

ברוך אתה יהוה  
אלהינו מלך העולם  
אשר קדשנו במצוותיו  
ואנו לעסוק  
בדברי תורה.

Barukh Atah Adonai  
Eloheinu melekh ha-olam  
asher kidshanu b'mitzvotav  
v'tzivanu la'asok  
b'divrei Torah.

Blessed are You, YHVH,  
our God, eternal sovereign, who  
sanctifies us in God's connecting  
command to busy ourselves  
in words of Torah.

**Genesis 23:1-9, 17-19**

יהיו חיי שרה מאה שנה ועשרים שנה  
ושבע שנים שני חיי שרה: ותמת שרה  
בקריית ארבע הוא חברון בארץ כנען  
ויבא אברהם לספד לשרה ולבכתה:  
ויקם אברהם מעל פניו מתו וידבר  
אל-בני-חת לאמר:

1-3. The years of Sarah's life were 127: so were the  
years of Sarah's life. Sarah died in Kiryat Arba  
which is Hebron in the land of Canaan. Avraham  
came to mourn for Sarah and weep for her.  
Avraham arose from before the face of his dead.  
He spoke to the Hittites saying:

WHERE WAS  
HE UNTIL NOW

גר-ותושב אנכי עמכם תנו לי אחוזת-  
קבר עמכם ואקברה מתי מלפני: ויענו  
בני-חת את-אברהם לאמר לו: שמענו  
אדני נשיא אלהים אתה בתוכנו במבחר  
קברינו קבר את-מתך איש ממנו  
את-קברו לא-יכלה ממך מקבר מתך:

4-6. "I am a stranger dwelling with you; give me a  
burial property among you and I will bury my  
dead from before me." The Hittites answered  
Avraham saying to him: "Hear us, my lord. You are  
a prince of God in our midst. Bury your dead in  
our choicest tomb. None of us will deny you a  
tomb so you can bury your dead."

ויקם אברהם וישתחו לעם-הארץ  
לבני-חת: וידבר אתם לאמר אם-גש  
את-נפשכם לקבר את-מתי מלפני  
שמעוני ופגעו-לי בעפרון בן-צחר:  
ויתן-לי את-מערת המכפלה אשר-לו  
אשר בקצה שדהו בכסף מלא ויתננה לי  
בתוכם לאחוזת-קבר: ...

7-9. Avraham rose and bowed to the people of the  
land, the Hittites. He spoke with them, saying: "If  
your souls may [allow] me to bury my dead from  
before my face, hear me and entreat to Efron son of  
Tzohar for me. "Let him give me his cave of  
Makhpelah at the edge of his field. Let him give it  
to me as a burial property in your midst." ...

Location  
location  
location

Mystical? Metaphorical?

ויקם שדה עפרון אשר במכפלה אשר  
לפני ממרא השדה והמערה אשר-בו  
וכל-העץ אשר בשדה אשר בכל-גבלו  
סביב: לאברהם למקנה לעיני בני-חת  
בכל באי שער-עירו: ואחר-כן קבר  
אברהם את-שרה אשתו אל-מערת  
שדה המכפלה על-פני ממרא הוא  
חברון בארץ כנען:

17-19. Efron's field in Makhpelah near Mamre – **the field with its cave and all the trees in the field within its surrounding borders** – rose up to Avraham. [The land] was Avraham's purchase before the eyes of all the Hittites coming into its town gate. Then Avraham buried his wife Sarah in the cave of the field of Makhpelah, facing Mamre which is Hebron in the land of Canaan.

**What here says darsheini?**

- Where was Avraham?
- Abraham is a prince of God?
- Avraham negotiating
- Why did Avraham choose this cave
- Why is Makhpelah named that?
- Is Avraham \*relocating\*?

