middle Eastern analysis of the subtext of this negotiation which our sages tell us was actually one of Abraham's great tests. Because here he was promised that the Land of Israel would be his heritage. And now, as his beloved wife's body lies before him...you know, before the actual burial, when the body is before you, it's like an open wound, amputation. And as she's lying before him, he needs to enter this demeaning and manipulative negotiation with Efron the Hittite who cynically offers it as a gift. But then when Abraham insists, then he names this grossly inflated price of 400 shekels which of course Abraham accepts without flinching.

And so here's where the power of Sarah's life, after her own death, continues to live on, right? For the Rebbe points out that although Abraham was promised the entirety of the Land, it's only in the merit of Sarah that any part of the Land actually is acquired. And therefore, it's in the merit of Sarah that the spiritual nature and spiritual potential of the Land is actually given expression for the Jewish people who Sarah represents. So bear in mind that before Sarah, who was buried in this cave? Trivia question. Before Sarah was buried there, who was buried in the cave? For one Land of Israel necklace, we'll send it to you. Before Sarah was buried, ok, the first one to get it right was Suzanne. Suzanne, so we will send you a Land of Israel necklace. We should do that more. That's fun. That's fun. So Eve was buried there. Adam and Eve were buried there. And it was Adam and Eve, right, who were the mother and father of all of humanity, which made the cave of Machpelah a universal landmark. But, when Sarah was buried there, much like her mission in life, the cave became particular and exclusive to the Jewish people.

Ok, now one of the members of the fellowship, I'm looking for you there, Robin, reached out with a question, right? Just a few days ago. He asked why Avraham had to buy Chevron at all since HaShem gave him the Land upon which his foot tread. Right? Is that right, Robin? Is that your question? I'm looking for you here. Ok. I assume it's your question, because I remember it's your question. So I've asked myself this question. Have any of you thought of that before? Why we had to buy the Land when it was just given to us. So, I've thought of that. And I sent the question, even though I had my own little answers, I sent it to one of my great rabbis, Rav Simcha Hochbaum. And so he sent me this response, I thought I would share it with you. Ben, you want to play that? Rav Simcha clip. Ok, I don't know exactly how long I should wait here. There we go. Ok, it was close. You heard him say alpi chassidus, according to Chassidut. Maybe we should do another fellowship exactly talking about, what is chassidut? What's the difference of chassidut. Here we go.

Rav Simcha Hochbaum



Hey Ari. Like all good question, numerous answers. One answer, alpi chassidus, is the concept of being pudus something. And when something is in the domain of an unholy force like Efron the Hittite, so that item needs to be redeemed...when you go to the Tzadik, sometimes you have to give a pidyon. And you have to give a pidyon to redeem, and that pidyon, it takes it out from the acquisition of the non-Jew and it brings it now to the acquisition of Avraham Avinu, everything gets sanctified, everything gets sanctified, everything gets uplifted. So that's one reason why he paid money to take it out from

their (?) of Efron who wasn't such a good guy.

And the other answer sometimes given is to show the real chesed shalemit. You love someone when it's for free, an easy relationship. It doesn't show you value it. When imagine you're nice to Sarah, and you want to show your love for her and do chesed shalemit. So you don't want to just bury her in any cave. You want to show how much you value that person and you're willing to pay for it. And you're willing to give a donation, even if it rightfully belongs to you, to Efron the Hittite. And that's why Avraham bought the cave. And of course, the 2021 answer of today is the nation, the world shouldn't come and say, gifts, divine promises, we don't hold from it. Avram wanted to talk a language the whole world will understand. If I pay for it, then I buy it. Everyone will know it's ours. And therefore, he goes out of his way to buy it, to purchase it so there'll be no opening for our cousins, from the Christian and the Muslim side to claim it's theirs.

Ari

Ok, now I know that there was a lot of very specific Hebrew verbiage that I could translate, but that would take a while. So the first answer he gives is somewhat legalistic, that in order to redeem a gift, you need to give something. But I don't want to get into that so much. The second answer he gave was that this was, if I'm summing it up right, an issue of perceived value, to show that it meant something to him. But I want to focus more on the third answer. And the third answer he said, that by buying the cave, it would address the claims of the nations when they say that they don't hold by Divine promises and it's not fair to expect them to.

