

Home Sweet Home

written by Yossi Katz

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As I write these words, I realize that today, the eve of Thanksgiving, is the busiest travel day of the year. Although it will take many millions of people hours longer than usual to get where they want to go, nevertheless, for the sake of

spending time with close friends and family, they feel it's well worth the long-haul. Why? Because the feeling of closeness that connecting with loved ones affords is so intrinsic to our very beings that we are willing to go the "extra mile" just to get there.

In this week's *parashah* we read about a peculiar incident. Abraham's dear wife Sarah passes away and Abraham seeks a specific place to bury her, *Maarat HaMakhpelah*. This burial place was no ordinary cave, but the gateway to the Garden of Eden. The local owner, Ephron HaChiti, was willing to give it to Abraham outright. But Abraham insisted on purchasing the cave for a small fortune. Why?

We find a similar episode involving King David and the future site of the Holy Temple. Here, too, King David insisted on purchasing the property. Both *Maarat HaMakhpelah* and the Temple Mount are places of special elevated holiness. Inasmuch as God is present everywhere, His Presence is felt to a much greater degree in these places.

In our own homes, surrounded by close friends or family, we feel an inner peace and clarity. Life's problems seem a little more distant. The good times give us the ability to breathe and think about life in a deeper and more objective way. Similarly, the Land of Israel as a whole, and its holy places to a greater extent, are places where we can feel a deep connection to God and observe His hand weaving together the various events in our lives. The Land of Israel is our spiritual home because it's the place where every aspect of life comes together, where we can experience purpose even in the mundane.

For this reason, the holy places had to be specifically purchased from the locals. The locals did not appreciate the spiritual power of these spots. They believed in the natural order of the world and could not tell the difference between these places and other places. Therefore Abraham felt the need

to exchange large sums of money for the land.

Money epitomizes the mentality of “living for a buck” (or many bucks), accumulating riches in order to live the good life while forgetting about God in the process. When our heads are involved with making money, it’s easy for us lose track and think that everything in our lives revolves around this process. On a certain level, the pursuit of wealth can become akin to idol worship, the opposite of belief in God. Abraham understood that he could redeem this special land only by dealing in the “currency” of its land owner.

Thankfully, Abraham was able to purchase *Maarat HaMakhpelah* and King David was able to purchase the Temple Mount. As a people, we wait for the time when Mashiach will come and the full spiritual potential of these places will be revealed. However, many of us do not reside in the Holy Land, and even those who do may not always feel the connection in our ongoing state of exile. Similarly, we all experience moments in our lives where God’s workings seem revealed to us and other times where life seems mundane or even difficult. However, with faith, we can always stay connected.

We express this thought every day in the Shema: “When you sit in your home and when you walk in the street.” No matter where we go, we never leave home. With faith, we live with the understanding that God is always with us and that everything we experience is always for our best.

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