

# Chevron ~ The Inner Connection

1 Parashat Vayechi  
 29 When Israel realized that he would soon die, he called for his son Joseph. "If you really want to do me a kindness," he said, "place your hand under my thigh." Act toward me with truth and kindness, and do not bury me in Egypt. 30 Let me lie with my fathers. Carry me out of Egypt, and bury me in their grave."

2 "When I was coming from Padan, [your mother] Rachel died on me. It was in Canaan, a short distance before we came to Ephrath." I buried her there along the road to Ephrath (Bethlehem)."

3 Rashi  
 AND I BURIED HER THERE. ולא הולכתיא אמילו לכית להם - And I did not even take her to Beth-lehem. וידעתי שיש בלבך עלי - and I know that there are hard feelings in your heart against me. אכל דע לך - But you should know that there are hard feelings in your heart against me. לקברתי שם - I buried her there. ויהי עוברי דרך שם - and they would pass through by way of [Rachel's tomb], יצאת רחל - Rachel would go out - על קברה - onto her grave, ויבוקה - and weep, ומבקשת עליהם רחמים - and seek mercy for them. וישמעו קול - as it says, "A voice is heard in the heights, etc." - ויקדוש ברוך הוא משיבת - And the Holy One, Blessed is He, answers her, "יש... שפר לעמלקתך ואת ה' - There is reward for your act, says HASHEM... and children shall return to their borders."

## 4 Wellspring of Faith - R. Yisroel Meir Eisenberg

The Torah reports that Rachel passed away in childbirth, just as Yaakov and his family were entering Eretz Yisrael, and Yaakov buried her in the place where she passed away, on the road near Beis Lechem. Why didn't Yaakov bury her in the Me'aras Ha-Machpeilah, less than a day's journey away?

Given what we know about the immense significance of the Machpeilah, there must have been a powerful reason that prevented him. The Ramban explains<sup>1</sup> that Yaakov was ashamed to bring Rachel into the presence of his forefathers because he had married Rachel in violation of the Torah's laws.

מהר"ל - נגלה ישראל - פרק א  
 ובמדרש (גד מ' מ"ו) מה דאח אבינו יעקב לקבור אח רחל בדרך אפרת אלא צפה שהגלות עתידות לעבור שם וקברה שם כדי שתהא מבקשת רחמים על בניה הה"ד קול ברמה נשמע נהי וגו' כה אמר ה' מנעי קולך מכני ויש תקוה לאחריתך ושבו בנים לגבולם ע"כ ומי ענין זה כמו שבארנו עוד במדרש (שם) רחל מבכה על לבניה ישראל וקראים ע"ש רחל ולא ע"ש רחל אלא ע"ש בנה הבן יעקב לי אפרים. וזה המדרש יש לו טעם מופלג. כהי האשה תקרא בית כמו שאמר רבי יוסי (גסין ר"ב ע"א) מעולם לא קראתי לאשתי אשתי רק לאשתי ביתי. ומפני כן רחל היא היתה עקרת הבית של יעקב. כמו שאמרנו חז"ל (ב"ר) שרחל היתה עקרת הבית. וכל מי שנקרא בית כולל ומאחד הכל כמו שהבית כולל הכל ומאחד כל אשר בתוכו. ולפיכך נקרא ישראל ע"ש רחל מפני שהיא היתה עקרת הבית של יעקב. וכן נקרא ישראל על שם בנה כמו

שהיא היתה עיקר ג"כ בנה עיקר ודבר זה ידוע מאד. ולפיכך אמר שנקברה רחל בדרך. שאם היתה נקברה רחל במקרה. לא היה אצל ישראל שהם בגלות שלהם. כח המקבץ והמאחד את ישראל בגלות שלהם. אבל נשאר בישראל כח המאחד את ישראל רק שאינו בפעל רק כח בלבו. ולכן רחל שהיא כח המאחד את ישראל שגרי כל ישראל נקרא על שמה נקברה בדרך. ולכן מבקשת רחמים עדי שהיו ישראל מקובצים בארצם למחר. ואם לא נקברה רחל מקובצים הבית המקבץ את ישראל בדרך. כבר נזכר עקרת ישראל חיו ולא היה אצלם עוד כח מקבץ ומאסף את ישראל. והיינו שחשיב לה הקדוש ברוך הוא מנעי קולך. מכני וענין מוכנה. כי בזכות רחל שהיא כח המקבץ ישראל ישבו ישראל מגלותם. וזהו ושבו בנים לגבולם כי יש כח מאחד את ישראל בחזק גלותם. ובשביל אותו כח המאחד ישבו ישראל מגלותם וזה מה שרצינו לומר:



## 16 Wellspring of Faith - R. Wolfson

Chazal describe the greatness of the Me'aras Ha-Machpeilah in truly extraordinary terms. They tell us, for example, that it is the location of the entrance to Gan Eden, the doorway through which all souls must pass on their journey to the next world.<sup>17</sup>

17

It is not only the prayers of the Avos which are heard in the Machpeilah Cave. The prayers of every Jew pass through Me'aras Ha-Machpeilah as well.<sup>18</sup> In other words, it is a gateway through which our prayers can leave this world and enter the higher, Heavenly worlds. In modern terms, we might picture it as a kind of communications tower that receives our whispered words of prayer and beams them upward to worlds we have never seen and cannot imagine.