So in order to approach the acquisition of our Land in a regal sort of way, a kind way, a way allowing for peace and good will and not war and conquest, Abraham purchased the Land. Exactly as we, his descendants did when we liberated the Land, too. As much as possible at least. Because after the war, we had the power to expel and take it all after the war as every other nation did and would do, but we didn't. I don't ...maybe we could, we should, we shouldn't have, that's a whole other discussion. But my friend, Baruch Gordon explained that is why we founded the JNF, right, the Jewish National Fund was founded to purchase Land that was owned by individuals whether it's Arabs or otherwise and to purchase it from its owners. And so my friend, Baruch found this clip of Menachem Ussishkin who was the founder of the JNF. He explained it himself. This is what he said.



Menachem Ussishkin

The slogan in the Land of Israel today is: More Land, More People. To purchase the soil of the Land of Israel today is not only required for settlement, but also for sovereignty.

Ari,

Again, this is just an example of Abraham blazing trails. And you know, even then, purchase the Land. That's part of what it was. But why all this expense and heartache over the cave of Machpelah? What was it about Chevron, about this cave that was so special? So Jeremy started to answer and we'll review a little but, but to start the answer, I'll refer to you my friend Yishai Fleisher, right? He's the spokesman of the city of Chevron. His wedding was in Chevron, a wedding that I attended. And inexplicably for some reason, I wore a tie-dye shirt. So Yishai shared his perspective on Chevron and why it's so important. But if I share it with you, we're going to probably go five to ten minutes over. Is that OK? Give me a yes or no. Yeah, I could share Yishai? I try to stick to the time, but I have so much to say. Alright. So let's play Yishai's video about answering about Chevron.

Interviewer

Yishai, what's the secret of Chevron?

Yishai



What is the secret of Chevron? The secret of Chevron, the real secret is that according to the Kabbalah, this is the entrance way to the Garden of Eden. And so on the one hand, there's a place here to connect with something otherworldly, metaphysical and really a portal into God and into the footsteps of the forefathers and mothers, on the one hand.

On the other hand, the other secret is, is that there's *tohu v'vohu*, as the Zora says, all around here. There is chaos and an effort to replace the Garden of Eden with chaos. There's always this tension between the Garden of Eden and chaos. And the Jewish people's return to the Land of Israel is the opposite of chaos, it's the Garden of Eden. And it's our friends, including even Arab friends behind me. There's one of the Arab tribes here, the Jabri tribe, which is very friendly with us. So they want progress and they want progress as they *badakeh*, as we say in Arabic, a blessing of God to Abraham in this place. And on the other hand, there's always a constant yearning of the dark forces in this world to make this place into chaos and to denaturate it from instead of being an awesome place of connectivity to disconnect for all mankind. We are on the side of progress, we're on the side of blessings, we're on the side of walking the footsteps of the forefathers and mothers in the ways of God.

Interviewer

And from Israel and around the world, you have support, but also opposition.

Yishai

Around the world, we have both support, and also a lot of conflict. There's a lot of forces in this world that want to stop us. From living here, from building here, from worshipping here. If it's Peace Now, if it's the Arab city of Hebron, if it's all kinds of international forces like UNESCO that wants to claim that this is a Palestinian world heritage site. These are sources that want to stop us from holding on to this place. And basically, stop us from our connection to the Torah and to our ancient past. But, by the way, it's not just an ancient past, we've never left Hebron, we've lived here throughout all time, Jewish people. There are forces like that. And then there are forces around the world, Bible lovers, Jews around the world, countries that recognize the importance of the rights of the Jewish people to the Land of Israel. I just want to remind everybody that the Trump administration with Nikki Haley, as the ambassador to the U.N. left UNESCO specifically because of the anti-Hebron declaration that said that this is not a Jewish site. And so, therefore, we have support, we have people who fight for us, and the most important support that we have is the people buried here, these giants, the God above and the tenacity and stiff-neckedness of the Jewish people to build in Chevron.

Ari

Alright, so Yishai, Yishai makes Chevron awesome. He lives and breathes Chevron and Kiryat Arbah. Because Chevron you know biblically is also called Kiryat Arabah, but why Kiryat Arabah? The four. Because there are four couples that are buried there, right? Adam and Eve, Avraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebecca, Ya'akov and Leah, Jacob and Leah. Of course, Rachel was buried in Ephrata, nearby Beit Lechem where she passed away. So as Yishai said, it's the city of the fathers and the mothers. And our sages tell us that when the spies were sent into the Land, Kalev, Caleb stopped at the cave of Machpelah and prayed there for strength to withstand the pressure by other leaders to join them in sharing on this negative and false report of the Land to maintain their own authority and positions or whatever their reasons were. And he prayed for strength and HaShem gave it to him.

