

Parshat Chaya Sarah: Chevron Connecting Us All

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rabbi Hershel Reichman

The Zohar tells us that the *Me'arat Hamachpeila* is called the double cave because it connects this world to the next. It is a counterpart to the city of *Yerushalayim*. However, if we examine Jewish law, the strictures of sanctity pertain only to *Yerushalayim* and not to *Chevron*. Why is this so?

Rav Wolfson in his book *Emunat Itecha* explains a concept of *itgalya*, revelation and *itkasya*, concealment. Every physical thing in this world has its equivalent in the next world. We can easily perceive our biological and emotional soul, but the counterpart to this is in the hidden world, the upper levels of our soul, *chaya* and *yechida*. The Divine Presence also comes to us on two levels, *b'itgalya*, in a revealed way and *b'itkasya*, in a concealed manner. *Yerushalayim* is *hitgalut*, where we can sense Hashem's revealed presence. When the *Beit Hamikdash* stood, people entered its holy environs and emerged prophets because they felt Hashem's presence in such an intense way. Likewise, when we invest our hearts and minds into the study of *Torah*, we feel the Divine Presence close beside us. Rav Soloveitchik used to learn by himself but he often said, "I have a *chavruta*." He sensed the *Shechina* studying *Torah* with him. Intense prayer in shul elicits

the same feeling of spiritual closeness.

Chevron and the *Mearat Hamachpeila* is *itkasya*, concealed holiness. Although Hashem's presence is there too, it is hidden, just as the *Avot* are buried deep within the ground.

Hashem created the world using three energies: place, time, and soul. *Chassidut* draws a parallel between them. There's a miniature *Mearat Hamachpeila* inside each of us. When we begin *Shemone Esrei* we invoke the names of the *Avot*. We ask Hashem to listen to us the way he listened to our forefathers because they and we are one. Our revealed prayers go through *Yerushalayim*, but our inner supplications pass through the hidden burial cave of the *Avot* in *Chevron*.

Yerushalayim was destroyed because its holiness was exposed. *Chevron* remains with us forever precisely because it is concealed. Similarly, the part of our soul that is connected to the *Avot* can never be defiled no matter how far we've fallen. On the revealed level, our soul may be tainted, but deep within we remain pure because we are bonded to the *Avot*. *Chevron* comes from the root word *chibur*, connection. It signifies hope and redemption.

King David's dynasty began in *Chevron* and in the future, *Mashiach* will redeem us with the power of this holy city.

Chevron is called *Kiryat Arba*, the city of four giants. They represent the four evils in the world: jealousy, desire, honor, and forbidden speech. These in turn correspond to the four exiles: Bavel, Persia, Greece, and Rome. *Chevron* appears evil on the outside, however, deep within one can find its hidden sanctity. The righteous *Avot* are the counterpart to the four evil giants. Their influence hovers over us in every corner of exile. No matter what evil we encounter, we remain connected to Hashem and the merit of the *Avot*.

Yerushalayim is revealed while *Chevron* is hidden. Every Jew has a *beit hamikdash* in his heart. When he's inspired, he can feel Hashem's presence *b'itgalya*, in an open way. But there are also times of *itkasya*, concealment, periods when it is hard to connect with Hashem. During those times we can hold on to the *Machpela*, where His presence remains forever no matter what level we're at. The *Beit Hamikdash* in *Yerushalayim* was destroyed, but in a sense it continues to exist in *Chevron*, in *Mearat Hamachpeila*, and in the heart of every Jew.

Sleepy Sermon: Parshat Chayei Sarah

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Mrs. Shira Smiles
Summary by Channie Koplowitz-Stein

Once while Rabbi Akiva was teaching his students, he noticed that they started to fall asleep. He roused them by telling them that Queen Esther merited ruling over 127 lands because her ancestress Sarah lived for 127 years. How do we understand this connection?

First, we must note that these were not ordinary students. Among them were the great Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai, Rabbi Meir, Rabbi Yehudah – giant figures who enabled Judaism to continue after the destruction of the Temple, notes the *Dorash Mordechai*. The period of Rabbi Akiva was a period of destruction. Rabbi Pincus explains that both Sarah and Esther served to found a new

nation; Sarah at the point of our inception, and Esther at our rebirth from possible annihilation. Each maintained their *temimus*, their wholeness and purity at every stage of their lives.

Rabbi M. Z. Sacks, cites a source from *Shir Hashirim Rabba*. Rabbi Yehudah roused his students by telling them that in Egypt one woman gave birth to 600,000 children at once. This riddle referred to Yocheved, who gave birth to Moshe who, because of his role in saving the Jewish nation, is valued as equivalent to all 600,000 Jews that Hashem took out of Egypt. Both Rabbi Akiva and Rabbi Yehudah dealt with the despondency and hopelessness of their generation after the destruction of the Temple. By citing these models, Sarah, Moshe and Esther, these

sages tried to infuse hope in their disciples and rouse them to rebuild, to fire up their brothers and bring the assimilated Jews back to *Torah*.