18

We also know from Chazal that Yerushalayim is a place which establishes a connection between Heaven and earth, between the spiritual world and the physical world. Yerushalayim has the power to connect Heaven and earth, because it is a city that exists as both an earthly place and a Heavenly presence — as Yerushalayim shel Matah and Yerushalayim shel Malah.<sup>19</sup> Yerushalayim is a double city, but not a divided city, for it is “the city joined together in unity.”<sup>20</sup> In every stone of this luminous city, Heaven and earth coexist; and because Yerushalayim unites the worlds within itself, it also can connect the upper and lower worlds. Yerushalayim provides a link to Heaven for all of earth and a gateway for the prayers of Klal Yisrael.

But if Yerushalayim provides a connection between Heaven and earth, why should there be another place, in Chevron, with the same properties? Doesn't it seem unnecessary?

19

According to the Zohar,<sup>21</sup> the very name Machpeilah reveals a connection between Chevron and Yerushalayim. The word machpeilah means a “double” or a “copy,” and the Zohar suggests that Me'aras Ha-Machpeilah was called by this name because it is, in fact, a copy, a duplicate of Yerushalayim. Thus, every time we speak of Machpeilah we are emphasizing its similarity to Yerushalayim.

20

Yerushalayim is a city of revelation. More than any other place in the world, it is the place that reveals Godliness and the connection between God and the Jewish people.

Yerushalayim is the place where God chose to build His House, the Beis Ha-Mikdash, in order to dwell among the Jewish people. The Beis Ha-Mikdash was an expression of God's love for us, and our Divine service in the Beis Ha-Mikdash — our work in elevating the material world to make it holy — was a living expression of our love for God. The Beis Ha-Mikdash was also known as the Ohel Mo'ed — the place appointed for God and His people to meet. As we said, it was the place to which all Israel came to “see and to be seen,” to encounter the Divine and to receive a revelation of Godliness.

21

Yerushalayim is a mountain not only in the topographical sense, but also in the spiritual sense, and the breathtaking vistas that can be seen from its high places are spiritual landscapes. Those who prepared themselves with purity and devotion and found favor with God were able to ascend the “mountain of Hashem.” From the heights of Yerushalayim, they saw visions of Godliness and heard the words of the Living God. With such a power of vision come inspiration, exhilaration, and exultation, and hence Yerushalayim is “a place of beautiful scenery, the joy of all the earth.”<sup>22</sup>

22

When we look at Chevron, we realize at once that it is the very opposite of revelation. In Chevron, the Avos are deeply hidden in a cave within a cave, far removed from sight. In contrast, Yerushalayim is a mountain which can be seen from afar. There, the Avos served God with animation and vitality, and Yaakov described it as “the place where my fathers prayed.”<sup>23</sup> In Me'aras Ha-Machpeilah, however, the Avos are in a state of repose, a state Yaakov referred to with the words “I will lie down with my fathers.”<sup>24</sup>

Previously we showed that Moriah and Machpeilah are, in essence, one. Now we see that this essence manifests itself in two diametrically opposite ways: Yerushalayim is revelation, and Chevron is concealment. Thus, we are led to the puzzling conclusion that Chevron is a kind of “underground Yerushalayim.” The Me'aras Ha-Machpeilah seems to be con-

connected to Yerushalayim like an invisible sister-city, a distant, subterranean annex hidden beneath the rocks of Chevron. To understand the meaning of this, we must understand the way in which we ourselves are connected to the Avos — and to Chevron.

24

We are the descendants of the Avos. But we are not merely the end product of a long process of development of which they were the beginning. If that were the extent of our connection to the Avos, we would only be their distant relatives, and we would possess within ourselves no more than a pale glimmer of what they were. In fact, our connection to the Avos is far more intimate and essential. The Avos are at the very center of our identity; they are an integral part of our being.

25

of branches and thousands of leaves. And yet, in some sense, the tiny seed already contains within itself the entire tree and even the later generations of trees that will be derived from the seed.

26 Similarly, there was a time when the Avos were the only Jews in the world, and hence we can say that all the future generations of Israel were contained within them. The souls which would later be born into the world in a revealed and physical way already had a hidden, spiritual existence within the Avos themselves. Thus, at that earliest stage of Jewish history, we lived within the Avos, so to speak, and each of our souls, according to its nature, formed a particular part of the Avos.<sup>21</sup>

Today, however, the situation is in a sense reversed. Each of our souls retains its original identity as a part of the Avos, and hence the Avos continue to exist within us.<sup>22</sup> But more than this, it is not only a particular aspect of the Avos that is present today within each individual Jewish soul — it is the very essence of the Avos, their essential being.

