

CHEVRAH TORAH...5777

With HEART in MIND

MUSSAR Teaching to Transform the Text & Our Lives

Chaye Sarah—Genesis 23:1-20

Mikra u'Mishna—Written & Oral Torah Together

...Key KOSHI...

HOW does the Oral Tradition frame Abraham as a model of honoring the dead?

HOW does our understanding of death expand through the evolution of our interpretive tradition?

HOW does our understanding of death's ritual frame our approach to making memory a legacy?



P'SHAT...Studying Torah—Encountering The Word—The Will—The ONE

The truly wise individual is not one who has achieved wisdom but a *talmid chacham*—a wise student...one who is constantly learning—including by observing and reflecting on what can be learned from other people.

23:1] Sarah lived to be 127 years old—such was the span of Sarah's life. 2] Sarah died in Kiriatharba (that is, Hebron) in the land of Canaan, and Abraham proceeded to mourn for Sarah and to bewail her.

3] Then Abraham rose up from upon his dead [wife], and spoke to the Hittites, saying, 4] "I am a foreigner living for a time among you; sell me a gravesite among you, that I may bury my dead here."

5] The Hittites answered Abraham, saying, 7] "Hear us, my lord; you are a mighty prince in our midst; bury your dead in any of our choicest graves. Not one of us will keep you from burying your dead by withholding a gravesite from you."

7] Abraham then got up and bowed low to the people of the land, the Hittites, 8] pressing them: "If you [really] are willing to let me bury my dead here, listen to me and entreat Ephron son of Zoar for me, 9] and let him sell me the cave of Machpelah. He owns it—it is at the edge of his land. Let him sell it to me as an inalienable gravesite in your midst at the market price." 10] Ephron [himself] was sitting among the Hittites, and, in the hearing of all the Hittites and all the town leaders, Ephron the Hittite answered Abraham, saying, 11] "No, my lord; listen to me. I am giving you the field, and the cave that is in it I give to you; in the sight of my people I give it to you; go ahead—bury your dead."

12] But Abraham bowed low before the landowning citizens, 13] and in their hearing he addressed Ephron the Hittite: "Oh, if only you would listen to me! I will pay the field's price; take it from me, and let me bury my dad there." 14] Ephron then made this reply to Abraham: 15] "My lord, hear me; land worth 400 shekels of silver—what is that between you and me? Go bury your dead!"

16] Abraham listened to Ephron, and Abraham weighed out for Ephron the [amount of] silver he had named in the hearing of the Hittites—400 shekels of silver, [using weights] standard among traders. 17-18] So Ephron's land in Machpelah, looking out on Mamre—the field, its cave, and all the trees in the field within its boundaries—passed to Abraham by purchase, in the sight of the Hittites and of all the town leaders. 19] Afterward, Abraham buried his wife Sarah in the cave of the field of Machpelah—facing Mamre (that is, Hebron)—in the land of Canaan. 20] Thus was confirmed Abraham's acquisition from the Hittites of the field and its cave as a fully owned gravesite.

1 ויהיו חיי שרה מאה שנה ועשרים שנה ושבע שנים
שני חיי שרה: 2 ותמת שרה בקרית ארבע הוא חברון
בארץ כנען ויבא אברהם לספד לשרה ולבכתה: 3 ויקם
אברהם מעל פניו וידבר אל בני חת לאמר: 4 גר
ותושב אנכי עמכם תנו לי אחוזת קבר עמכם ואקבר
מתי מלפני: 5 ויענו בני חת את אברהם לאמר לו:
6 שמענו | אדני נשיא אלהים אתה בתוכנו במבחר
קברינו קבר את מתך איש ממנו את קברו לא יכלה
ממך מקבר מתך: 7 ויקם אברהם וישתחו לעס הארץ
לבני חת: 8 וידבר אתם לאמר איש את נפשכם לקבר
את מתל מלפני שמעוני ופגעו לי בעפרון ברצח: 9 ויתר
לי את מערת המכפלה אשר לו אשר בקצה שדהו בכסף
מלא יתננה לי בתוכם לאחוזת קבר: 10 ועפרון ישב
בתוך בני חת ויען עפרון החתי את אברהם באזני בני
חת לכל באי שער עירו לאמר: 11 לא אדני שמעני השדה
נתתי לך והמערה אשר בו לך נתתיה לעיני בני עמי
נתתיה לך קבר מתך: 12 וישתחו אברהם לפני עם
הארץ: 13 וידבר אל עפרון באזני עם הארץ לאמר אך
אסאתה לו שמעני נתתי כסף השדה קח ממני ואקבר
את מתתי שמה: 14 ויען עפרון את אברהם לאמר לו:
15 אדני שמעני ארץ ארבע מאת שקל כסף ביני ובינך
מה הוא ואת מתך קבר: 16 וישמע אברהם אל עפרון
וישקל אברהם לעפרון את הכסף אשר דבר באזני בני
חת ארבע מאות שקל כסף עבר לסחר: 17 ויקם |
שדה עפרון אשר במכפלה אשר לפני מרא השדה
והמערה אשר בו וכל העץ אשר בשדה אשר בכל גבולו
סביב: 18 לאברהם למקנה לעיני בני חת בכל באי שער
עירו: 19 ואחרי כן קבר אברהם את שרה אשתו אל
מערת שדה המכפלה עלפני מרא הוא חברון בארץ
כנען: 20 ויקם השדה והמערה אשר בו לאברהם לאחוזת
קבר מאת בני חת: ס