**So what? What work would midrash do?**

- What was the relationship between Avraham & Sarah
- Start of (Western) monotheism; elevation of person / experience
- Time of negotiation / burial
- How did Avraham know about this cave?
- Names have meaning!
- Implications for identity, relationship to the Land

**Rashi, Gen. 23:2**

לספוד לשרה ולבכתה. ונסמכה מיתת  
שרה לעקדת יצחק לפי שע"י בשורת  
העקדה, שנידמו בנה לשחיטה וכמעט  
שלא נשחט, פרחח נשמתה ממנה  
ומתה:

*Mourn for Sarah and weep for her* – The narrative of the death of Sarah follows the binding of Isaac. By the news of the binding – that her son had been made ready for sacrifice, and almost was sacrificed – her soul flew from her and she died.

**Genesis Rabbah 58:5**

ויבא אברהם לספד לשרה מהיכן בא?  
אמר ... רבי יוסי בא מהר המזריחה,  
ומתה שרה מאותו צער, לפיכך נסמכה  
עקדה לויחיו חי שרה.

*Avraham came to mourn for Sarah and weep for her* – From where did he "come"? R. Yosei said... He came from Mount Moriah. Sarah died from grief over it – the binding [of Isaac], so the Life of Sarah became bound to it.

**Rashi, Gen. 23:9**

המכפלה - בית ועליה על גביו. ד"א  
שכפולה בזוגות:

*Makhpelah* – With a lower and upper chamber. Another explanation – doubled in couples.

**B.T. Eruvin 53a**

מערת המכפלה, רב ושמואל, חד אמר:  
שני בתים זה לפניו זה מאחוריו, וחד אמר:  
בית ועליה על גביו. בשלמה למאן  
דאמר זה על גב זה יהו"ה היינו  
"מכפלה". אלא למאן דאמר שני בתים  
זה לפניו זה מאחוריו, מאי "מכפלה"?  
שכפולה בזוגות. "ממרא קרית ארבע",  
אמר רבי יצחק, קרית הארבע זוגות:  
אדם וחווה, אברהם ושרה, יצחק  
ורבקה, יעקב ורואה.

*Cave of Makhpelah* – Rav and Shmuel [debated]. One said: Two rooms, one inside another. One said: a room [below] and [one] above. If you say [Makhpelah] is one [room] above another, that is the etymology of *Makhpelah*: "double." But if you say two rooms, one inside the other, how is this double? This is [for the patriarchs and matriarchs buried] in pairs there in "Kiryat Arba of Mamre." R. Yitzhak said: "[Kiryat Arba is] the place of four [=arba] couples: Adam and Eve, Avraham and Sarah, Yitzhak and Rivkah, and Yaakov and Leah."

**Genesis 18:1-7**

וירא אליו יהו"ה באלני ממרא והוא  
ישב פתח-האהל כחם היום: וישא עיניו  
וירא והנה שלשה אנשים נצבים עליו  
וירא וירץ לקראתם מפתח האהל  
וישתחו ארצה: ויאמר אדני אם-נא  
מצאתי חן בעיניך אל-נא תעבר מעל  
עבדך: יקח-נא מעט-מים ורחצו  
רגליכם והשענו תחת העץ: ואקחה פת  
לחם וסעדו לבבכם אחר תעברו כי-על-  
כן עברתם על-עבדכם ויאמרו כן  
תעשה כאשר דברת: וימהר אברהם  
האהלה אל-שרה ויאמר מהרי שלש  
סאים קמח סלת לוישי ועשי עגות: ואל  
הבקר רץ אברהם ויקח גו-בקר רץ  
וטוב ויתן אל-הנער וימהר לעשות אותו:

YHVH appeared to [Avraham] in the plains of Mamre, as he sat in the tent opening in the heat of day. He lifted his eyes and looked: three "men" stood by him. When he saw them, [Avraham] ran to meet them from the tent opening, and bowed to the ground. He said; "Adonai, if I found grace in Your eyes, please do not pass from your servant. Let a bit of water be brought, wash your feet, and rest under the tree. I will fetch bread and you will feast for your hearts – then you can pass, for this you came to you servant." They said, "Yes, do as you said." Avraham hurried to Sarah's tent and said, "Hurry! Make three measures of fine meal, and knead it into cakes!" Avraham ran to the herd and fetched a tender and good calf, and gave it to a young man, and he hurried to prepare it."