27 This idea that each Jewish soul contains the essence of the Avos is also not easy to understand. But it is related to the mystical concept that every individual is a microcosm — a small world that contains, in miniature, everything found in the world at large.<sup>23</sup>

Since each individual is a microcosm, and since in the world at large there is a place we call Me'aras Ha-Machpeilah, which contains the Avos, it follows that each individual must possess within himself his own private Me'aras Ha-

Machpeilah. It is a place deep within his heart that contains the essential being of the Avos and their holiness. Although it is so deeply hidden that even the individual himself cannot directly sense its presence, it is there nonetheless.

28 This means that whenever a Jew prays, it is as if he is praying together with the Avos — and this greatly helps his prayer. This is because it was the Avos who established the practice of regular prayer, fixing it firmly and forever in the soul of Israel.<sup>24</sup> It was they, through their unceasing service and absolute devotion, who opened the gates and pathways of prayer for themselves and for all their descendants. The Avos forged a connection between themselves and God, and that same connection is automatically available to us. Their connection to God was so deep that it became an essential part of their being, and their essential being is within us.

29 As a result, a Jew who wishes to approach God in prayer need not clear a new path for himself. Since he is a part of the Avos, and since their essence is within him, he can follow in their footsteps and use the same pathways that they established for all the generations.

30 That is why our most important daily prayer, the Shemoneh Esreh, begins with the blessing called Avos. The Shemoneh Esreh is the prayer in which, after we have prepared ourselves by reciting Pesukei d'Zimrah and the blessings of Shema, we attempt to attach ourselves most closely to God. Standing still and silent, we try to quiet the constant chatter of self-awareness and to feel as near to God as a silently spoken word is near to the one who speaks it.

But how can we accomplish this? Do we harbor any point

of spirituality uncluttered with self-awareness? Do we have any place within us that can serve as an initial point of connection with the Divine? And which aspect of God should we attempt to know and relate to first?

31 In answer to these questions, the first blessing of Shemoneh Esreh tells us that when we first approach God we should address Him as "Elokei Avraham, Elokei Yitzchak, v'Elokei Yaakov." We are reminded that deep within us, hidden below the level of self-awareness, there is a Me'aras Ha-Machpeilah, where the essence of the Avos is our essence and the connection between the Avos and God is our connection. It is as if the first blessing of the Shemoneh Esreh is telling us, "Do you want to find God? He is Elokei Avraham — He can be located and identified by His attachment to the Avos, and the essence of the Avos is within you."

Thus, the first blessing of the Shemoneh Esreh invites a Jew to connect himself to the Avos, so that his prayer may ascend together with their prayers. And where can he find the Avos? Within the Me'aras Ha-Machpeilah of his own heart, at the very core of his being. This is the spiritual meaning of the idea that the prayers of Israel ascend to Heaven by way of the Me'aras Ha-Machpeilah.

22

The spiritual Machpeilah within our hearts is so close to the center of our being that it is not generally accessible to our awareness. It is so deeply hidden that it cannot be directly perceived. And, of course, being a spiritual entity, it does not take up any space, and it cannot be assigned to any particular location.

33

Thus, in the physical world, the Avos are so deeply hidden that we cannot locate them. They are present, but not in a way that is expressed within the usual parameters of space and location. They are present, and yet they are removed from the world of place.

Similarly, in the spiritual world, in the Machpeilah that exists within the heart of every Jew, the essence of the Avos is so deeply hidden that it is practically undetectable. It is hidden far beneath the thoughts and feelings that flicker across the face of our being, shifting like the winds and changing like the weather. It is hidden beneath the persistent patterns of personality; it is deeper than the difference between wise and foolish, deeper even than the good and evil we do — the essence of the Avos is at the very center of our being.

34

But Me'aras Ha-Machpeilah was never destroyed; it was never even affected by the churban, the destruction of the Beis Ha-Mikdash. Indeed, if we look deeply at Chevron, we realize that it is a place which, by its very nature, could never be subject to churban. Churban, in the spiritual sense, consists of several elements. One is hester panim, the concealment of God's involvement with us. Another is histalkus ha-Shechinah, the removal of the open revelation of the Divine Presence, and the third is the cessation of the service of God as performed by man.

32 In Yerushalayim, God's involvement with His people was open and manifest, a situation known as *he'aras panim*. In addition, the Divine Presence was revealed, and the Jewish people were energetically devoted to the active service of God. Since it was possible for these to be suspended — for the revealed can be hidden, and human activity can be halted — it was also possible for there to be a *churban* in Yerushalayim.

The Machpeilah, on the other hand, was never a place of open revelation. The *Avos* are concealed there in secrecy. Nor was it ever a place characterized by the active service of God, for the *Avos* came to the Machpeilah only after they had concluded their days of active service upon the earth. It is a place, therefore, which is not susceptible to the forces of *churban*. Anything that *churban* has the power to destroy was never to be found in Chevron. As a result, that which does exist in Chevron — the deeply hidden holiness of the *Avos* — is completely invulnerable to *churban*.