ברוך אתה, יי אלהינו, מלך העולם, אשר קדשנו במצותיו וצונו לעסוק בדברי תורה.
Baruch atah, Adonai Eloheinu, Melech haolam, asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav v'c'zivanu laasok b'divrei Torah.
Blessed are you, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the universe, who hallows us with mitzvot, commanding us to engage with words of Torah.

REMEZ...*Acquiring Torah*...When Torah penetrates our entire being, not just our *seichel/intellect*, this is the acquisition of Torah.

—R' Avi Fertig

V.2 Sarah died in Kiryat Arbah, which is Hebron, in the land of Canaan; and Abraham proceeded to eulogize Sarah, and to mourn/cry for her... N.SARNA...It has been connected with the Hebrew stem “CH-B-R”—to unite signifying a confederation of four separate settlements, hence its other name, “*city of four*.”...Hebron has occupied a place of extraordinary importance...as one of the four holy cities along with Jerusalem...For 7 years it was the first capital of Judah under King David [II Samuel 2:1-4]

RASHI...The “*city of four*” because of the four couples buried there: Adam & Eve, Isaac & Rebecca, Jacob & Leah, and Abraham & Sarah.

ALSHECH... Torah states that her death was felt in Hebron, the city Abraham renamed *Kiryat Arbah* to symbolize the “*ChiBuR*,” joining the soul with the Higher Realm through the act of burial in the Cave of *Machpelah*. Only burial in *Eretz Yisrael* enables the soul to return immediately to the higher world from whence it came. For that reason, Torah stresses the location as *Kiryat Arba*, though we all know it.

TALMUD... “*and to cry for her*...” The word “*v’liv-kotah—to cry for her*” was written with a small kaf to indicate that Abraham did not grieve excessively. She was old and led a full life.

ALSHECH... There was no need to weep for Sarah, since she left this earth completely fulfilled, and her soul would proceed to Heaven without delay. There remained only the need to weep for the loss of her unique personality...For this reason Torah says that he came not merely to mourn her, but to weep for her. Weeping is a spontaneous, natural reaction. Eulogizing is a planned activity. The object of this activity is to make people weep...This is why Abraham’s private weeping is not mentioned. Torah does not mention what was Abraham’s primary concern first—to bury Sarah, something he was obliged to do, whereas it does mention his eulogizing her, something he is not obliged to do. The reason is that Abraham hoped to create a predisposition in the hearts of the townspeople to enable him to bury Sarah in the cave of *Machpelah*, having been moved by her eulogy.

HIRSCH...The small kaf suggests that Abraham did not parade his grief publicly. We know what Sarah had meant to Abraham, and how deep his grief must have been. But the full measure of pain remained in his heart, for the privacy of his own home.

V.3 Then Abraham rose from beside his dead...

ABARBANEL...Weeping in mournful lament, he’d been bending over her body, crying. Now it was time to stand up

V.4 I am a resident alien among you. Sell me a burial site among you that I may bury my dead from before me.

MISHNA Berachot...One whose dead lies before him is exempt from the recital of the Shema... and all precepts laid down in Torah...

Gemara, 18a...R’ Ashi taught: Since the obligation of burial devolves on him, even if the dead one is not there, it is as if the corpse was “*before him*.” As it says, “*And Abraham rose up from before his dead*,” and further, “*that I may bury my dead from before me*.” This implies that so long as the obligation of burial remains, until the mitzvah [*of kevrurah*] is fulfilled, it is as if the dead corpse is lying before him, and it is incumbent upon him to bury.

SHULCHAN ARUCH...One who has lost to death one of the relatives for whom he is bound to mourn is termed an *Onen* until after the burial...An *Onen* is exempt from all the mitzvot...Even if he desires to be scrupulous in the fulfillment of the precepts, he must not do so, in honor of the dead. He should not say any benediction nor even respond *Amen*...nor should he be included in a Minyan nor in the *Birkat HaMazon*...

Yet so long as the dead remains unburied, the mourner should not take off his boots, for he may need to leave to tend for the burial of the dead. [196:2,6]

V.19 And then Abraham buried his wife Sarah in the Cave of the Field of Machpelah, facing Mamre...

TANCHUMA...The highest act of *Gemilut Chasadim*—of loving-kindness in all of Jewish tradition, is that which we do to honor our dead, through the act of burial.

HIRSCH...The word *Machpelah* derives from *KaPHaL*, signifying “*double---pair*” The name Hebron has a similar connotation, meaning “*unite, link*.” Thus, the first Jewish possession of *Eretz Yisrael* stood for the attachment of husband and wife, and the loyalty of succeeding generations, through love, one to another...