**Zohar 1:127a-129a**

ר' אלעזר אָמַר בְּשַׁעֲרֵי דְעָלָא אַבְרָהָם  
 בְּמַעְרַתָּא הַיָּד עָלָל. בְּגִין דְּהוּא רְהִיט  
 אַבְתְּרִיָּה דְּהָהוּא עֲגָלָא דְּכִתְיִב וְאֵל  
 הַבָּקָר רָץ אַבְרָהָם. וְהָהוּא בּוּ בְּקָר עָרַק  
 עַד הָהוּא מַעְרַתָּא וְעָלָל אַבְתְּרִיָּה וְחָמָא  
 מַה דְּחָמָא. וְת"ח, כִּד עָלָל אַבְרָהָם  
 בְּמַעְרַתָּא בְּקִדְמִיתָא, חָמָא תַּמָּן נְהוּרָא,  
 וְאַתְרָמִי עֲפָרָא קַמִּיהָ, וְאַתְגְּלִי לִיהַּ תְּרִין  
 קַבְרִין אֲדִהֲכִי אֲסַתְלַק אָדָם בְּדִיּוּקְנִיהָ  
 וְחָמָא לִיהַּ לְאַבְרָהָם וְחָיִיד, וְבִיהַּ (הוּהוּ)  
 יָדַע אַבְרָהָם דְּתַמָּן (הוּהוּ) הוּא זַמִּין  
 לְאַתְקַבְּרָא. תּוּ בְּגִין דְּאִיהוּ צְלִי כָּל יוֹמָא  
 וְיוֹמָא וְהוּהוּ נְפִיק עַד הָהוּא חִקַּל דְּהוּהוּ  
 סָלִיק רִיחִין עֲלָאִין וְחָמָא נְהוּרָא דְּנְפִיק  
 מִגּוֹ מַעְרַתָּא וְצְלִי תַּמָּן, וְתַמָּן מְלִיל  
 עַמִּיהַּ קַב"ה וְבְּגִין כִּד בְּעָא לִיהַּ,  
 דְּתַאבְּתִיהַּ הוּהוּ בְּהָהוּא אַתְרַּ תְּדִיר.

R. Elazar asks: At the time Avraham first came into the cave [of Makhpelah], what happened. He was chasing a calf, as in (Gen. 18:7): "Avraham ran to the herd." This calf ran to the cave, Avraham ran after it, and he saw what he saw.

Come and see: When Avraham entered the cave for the first time, he saw a light. The dust fell away from before hi[s eyes], revealing to him two graves. Adam rose from his grave in rightful form, saw Avraham, and laughed. By that, Avraham knew he was destined to be buried there.

Another reason: Avraham prayed each and every day. He went to the field [that was] fragrant with heavenly perfume, saw light coming from the cave, and entered there to pray. There the Holy Blessed One spoke with him. Thus, Avraham yearned for that cave and always [kept his] desire for it.

**What is going on here?!**

רְזָא דְּמַלְכָּה שְׂדֵה הַמַּכְפֵּלָה וְדָא, מָאן  
 מַכְפֵּלָה, ה' דְּבִשְׁמָא קַדִּישָׁא דְּאִיהִי  
 מַכְפֵּלָה. וְכֵלָא קַיִמָּא כְּחַד, וְבִגְיִנְיָה קְאָמַר  
 בְּאוּרַח סְתִים ה' מַכְפֵּלָה דְּלָא הוּי בְּשַׁמָּא  
 קַדִּישָׁא אֶת אַחְרָא מַכְפֵּלָה בַּר אִיהִי.

The secret is the field of Makhpelah itself. What is Makhpelah [=made double]? It is the double ה of the Holy Name [=יהו"ה] and they're as One. So Torah says *Ha*Makhpelah, so ה is doubled, for the Holy Name has no other double but that one.