36 This is a reflection of an important general idea: only those aspects of holiness which are in a state of revelation are susceptible to *churban*. There are deeper levels of holiness, however,

that are always in a state of concealment, and they can never be affected by *churban*. In the language of our mystical tradition: "In the aspect that is concealed [*beVechinas Iskassiyah*], there is no *churban*."<sup>26</sup>

37 *Churban* is a phenomenon of this world. It affects only the physical world, or those aspects of spirituality that are openly revealed in the physical world. To put it in even simpler terms, *churban* affects the spiritual world only insofar as it appears to us, but not as it actually is. Spiritual realities as they are in essence — on a level deeper than revelation — are untouched by *churban*.

Thus, there is an aspect of the Divine Presence and the holiness of the *Avos* which is deeper than revelation. And that essence of their holiness continues to be present within us, even in our state of exile, although it is present, to be sure, only in a concealed way.

38 This, then, is the spiritual meaning of *Me'aras Ha-Machpeilah*. In a time of *churban* — when the revelation of holiness has ceased from its place — the Machpeilah, which is enduring, invisible, and invulnerable, shows us that the essence of the holiness within us is also enduring, invisible, and invulnerable.

39 Thus, Chevron declares that even when the Divine Presence is no longer openly revealed to us, we are deeply and inseparably connected to our Father in Heaven. Indeed, the very name Chevron expresses this. The Hebrew word *chevron* (חברון) is spelled with exactly the same letters as the word *churban* (חורבן), but the letters have been rearranged to suggest the word *chibbur* (חיבור), which means "connection" or "attachment." In other words, the name Chevron tells us that even in the midst of *churban* we are still in a state of *chibbur* — connected to our Father in Heaven.

40 At the beginning of *parashas Chavei Sarah*, the Torah refers to Chevron as *Kiryas Arba*, and Rashi offers two explanations for the name.<sup>27</sup> First, he informs us that *Kiryas Arba* was named after four giants who lived there: Achiman, Sheishai, Talmai, and their father. Then, as a second explanation, Rashi suggests that the name refers to the four couples buried there: Adam and Chavah, Avraham and Sarah, Yitzchak and Rivka, Yaakov and Leah.

Rashi's first explanation is in itself rather puzzling. Why would the Torah choose to refer to the holy site of Chevron with a name that commemorates four wicked giants who briefly darkened the place with their cursed presence? And why does Rashi offer this explanation first, as if to give it precedence? Indeed, why does Rashi even need both explanations?

But in the light of what we now know about Chevron, we see that both explanations are necessary to convey the true nature and significance of Chevron. An outward appearance of wickedness, a surface that does not reveal Godliness, and hidden deeply within, the original and essential holiness of the Jewish people — that is Chevron. The wickedness, like the giants, is transient, while the holiness, like the holiness of the *Avos*, endures — protected and pristine and in all its powerful glory — until the end of time.

41

Rashi's characterization of Chevron can also be read as a description of an individual Jew, for, as we have said, every individual is a microcosm, with his own hidden Machpeilah. On this level, Rashi's words describe a Jew who has become en-

snared in sin and seems to be entirely overpowered by his own wickedness — "overrun by wicked giants," so to speak. When we look at him, we cannot see even the faintest glimmer of his original and essential Jewish holiness. But Chevron teaches us that the picture of utter destruction this Jew presents to the world is only a matter of outward appearance. Deep within him, hidden from our eyes, the full holiness of the *Avos* endures. If he will only make up his mind to return to God, that unblemished aspect of the *Avos* will provide him with a foundation on which to rebuild his house. If he will only return, that inviolable reservoir will once again fill him with a revealed and perceptible holiness.

Rashi mentions the giants first, not because what they represent is more true, but because that is the order in which we see the world. When we look at Chevron, or at another Jew, we notice the outward appearance first. Only later, after much reflection, do we become aware of the deeper reality — the holiness of the *Avos* that is hidden beneath the surface.

42

When we pray, we pray with Chevron and by means of Chevron. But we do not turn to face Chevron — because we do not need to! Chevron is within us. It is not something external, like a source of light we must face in order to see. Chevron is the deepest level of our being; it is the essence of who we are. When we pray, we look towards Yerushalayim to receive a revelation of the Divine Presence, but we pray from Chevron, from the point within our being where we are permanently connected with the *Avos* and with our Creator.

Every Jewish marriage is a metaphor, a tiny model of an immensely great and holy reality. A Jewish marriage is an echo of the Heavenly marriage by which the Jewish people are connected to God. In the writings of the Prophets, God is often described as a bridegroom and the Jewish people as His bride. The entire book of *Shir Ha-Shirim* is based on this metaphor.