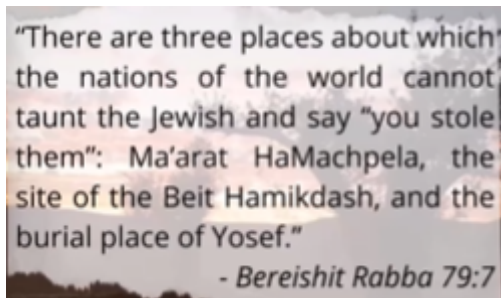
And so too, the Jewish people continue going to Chevron to pray for strength until this very day. And I'm telling you, you do not find Jews anywhere stronger in the world and anywhere more committed than the Jews of Chevron. When we come to the Land of Israel fellowship at the farm, one of our first stops is going to be...one of our trips is going to be Chevron. I remember a friend of mine that lives there telling me that you don't pick to live in Chevron, Chevron picks you. And while you look at these Jews and say that they're suffering for their decision to live surrounded by hostile, murderous enemies, if you sit down with any one of them, they would laugh that off. Sincerely. And from the depths of their hearts, they would say that it's their greatest joy and greatest privilege to live in Chevron.

So, a very dear friend of mine, Moshe Taragin, Rabbi Moshe Taragin, he wrote this beautiful piece about Chevron and Jerusalem, who you know in our Aron Kodesh, in our House of Prayer, we have stones in that Aron Kodesh both from Jerusalem and from Chevron. They're two of the holiest and most centrally significant cities for the nation of Israel in the Land of Israel. And

so he starts off by explaining that Yerushalayim is the city of fire, this holy fire, right? It's intense. Yerushalyim from yirah, from fear and awe. Whereas Chevron is from chaver, a friend, a connection. It's the city of our friends, HaShem's friends, right? Avraham, Yitzchak, and Ya'acov.

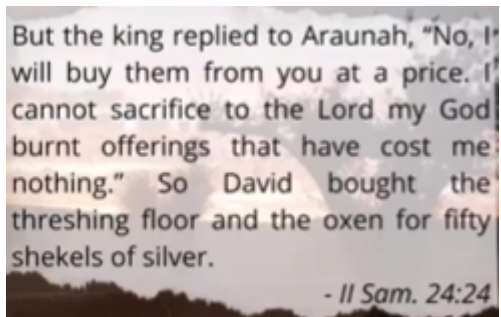
So the Torah portion starts off with Avraham in Mamre, which is in the Chevron region. And he's hosting HaShem in his tent, right? HaShem comes to his tent in this unbelievable prophecy and so sort of Avraham is hosting Him in his tent. But by the end of the parsha, HaShem has brought Avraham to Yerushalyim on top of the mountain. Rav Taragin explains that in Chevron man hosts HaShem, and in Yerushalyim, HaShem hosts us. We are HaShem's guests.

Anyways, Jewish history, it starts in Chevron and it will end in Yerushalyim, right? As Jeremy said, what starts in Chevron ends in Yerushalyim. So the question is, why again? Why does the Torah go into such detail, 20 verses that go into this negotiation with Abraham and Efron over Maarat HaMachpelah. Why does it go into the minutia of the details? So here's a midrash that hints to the answer. I actually have this midrash beautiful art over my Shabbat table. It says -



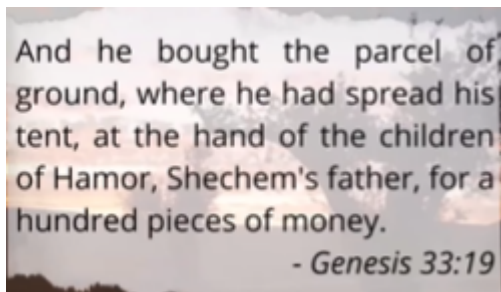
"There are three places about which the nations of the world cannot taunt the Jewish and say "you stole them": Ma'arat HaMachpela, the site of the Beit Hamikdash, and the burial place of Yosef."  
- Bereishit Rabba 79:7