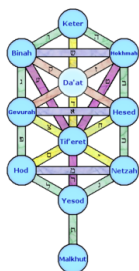
**הַמַּכְפֵּלָה**

י ה ו ה ה

תָּא חַזִי, יְרוּשָׁלַיִם כָּל אֶרֶץ דְּיִשְׂרָאֵל  
 אֲתַכְפַּל תְּחוּתָהּ. וְאִיהִי קַיִמָּא לְעֵילָא  
 וְתַתָּא, כְּגוּוּנָא דָא יְרוּשָׁלַיִם לְעֵילָא  
 יְרוּשָׁלַיִם לְתַתָּא, אַחְדָּא לְעֵילָא וְאַחְדָּא  
 לְתַתָּא, יְרוּשָׁלַיִם לְעֵילָא....  
 וְקַב"ה עֲבַד כֵּלָא לְאַשְׁתַּכְּחָא הָאִי עֲלָמָא  
 כְּגוּוּנָא דְּלְעֵילָא, וְלֹאֲתַדְּבַקָא דָא בְּדָא,  
 לְמַהוּי יְקָרִיָּה לְעֵילָא וְתַתָּא. זַכָּאָה  
 חוּלְקִיהוּן דְּצַדִּיקָא דְּקַב"ה אַתְרָעִי בְּהוּ  
 בְּהָאִי עֲלָמָא וּבְעֲלָמָא דְּאַתְיָ:

Come and see: The whole land of Israel is made doubled (*i.e.* folded onto itself) in Jerusalem. It is above and below, an upper Jerusalem (*sefirah: Binah*), and a lower Jerusalem (*sefirah: Malkhut*)....

The Holy Blessed One does all so what is in this world [below] secretly resembles what is above. They cleave, so divine glory can be established both above and below. Let the righteous merit that the Holy Blessed One will desire them both in this world and the world that is coming.



**Binah**  
(understanding)

**Upper Jerusalem**  
[world that is coming]

**Malkhut**  
(actualization)

**Lower Jerusalem**  
[this world]

As above, so below.

As below, so above.

[Sacred Space, Sacred People, Sacred Time](#)  
[Leora Kling Perkins \(Times of Israel, 2022\)](#)

There is a famous picture, you've probably seen it, of a group of young men, Israeli soldiers, gazing up, with a look of awe on their faces. They are in a place where no Jews had been for the past 19 years, a place which Jews have been turning towards, singing about, and dreaming of for nearly 2,000 years. At the moment the picture was taken [during the Six-Day War in 1967], those men were starting to realize that the place they were in was once again in Jewish hands. They are at the retaining wall of the Temple Mount, the place known as the Kotel [=Western Wall]. I can't think of another single place that is treated with more reverence among Jews, or that has such a hold on us. It is a place that, in other words, is sacred.

When I think about sacred space in Judaism, I tend to hear the great rabbi and philosopher Abraham Joshua Heschel whispering in my ear. You may be familiar with Abraham Joshua Heschel's beautiful work "The Sabbath," where he argues that Jews mark holy time, not holy space. Shabbat, he says, is a palace in time. For those of us who celebrate Shabbat and holidays regularly, and who find those times spiritually nurturing, that message may resonate. No matter where we are, the distinct texture of time helps us experience holiness as we move through the week and the year.

Furthermore, one of the great innovations of Rabbinic Judaism, the innovation that allowed Judaism to survive after the destruction of the Temple in the year 70, was the idea that we don't need any one particular space in order to celebrate Judaism. We can practice Judaism, form communities, and worship God wherever we go. The sense of connection to God that people once felt in the Temple is something that we access instead through prayer, through our ritual observances, and through the festive meals that we share with each other. The rabbis make this explicit, imagining the Shabbat table as taking the place of the altar that was once in the Temple, and calling our homes a *Mikdash Me'at*, a miniature tabernacle.

And yet, I think we all intuitively understand that we feel different in different spaces.

There is a Hasidic story about a child who went to the woods every afternoon to pray. Their teachers and parents always used to seek them out to bring them back inside, and once, the child's parent asked, "Don't you know that God is the same everywhere?" The child responded "God is the same everywhere, but I am not."