One can speak about a Jewish marriage on two levels: revealed and concealed. The revealed level — the level of *Issgalia* — deals only with what is visible in the world, and so it deals only with the aspects of a marriage that are related to the body. On this level, a marriage is a relationship with social, emotional, and biological dimensions. It begins with the halachic act of *kiddushin* and lasts for as long as a couple are together in this world.

There is, however, a deeper, concealed level — the level of *skassia* — and it takes into consideration the aspects of a marriage that relate to the soul and are not directly visible. Chazal tell us that in every marriage the souls of the bridegroom and the bride were connected to one another long before the wedding. Years before their union was even a glimmer of inspiration in a matchmaker's mind, the souls of the *chasan* and *kallah* were already linked in Heaven.<sup>44</sup>

In this light, it is clear that the halachic act of *kiddushin*, the Jewish marriage ceremony, does not "create" a marriage from nothing. On a hidden, spiritual level, the *chasan* and *kallah* were always connected to one another. The effect of the act of *kiddushin* is simply to strengthen that connection and to make it manifest. It turns an invisible connection into a public fact, and it imposes a set of legal obligations and restrictions.

The unity of a *chasan* and *kallah* is derived from the deepest level of their souls — it is an expression of their essential identity. For the souls of Israel originate within the *Kisei Ha-Kavod*, the Heavenly Throne of Glory, and there, in a realm above the world of time, each *chasan* and *kallah* are one. That is why, at a wedding, when the *chasan* and *kallah* are being reunited, we recite the blessing "*vehiskin lo mimenu binyan adei ad* — He [God] prepared for him [for man]...an eternal edifice." How can a Jewish marriage be described as an eternal edifice when a couple

can only hope to be together in this world for a finite number of years? The answer is that we are referring to the hidden unity of the *chasan* and *kallah*, to the unity of souls which the wedding merely reveals — and that unity is eternal for it originates in a world beyond time.

According to Jewish law, a marriage becomes legally significant in two stages. In the first stage, known as *kiddushin*, the *kallah* is designated as the future wife of the *chasan*, and for this reason the word *kiddushin* is often translated as "betrothal." In fact, however, *kiddushin* is more than an engagement, and in many respects the couple are already legally married at this stage. The second stage, which completes the marriage, is known as *nisuin*.

The laws of *kiddushin* are discussed by the Talmud in the tractate with the same name, and at the very beginning of the tractate *Kiddushin*, the Mishnah teaches us that money or any object of monetary value can be used to perform the act of *kiddushin*. This is the legal basis for the traditional marriage ceremony, in which the *chasan* gives a wedding ring to the *kallah*. Since the ring has a monetary value, it is valid for the act of *kiddushin*. The Gemara then explains that this halachah is derived from the Torah's account of how Avraham Avinu bought the Machpeilah as a burial site and paid for it with money. At first glance, this seems very strange. We have many laws and customs that are designed to ensure that when a Jewish wedding takes place it is surrounded only by auspicious signs. We try to make every detail of the wedding a "*siman tov*," a symbol of blessing and life, and we usually avoid anything that might carry a negative association.

Avraham knew that his marriage with Sarah was a model for the Heavenly marriage between God and the Jewish people, and hence he understood that anything that would strengthen his own marriage would strengthen the Heavenly marriage. That is the reason why Avraham Avinu prepared a place

where he and Sarah would be together even after their physical lives came to an end, and that is why Yitzchak and Yaakov also asked to be buried in the Machpeilah together with their wives.

In purchasing the Machpeilah, Avraham Avinu was acting to ensure that his marriage with Sarah would be permanent. Even at a time when all the outward aspects of their marriage had ceased to exist even when, on a revealed level, the act of *kiddushin* which had united him with Sarah was no longer binding — even then, Avraham insisted that his union with Sarah endure. And by ensuring that his own marriage would be permanent, Avraham was also ensuring that the Heavenly marriage between Hashem and the Jewish people would never be broken.

Thus we find that the Machpeilah signifies the permanence of two marriages: the earthly marriage between a Jewish husband and wife and the Heavenly marriage between God and the Jewish people. When Avraham insisted that his union with Sarah be eternal, he showed us that a Jewish marriage is based on something deeper than what we can see in the physical world. On the revealed level, a Jewish marriage is limited to this world. From a strictly legal point of view, the act of *kiddushin* has a meaning only in the land of the living and not in the world beyond the grave. But within the Machpeilah, the Avos and their wives are united forever. And so the Machpeilah teaches us that a Jewish marriage is based on something more than the act of *kiddushin*, on something deeper than the visible world — it is derived from a hidden unity of souls.

At the same time, the Machpeilah ensures the permanence of the Heavenly marriage. The message of the Machpeilah is that even in a time of *galus*, exile, when Israel has been forced to flee from the bridal canopy of Yerushalayim, she is still united with her Beloved, *Ha-Kadosh Baruch Hu*.

51 Even when Is-

rael has been driven from her blessed, tranquil habitations of holiness and compelled to wander as an exile in foreign lands, she continues to be united with God in a profound and wondrous unity, just as in the earliest days of their marriage.