D'RASH...*Helping the Heart feel what the Mind understands ...*

Rabbi MAURICE LAMM...

[Consolation, pgs 7-8, 14-15]

Crying is a blessing...Crying opens a vent in the heart to release the pressure building up inside us...Our loss is complicated by an apparent senselessness. Crying is a burst of raw emotion, inarticulate, beyond reason, offering no logic, no solution. Both numbness and weeping are inchoate...The difference is that in numbness we inhale the grief; in weeping we exhale it....Abraham responded to his wife's death [delivering a eulogy and weeping over her] A eulogy is a rational assessment, weeping is emotional. He did both. The word for weeping in Torah is written with a diminished middle letter as if to say not an outburst but a dirge. Abraham's strong emotional reaction may seem surprising since Sarah was, after all, an old woman, yet his display of grief sets a model for the appropriate attitude of the Jewish mourner...It was Abraham who first applied the human capacity for weeping to the death of someone close. Weeping is a eulogy—a mark of reverence and love

...Yet grieving sparks embers of fears...We may be afraid that we will pine for our beloved so intensely that we will not survive the ordeal of our grief...Such fears are quite understandable. Other fears, seldom mentioned yet pervasive, thrust upwards from our inner depths, such as the fear that death will strike again. Folklore has it that death strikes in threes...People often act as if death were contagious. This is apparent in a little-known custom that when shoveling the earth into the grave at burial, the shovel is not passed from one hand to another, but is replaced after use into the earth, so that one person does not touch another...It is not the superstition that is important to the mourner; it is the fear.

Rabbi ELIE MUNK...

“...*that I may bury my dead from before me.*” This is the first reference in the Bible to burial of the dead. Abraham places very great importance on assuring “his dead” of an honorable burial place, and his descendants have inherited that same preoccupation. Many of the rules concerning forms of burial and the mourning process are derived from the details of this passage.

As a wrapping for the soul comes from the celestial spheres, the human body is lavished with the greatest care during its earthly life and the most profound respect at the moment the soul leaves it. “*The body returns to the earth as it was and the spirit ascends to God who gave it.*” [Ecclesiastes 12:7] The body is returned to the earth to blend again with it [Adam—Adamah] while the soul remains and ascends again to God. For Judaism, burial of the mortal remains signifies that the material part of man finally disintegrates, while the spiritual soul survives in its individuality. The pagans who believed in the transmigration of souls considered the body as the only perpetual part of the human being. Consequently,...they embalmed their corpses, mummified them, and erected mausoleums and pyramids in their honor. Opposed to this concept is the nihilistic doctrine of freethinkers. They show their belief in nothingness after death by having their dead cremated. But Judaism affirms its faith in the immortality of the soul by returning the body to its original source without deifying or annihilating it, while the immaterial and imperishable soul rejoins its sphere of emanation...The exceptional importance that Abraham attached to a burial-place for Sarah was certainly in keeping with his desire to reveal these fundamental principles of monotheistic religion to the pagan peoples of Canaan.

SOD...*Helping the soul-light shine...*

Practice focuses on recalibrating the soul-traits that are obstructing your soul's light from shining into your life.

Rabbi ELIE KAPLAN SPITZ...

...Faith in survival of the soul also evokes interest in the Divine. If the soul survives, there is a greater likelihood of an enduring, unseen dimension to reality. If we are destined to return to cultivate our soul, then our lives are purposeful, which indicates an organizing consciousness in the cosmos. Faith in the existence of God is not a product of intellectual proofs (including compelling stories of survival of the soul) but a consequence of living in relationship to God. With a faith in the Divine and in the timeless paradox of free will coexisting with destiny, we see meaning and purpose in what would otherwise be considered a "coincidence."

Faith in survival of the soul changes how we view death. Death is not an end but a door into another realm. Faith offers greater grace in dealing with friends or family who are gravely ill. We may share with those who are terminally ill that they need not be afraid and that their loved ones will greet them on the other side. Such assurance may aid them to die with greater acceptance, comfort, and dignity. Belief in survival of the soul also makes closure on this life even more important. Reconciliation with loved ones, holding hands and expressing love, saying good-byes, and feeling completion offer both an easier transition and the promise of less work to do in the next realm or upon our next return.

A faith in survival of the soul adds greater urgency to living our days meaningfully. Just as our soul needs a body as a vessel of expression, so our body and soul gain from the grounding and reinforcement of a religious community and the tools of a particular, coherent tradition....We learn from the wisdom of those who have lived before us, gaining tools for deepening our gratitude to and awareness of the mystery and presence of God. As inheritors of an ancient heritage, Jews are members of an extended family in pursuit of holy living. When we live with a faith in our people's covenant with God, we gain purpose. When we respond to God's call we serve as God's partner in completing creation.

[From *Does the Soul Survive*, pgs. 171-172]

...PRACTICE...

Have a conversation with people you hold dear/are closest to you,
about death...about funeral moments...about how memory lives?
HOW does our belief [in the soul/the spirit living on, making memory a legacy]
impact the way we live?