



At The SHABBAT TABLE

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PARSHAT CHAYE SARAH

Lasting Echoes

There was once a group from a kiruv organization traveling to Crown Heights to receive a blessing from the Lubavitcher Rebbe. When it came time for the young group leader to speak with the Rebbe, he approached with a heavy heart.

"Rebbe," he began, "we run so many programs. Kids and young adults walk in and out from every possible background. Some stay, many drift away, and with most of them... we simply never know what becomes of them. What can inspire someone to keep going? How can I know if I'm making any real difference? Is it even worth investing so much time and energy when I may never see the results?"

The Rebbe listened, then gently offered a story of his own:

"Imagine," he said, "that you're giving a class in your community center—speaking passionately about Jewish identity. You tell the students about their rich heritage, the responsibility to remain connected, to marry a Jew, to live with Jewish values.

"As you're delivering this heartfelt message, a troubled teenager slips into the room. He listens for a few minutes—long enough to hear your words—then, just before the class ends, he walks out. You never speak with him. You may never see him again.

"Life continues. He attends public school, grows up, and eventually meets a non-Jewish girl. They fall in love. They decide to marry. Her parents insist that the wedding take place in a church. He doesn't care—why should he?—and so the arrangements begin.

"But then," the Rebbe continued, "on the way to his own wedding, he stops. Something echoes in his mind: 'Remain a Jew... marry a Jew... live as a Jew...'

"He suddenly realizes what he is about to do. And in that moment, something inside him awakens. He decides he cannot go through with it. He turns around and calls off the wedding."

The Rebbe looked deeply at the young man and said, "You never know whose life you are affecting—or how far your words will travel. The environment you create, the programs you build, even a single sentence you say... they may transform someone you never truly met, someone who walked into your life for only a moment."

Then the Rebbe added, with unmistakable conviction: "Your actions carry ripple effects that stretch far beyond your sight. You may never witness the results. You may never know the impact. But the impact is real. And it is great."

(Shared by R' Menachem Goldberger)

When a child is learning to walk and falls down 50 times, they never think to themselves, "Maybe this isn't for me."

The Eternal Purchase

The Parshah opens with an unusually detailed description of Avraham's purchase of the Me'arat HaMachpelah as a burial site for Sarah. The Torah, which so often conveys monumental lessons in just a few words, devotes an entire passage to the legal and financial details of this transaction. Why? What makes this purchase so significant that it deserves such lengthy attention?

The Ibn Ezra offers two explanations. First, the Torah seeks to highlight the unparalleled spiritual stature of Eretz Yisrael — not only as a place to live, but even as a place to be buried. Second, it emphasizes the beginning of the fulfillment of Hashem's promise to Avraham: "To your descendants I will give this land."

The Ramban challenges both points. How does Sarah's burial prove the spiritual superiority of burial in Eretz Yisrael, if she had already been living there and naturally was buried there? And how could this be a fulfillment of the Divine promise if the inheritance of the land was destined for Avraham's descendants, not for him personally?

R' Avraham Mirsky, in the name of R' Yochanan Zweig, provides a profound answer. When a person buys property, ownership is never absolute. The land remains subject to "eminent domain," meaning that the governing body can reclaim it for public use. However, when one nation acquires land from another, the ownership becomes complete and irrevocable — a sovereign acquisition.

Avraham, aware of this distinction, wanted more than just a burial plot; he wanted to claim a piece of the Divine promise in the most complete sense possible. The Torah emphasizes that Ephron was appointed by the people of Chet as a ruler for that day, and that the deal was conducted with "o'ver la'soher" — universal currency — indicating an international and sovereign transaction. Through this deliberate act, Avraham transformed that small piece of land into the very first segment of holy soil, infusing it with the kedusha of Eretz Yisrael.

This also resolves the Ramban's questions. Sarah's burial now truly reflects the spiritual greatness of being buried in Eretz Yisrael — for it was Avraham himself who transformed that ordinary piece of land into sacred ground. And while the full inheritance of the land was destined for his descendants, this was the first tangible step, the initial claim — a spiritual down payment on Hashem's eternal promise.

Avraham's example teaches us the power of intention united with action. He didn't wait for holiness to descend from Heaven; he initiated it on earth. He transformed a simple transaction into a sacred moment, an ordinary field into eternal inheritance. So too, each of us can sanctify our corner of the world. When we approach life deliberately — our homes, our relationships, our work, our mitzvot — with the awareness that every act can be one of kedusha, we, too, transform the mundane into the eternal.