52

With this idea we can appreciate a deeper level of meaning in the name Machpeilah. The name is derived from the word *peil*, which means "double." What precisely is doubled in the Machpeilah? Our Sages offer two answers:<sup>52</sup> (1) the Machpeilah consists of a cave beneath a cave, and (2) it is *kefulah b'zugos* — a place with "a doubling of married couples." This second answer is usually understood as a reference to the four couples who are buried there, but now we can see an even deeper meaning in these words.

On this level, the Machpeilah teaches that a Jewish marriage is based on a timeless unity of souls.

The second married couple of the Machpeilah is the Heavenly marriage between Hashem and *klal Yisrael*. On this level, the Machpeilah proclaims that the marriage of Hashem with *klal Yisrael* is an eternal marriage which can never be undone, a union of lovers who can never be separated. Thus the Machpeilah is a place with a "doubling of married couples." It is the place of the earthly marriage and the Heavenly marriage, and it expresses the connection between them.

In light of what we now know about the Machpeilah, we see how profoundly appropriate it is that the law of *kiddushin*, that unites every Jewish couple is derived from Avraham's purchase of the Machpeilah. Avraham bought the Machpeilah in order to ensure that he and his wife would be united forever, and his purchase shows us that a Jewish marriage is a *binyan adei ad* — an everlasting connection based on a unity of souls. Not only is there nothing inauspicious about remembering the Machpeilah under the *chuppah*, but, on the contrary, there could be no greater *siman tov*!

In this way, the money of *kiddushin* provides a link to the *Avos*. The *chasan* and *kallah* are reconnected to their source within the holy couples of the Machpeilah, and their own marriage, at its very inception, is united with the wondrous and holy marriages of the *Avos* and *Imahos*.

In addition, the *chasan* and *kallah* are reconnected to their source in the world's first couple, and that is why Adam and Chavah are mentioned in the blessings that are recited under the *chuppah*. "Blessed are You, Hashem," we say, "Who created Adam Ha-Rishon in His own image...and made for him [a wife] from himself [from Adam's rib], an eternal edifice [*binyan adei ad*]." Since our Sages saw everything with spiritual eyes, they understood that the *chasan* and *kallah* standing under the *chuppah* are connected to their source in Adam and Chavah.

Thus, if a *chasan* is worthy, he can accomplish with his *kesef kiddushin*, with the ring he places on his *kallah's* finger, what Avraham accomplished with his four hundred shekels. He can make a marriage that is an eternal union and an earthly model of the Heavenly marriage between God and the Jewish people.

55a

The link between Machpeilah and marriage is also reflected by the location of these topics in the text of the Torah, for the juxtaposition of topics in the Torah indicates a connection between them.

55b

In *parashas Chayei Sarah*, the Torah first tells us how Avraham bought the Machpeilah and then, immediately afterward, how Avraham sent Eliezer to find a wife for Yitzchak.

56

Jewish souls draw their life and being from the Divine Presence, which is often referred to in this context as "*Knesses Yisrael*." According to our mystical tradition,<sup>56</sup> *Knesses Yisrael* has two different aspects, and they are named Leah and Rachel. In other words, there are two different sources from which a Jewish soul can draw its life.

The first source is accessible to every Jew equally, regardless of his personal merit. Whether righteous or wicked, every Jew is connected to this source by virtue of his being a part of the Jewish people. This is the aspect of the Divine Presence called Leah, or *alma d'iskassia*, "the concealed world."

The second source, however, does depend on individual merit, and a person's connection to it is commensurate with his deeds and accomplishments. This aspect of the Divine Presence is known as Rachel, or *alma d'isgalia*, "the revealed world."

57

*Tikkun Chatzos* consists of two parts. The first, called *Tikkun Rachel*, is a lament for the destruction of the Temple and the bitterness of the exile. This part of *Tikkun Chatzos* is recited only on weekdays. The second part, called *Tikkun Leah*, consists of songs and praises, and it can be recited even on Shabbos and Festivals.

58

Based on what we know about the two aspects of the Divine Presence, we can understand the difference between these two sections of *Tikkun Chatzos*. The aspect of *Knesses Yisrael* known as Leah is the deepest root of the Jewish soul. It is the pure, enduring spark of holiness present in every Jew, righteous or wicked. It is a hidden point of purity beyond the

reach of sin. This is the aspect of Chevron, the city that is invulnerable to *churban*. It is the aspect of *alma d'iskassia*, where the Supernal Union is never interrupted, and the marriage between God and His people is forever strong. Since *Tikkun Leah* refers to this aspect of *Knesses Yisrael*, it is a song of praise and a joyful expression of closeness to God, and hence it is appropriate even on Shabbos.