Here we see that Avraham purchased Chevron, we just went over that. King David purchased the Temple Mount in the 2<sup>nd</sup> book of Samuel. We'll just go through it real quick, we're running out of time. Here it is in the 2<sup>nd</sup> book of Samuel:



But the king replied to Araunah, "No, I will buy them from you at a price. I cannot sacrifice to the Lord my God burnt offerings that have cost me nothing." So David bought the threshing floor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver.  
- II Sam. 24:24

He was offered it for free, just like Abraham was. And so, also Jacob purchased Shechem in Genesis, chapter 33, verse 19:



And he bought the parcel of ground, where he had spread his tent, at the hand of the children of Hamor, Shechem's father, for a hundred pieces of money.  
- Genesis 33:19

So according to this approach, there's such detail so that we have a document, we have proof, we have a deed, we have a clear record detailing the sale, which by the way, I've said this for a long time. The tragic irony is the fact that so rarely do any Israeli diplomats who speak in front of the United Nations make the claim that the Land of Israel belongs to the Jewish

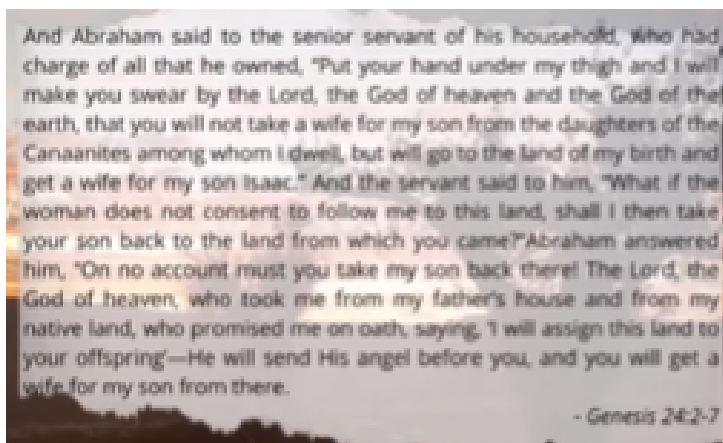


people because of the Torah. Because God gave it to us as an eternal heritage. That's actually something the world, maybe they wouldn't love it, but they would respect it as truth. But anyways, our claims are if we don't use that claim, then whatever claim we have is just disputable into he said, she said, your truth, my truth.

But what's crazy, is that these three places that we just talked about – Hebron, the Temple Mount, Shechem, the three places that were purchased in a very clearly recorded way are the three most contested places upon which our enemies focus their struggle. That's interesting, right? So why are they even recorded? Now I'm not sure I have a great answer for this, but perhaps the answer is that it's not recorded for them, it's recorded for us. What do we think? Right? What do we believe? And perhaps that's the answer to Robin's question. Why did we have to purchase the Land? To satisfy ourselves, our own questions. For just as Abraham wanted to walk an exalted path of justice and peace, we have the same desire in our hearts. And so, maybe for our own emotional health, we needed to have this documented fact that it was purchased in a non-coerced, free will sort of way.

Because keep in mind, Abraham had a mission, right? And that mission was not to acquire the Land of Israel. That mission was to bring the world to a universal recognition and understanding and love of HaShem. And the Land of Israel was the perfectly divinely designed vessel through which that can happen. But the Land in Israel is not the mission in and of itself. It's the vehicle for the mission. So this mission is best demonstrated in what will probably be one of the last verses that we have time for because we are running out of time.

Ok, so Abraham, right, he buries Sarah, he eulogizes her and then he commands Eliezer to go find a wife for Isaac. I have a lot to share about this, but maybe next year's fellowship. And so this is the vow he makes Eliezer, right? So this is Genesis chapter 24, verses 2 through 7:



And so there's so much to say there. I wanted to consistently interrupt it and just give little commentaries on every verse there on every little bit. But the real question I want to focus on in our time together is, why does Abraham when speaking of the past, right? I actually italicized that part, why does he refer to God as the God of heaven, but when he speaks of the present, within the Land of Israel, he speaks of

the God of heaven and earth?

So Rashi explains, right, on verse 24:7. Why does it say he's the God of heaven and earth?