Rashi says that the *Torah* adds the words, "these were the years of Sarah," to tell us that all the years were equally good. Despite her difficult challenges, Sarah never lost hope to do good. Similarly, Esther also experienced challenges and trials yet remained steadfast in her faith. Rabbi Akiva could easily have given up, but by citing the examples of Esther and Sarah, he bolstered his own faith and spurred his disciples to action.

While Queen Esther ruled over 127 lands, Sarah, as her name suggests, also ruled. Both

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maintained mastery over themselves and over their faith, in whatever circumstances they found themselves, notes Rabbi Alpert. In every moment of their lives, they believed that they were where Hashem wanted them to be and that Hashem was with them.

Both Sarah Imeinu and Queen Esther used their time fully. This was Rabbi Akiva's message to his disciples. Just as Sarah Imeinu affected so many lives in her generation, so can you affect lives in this generation. Wake up from your lethargic despondency and make your time count.

Sarah's mastery over self and over time was transmitted to Esther, who developed mastery over 127 provinces. But royalty is not a given, notes the Asufat Maarachot. It must be developed from within so the person is master

over himself, in all circumstances. Sarah is the Mother of monarchy, and kings and queens descended from her precisely because she maintained mastery over herself. She kept her soul connected to Hashem at all times and felt rejuvenated each day in that relationship.

We seek renewal and excitement in the material world because we don't feel it in our spiritual lives notes the *Talalei Chaim*. Our souls are looking for connection and newness. While we are awake, our soul is always giving. During sleep, the soul is open to receiving; it is when we give our spirits over to Hashem. The students of Rabbi Akiva wanted to sleep to receive new spiritual energy. But Rabbi Akiva was telling them that waking life offers continuous moments of connection to Hashem. They must create newness and satisfaction during the wakeful moments of life.

They must fill their days with meaning as Sarah Imeinu did.

Rav Dessler suggests that Rabbi Akiva was teaching difficult concepts and his students were tuning out. But he was telling them that they have to look for role models to elevate themselves, as Queen Esther did in emulating our Matriarch Sarah. When we bless our daughters to be like our Matriarchs, we are providing them with role models to emulate. The Matriarchs did not sleep through life, but made every moment count in striving to reach wholeness and perfection in their service of Hashem. When we wake up every morning and thank Hashem for returning our souls revitalized and refreshed, we should breathe that energy in deeply so that we can go forth and fill the gift of that day Hashem has given us with holiness.

Traveling the Journey of Life Tehilim 14

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Leah Kohn

"A song by David, Hashem who may sojourn in your tent, who may dwell on your holy mountain." The tent refers to the tent of meeting (*ohel moed*) and the mountain is the Temple Mount, where the *Bet Hamikdash* stood. This was Hashem's dwelling place where a Jew could experience the presence of Hashem on a level that was almost impossible in any other place. King David discusses who will merit to connect to Hashem on such an exalted level as was felt at the giving of the *Torah*, in the *Mishkan* and in the *Bet Hamikdash*.

The Torah tells us, "*U'bo tidbok*- cling to Him..." The goal is to become one with Hashem. What enables us to achieve such a close relationship? What do we need to do? This chapter will guide us. Why does David Hamelech mention both the *Mishkan* and *Bet Hamikdash* if their function was the same?

On a simple level we can say King David

wrote this chapter when the Jews only had the *ohel moed* so he first spoke about reality and then about the future. On a deeper level we can explain that when we speak about a tent it means a sojourn and when we speak about the *Bet Hamikdash* the term used is -to dwell. We can experience a closeness with Hashem in a reality that is temporary like a tent. That is why the term used is *l'gur* -from the root word *ger*. We are here only temporarily. We also speak about a mountain which is something steady, permanent, and strong. David Hamelech refers to two realities. When Hashem created man the *Torah* uses the term, *vayitzer* and it is written with two *yuds*. Rashi explains, man was created for two realities. There are two phases to the existence of every human being. There is life in this world the way we know it and life in the World to Come. Originally man was not meant to die and pass from one phase to another. If Adam wouldn't have eaten from *eitz hadaat* he would have been transformed to a much more spiritual

reality, the World to Come which is stage two. As a result of the sin there was now an in between stage- *olam haba*.

But this is not what *Rashi* speaks about. He refers to stage one as Adam before the sin in *Gan Eden* and stage two as the reality after *tehiat hameisim*. The reality in phase one, our existence in this world is described as life in a tent which is temporary, not our ultimate destination. Our permanent destination will be after *Mashiach* comes. The question King David asks is, who will sojourn in this tent? Who will have the understanding of what life is about? And second, who will deserve to be in the permanent reality and enjoy what it has to offer? Our attitude towards life should be that it's a time of investment and preparation for something greater that will be the ultimate destination and real fulfillment. By looking at the investment we can understand the goal. As we go through this chapter, we will explore how to achieve this.