The aspect of *Knesses Yisrael* known as Rachel is the connection between the Jewish soul and God that depends on individual merit. It is the holiness in the Jewish soul that is revealed, and it is vulnerable to sin. This is the aspect of Yerushalavim, the city where the *churban* could have an effect. It is the level of *alma de'isgalia*, the light of revelation which allows for a possibility for darkness. Thus, in a time of darkness and *galus*, *Tikkun Rachel* is a song of lamentation and tears, and it cannot be recited on Shabbos.

of Glory.<sup>71</sup> Only Yaakov is described this way, since it was in his life that the quality of *merkavah* was expressed most fully. In more familiar terms, we might say that Yaakov lived on earth and in the Heavenly worlds at the same time. More than with the other *Avos*, the events of Yaakov's life reflected realities in the supernal worlds, and the realities in the supernal worlds reflected Yaakov's life. What looks to us like two separate worlds was for Yaakov a single, seamless unity.

It follows that Yaakov's earthly marriage had to be a faithful reflection of the Heavenly marriage between God and the Jewish people. As we have said, every Jewish marriage has this potential, and in the marriage of Avraham and Sarah this potential was realized to a far greater degree than in the marriages of ordinary individuals. But since it was Yaakov who most fully expressed the quality of *merkavah*, his marriage had to represent the Heavenly marriage in the most complete and accurate way.<sup>72</sup>

61 The *Imahos*, the Mothers of the Jewish people, also had an existence which corresponded to realities in the Heavenly worlds. Rachel and Leah existed in the physical world in a way that reflected the Divine Presence, the Supernal Source of the souls of Israel. But the totality of *klal Yisrael*, in all its aspects, could only be represented by both Rachel and Leah. Either one by herself would only reflect half the reality of the Jewish people. Yaakov therefore understood that in order for his earthly marriage to be an accurate representation of the Heavenly marriage, he had to marry both Leah and Rachel.

But even according to the Ramban's approach, we are faced with a serious difficulty. Yaakov was the most perfect of the *Avos*. How could he possibly have violated a prohibition of the Torah? If Yaakov was later ashamed to bring Rachel into the presence of his forefathers, how could he have married her the first place? Why wasn't he even more ashamed in the presence of Hashem?

Yaakov had to marry both sisters, since that was the only way he could accomplish the great *tikkunim* Reb Chayim mentions. In addition, as Reb Chayim explains, the laws of the Torah did not yet apply, and hence such a marriage was permitted, strictly speaking.

Nevertheless, Yaakov was confronted by a problem. In keeping with his elevated spiritual status, Yaakov had accepted upon himself a higher and more restrictive standard of conduct. He voluntarily observed all the laws of the Torah, even though he was not required to do so. Yaakov, and the *Avos* before him, were on such an exalted level of holiness that they knew the commandments of the Torah even before the revelation of Har Sinai.<sup>73</sup> The *Avos* knew the spiritual meaning of each mitzvah and how it had to be performed in the physical world. Wherever possible, they kept the laws of the Torah precisely.

It seems that when Yaakov first arrived in Lavan's house, he believed it would be possible for him to marry both Rachel and Leah without even the slightest hint of sin. Apparently, he knew that Rachel was destined to pass away before Leah — when Yaakov met Rachel for the first time, he wept, and Chazal tell us that it was because he foresaw, with *ruach ha-kodesh*, the circumstances of her burial.<sup>74</sup> He knew, therefore, that she was destined to die young.

The Torah's prohibition of marrying two sisters only applies when the second marriage takes place during the lifetime of the first wife. Hence, there was a way, theoretically, for Yaakov to marry both sisters, without any sin at all. He could marry Rachel first, and after she passed away he could bring

her to the Machpeilah, since their marriage would have been completely free from sin. Then he could marry Leah, and since this second marriage also would be fully in accord with the laws of the Torah, Leah too could be buried in the Machpeilah.

65 This was Yaakov's plan. Had it been successful, the history of the world would have been radically different. If Yaakov had succeeded in bringing both Leah and Rachel into the Machpeilah, the Heavenly marriage between Hashem and *Knesses Yisrael* would have been permanent with respect to both aspects of *Knesses Yisrael*. Not only would it have been permanent in the aspect of Leah, the hidden level; it would also have been permanent in the aspect of Rachel, the open and revealed level. Any separation between Hashem and *Knesses Yisrael* would have been impossible, even a separation on the visible level, and hence the entire exile could never have occurred. The Creation would have arrived at a state of complete perfection, as it will on the day when Hashem is known to all the nations, and His kingship is established throughout the world. On that day, *Tikkun Rachel* will be sung in voices of praise and jubilation, and the eternal connection between God and His people will be openly revealed, never again to be hidden.

66 Similarly, in his war with Lavan, Yaakov survived and even flourished. Nevertheless, he was forced to pay a heavy price. When Lavan succeeded in deceiving Yaakov — when he tricked him into marrying Leah instead of Rachel — Yaakov's plans for the future were thrown into disarray.