Now He is the G-d of the heaven and the G-d of the earth, because I have made Him familiar in the mouths of the people, but when He took me from my father's house, He was the G-d of the heavens but not the G-d of the earth, because mankind did not acknowledge Him, and His name was not familiar on the earth.  
- Rashi on Genesis 24:7

So that's what Rashi says, but the Ramban takes it even further to explain that from his perspective in the Land of Israel, God is the God of heaven and earth. But in Charan, where He started, He's only the God of heaven, right? So within the Land of Israel, He's the God of heaven and earth, but in Charan, He's only the God of heaven. Meaning that only in the Land of Israel can the knowledge of HaShem

permeate the entire earth. Only in the Land of Israel will the Shechinah return. No matter how compelling an argument for HaShem can be, right? No matter how many souls Abraham may have convinced and made outside the Land of Israel, it will only remain intellectual. Only in the Land of Israel can it fully penetrate the heart. Only when the nation of Israel is within the Land can God truly become the God of heaven and the God of earth. Only when the nation of Israel is within the Land of Israel can we the Jewish people, the descendants of Sarah, right...perform the mission of Abraham and bring the knowledge of God to all of mankind. Only in the Land of Israel does that trail that Abraham blazed and that trail that Sarah blazed, do they converge into one holistic path – the path of redemption. This unified path of redemption.

So I actually want to share with you this short video of Chabad girls who came from many nations around the world to our mountaintop in Judea. Ben, make it a little bit shorter. We don't have time for the whole six minutes.

Video

Ari – how was your time here?

Young girl



My time at the farm was absolutely incredible. This is one of the most special, most incredible places that you will ever, ever come to.

Ari

Wow, thank you so. What was the highlight for you?

Young girl

My highlight was definitely last night, sitting at the bonfire overlooking all the mountains. It just touches absolutely differently. I mean this is a place of absolute kadusha and holiness. And just to sit around and get to know people and like time to think. You just... life changing, absolutely life changing.

Ari

Does it make you think about Israel any differently?

Young girl

Absolutely. Before I came to Israel, I never ever, ever considered making aliyah. It's not something that I would have ever thought about. And once I got here and realized that people literally like the people who are on Arugot Farm and literally sacrificed their lives and will sacrifice so much to come to the middle of like almost nowhere, where there's nothing. And just come and set up a life for themselves just so we can have the Land of Israel. And if people can do that, I can definitely make aliyah. I mean, that's one of the most Israel in your heart.

Ari

So that video goes on for about four more minutes, but if I interviewed every girl there, it would be non-stop. I'm telling you the truth from my heart, I'm just telling you. Nearly every group comes sounding like that. Whether it's Jews, whether it's non-Jews, whether they're secular, this is just the first time I actually pulled out my phone to interview them. And you know, it definitely isn't my charisma or Jeremy's teachings that so powerfully touches them. It's the intrinsic holiness of the Land of Israel that has this transformative power for the soul. Not only the Jewish people, but for all of mankind and it's not a coincidence that when you stand in our sacred House of Prayer, which please God all of you will soon. You're on the top of our mountain and you look south, you see Hebron. And you look north and you see Jerusalem. We're really like right in the middle. And that is our sacred mission I realized. That on the one hand, to connect thirsty souls to the earth, to the Land, to our forefathers, to the mothers and to the fathers, to the energy of Hebron. And on the other hand, to point them to the fire of Jerusalem, to the city of HaShem from where knowledge of HaShem will cover the earth as water covers the sea.

Alright, so allow me my friends to bless all of you again. We started off with the blessing and we'll end with the blessing. Because really we learn a lot about blessings in these Torah portions, right? In the last Torah portion, Abraham prays for Avimelech to be healed. And then he is blessed with a son. We learn that when we bless our fellow, when we bless each other, God answers our prayers. And also in this Torah portion, right? Isaac was out in the field, just talking To God in the field, having a conversation with God. The sages tell us he was asking for a wife and literally as he returns, Rebecca is coming on a camel. This is the time of prayer. These are portions of prayer, and this is the best place for blessings and for prayer.

So, allow me to bless all of you, bless all of us that we should merit to be fruit on the trees of Abraham and Sarah and thereby we should be connected to their life force and their mission. And we continue to live through them and they will continue to live through us. And so, allow me to bless you the blessing of Aaron the High Priest, that he would bless the Jewish people. But we, as we know, we are a nation of priests and so it's my greatest joy to bless all of you.

Aaron blessing (Hebrew)

May God bless and protect you. May He shine His light and His countenance upon you and may He give you peace. Amen.

Love you all.