The problem was that as soon as Yaakov married Leah, there was no longer any way for him to marry Rachel in accordance with the laws of the Torah as they would later be revealed at Har Sinai. Yaakov could not postpone his marriage with Rachel until after Leah's death, because he knew that Leah would outlive Rachel. The only choice left was to marry Rachel during Leah's lifetime, and that is what he did. According to the Torah — the Torah as it actually applied to Yaakov — it was the correct and necessary thing to do. The great mitzvah of the *tikkunim* Yaakov would accomplish was more important than the minor sin of detracting from the additional holiness he had accepted. Nevertheless, his marriage to Rachel would now involve a slight transgression, and as a result, Yaakov would no longer be able to bring Rachel into the Machpeilah. The victory that had been within his grasp, the opportunity to bring the final redemption, had been suddenly snatched away.

... had changed the entire course of history. What appeared to be only a momentary

week before marrying Rachel — was really a tear in the fabric of time that could not be quickly mended. Lavan had created a tiny gap in time that would stretch until it encompassed more than two thousand years of *galus* and a million tales of woe.

In a deeper sense, Lavan had created a dislocation in the structure of reality itself. Since Rachel, who corresponds to the revealed connection between the Jewish soul and God, would not be together with Yaakov in the Machpeilah, the Heavenly marriage of Hashem and *Knesses Yisrael* would not be permanent in a visible way. Thus there would be times when God's

eternal love for His people would not be openly manifest. Lavan had created a gap between appearance and reality — and that gap is the very essence of the exile.

That is why, at the Pesach Seder, when we retell the story of exile and redemption, the *Haggadah* begins with the verse, "*Aramei oved avi va-veired Mitzraymah* — It was an Aramean who tried to destroy my father, and he went down to Egypt." The Aramean was Lavan who tried to destroy our father Yaakov, with the spiritual result that Yaakov had to go into exile in Egypt. And since the Egyptian exile was the spiritual root of all the exiles of Jewish history, the *Haggadah* is also telling us that it was Lavan who caused the entire *galus*.

Even with the merit of the *simanim*, however, Yaakov was unable to annul the decree. Despite his years of toil, Yaakov did not succeed in bringing Rachel to the Machpeilah, and this meant that there would be a time when his children would have to endure the night of exile.

It was God's Will that the *galus* should begin in Chevron because Chevron is the place that would give the Jewish people the power to endure the exile. It is precisely because Avraham and Sarah are buried in Chevron that we have had the strength to survive the exile, even to the present day.

We have come to understand that there are two *Mikdashim* in the spiritual world, two sources from which we can draw holiness: Yerushalayim and Chevron.

When you think carefully about your own spiritual life, you will be able to identify times when you were blessed with spiritual illumination and clarity, and you could feel the blissful closeness of the Divine Presence. When you experience such moments of illumination and closeness in your own life, means you have been privileged to ascend to your Har Ha-Moriah. There, as you stand upon "the mountain of God," you are in the presence of the *Avos Ha-Kedoshim*, and their holiness is revealed to you.

But you may also experience times when your heart is closed to all feelings of holiness and joy, and your mind is tightly shuttered. You sense that the light of Heaven is hidden from you by thick and gloomy clouds, and your eyes gaze upon a weary and oppressive darkness.

... been locked, barring even the faintest beginning of a prayer. You yearn for your soul's Beloved, and although you search for Him, you cannot find Him. The trouble and the sorrow you feel are a sign that, for the present moment, your *Beis Ha-Mikdash*, your Yerushalayim, has been destroyed.

At such a time, when you cannot go up to Har Ha-Moriah, you must go down instead to the Me'aras Ha-Machpeilah that exists within you. Do as Kalev ben Yefuneh did, and pray at the tombs of your holy forefathers, who are hidden like a treasure in the depths of your heart. Pray, even if your prayer is no more than a longing for prayer. If you cannot make your prayer an expression of your heart, then let it be an expression of your faith. If you cannot pray with vitality, then pray with *emunah*. But do not desist.

Force yourself to learn Torah, even if now it tastes bitter to you, and you only recall with difficulty how its words once delighted you with the sweetness of milk and honey. Accept upon yourself the service of God, even if seems a heavy burden and you feel only weariness and indifference. Even if you can only force yourself to study Torah and to do mitzvos with a dull-witted determination, you must persevere, nevertheless.

Serve God with whatever powers you have now — with whatever you can find within your soul at the present time. If, for the moment, you cannot discover within yourself enthusi-

asm and joy, if the light of understanding is dim, then serve God even like the ox, who pulls forward steadily under the yoke, patient, resigned, and powerful. Or serve God like the donkey, loaded with heavy burdens, who is cold and lethargic, but also sure-footed, reliable, and uncomplaining. Serve God in whatever way you are able. But do not despair, and do not desist.

There is no place for despair, for your Me'aras Ha-Machpeilah is a wellspring of holiness that can sustain you even when the light of Yerushalayim is dim. Your Machpeilah can never be destroyed. The holiness of the *Avos* that exists within you can never be lost. True, it is hidden now — locked within the reservoir of your Machpeilah. But that holiness is waiting expectantly, and at a moment's notice it is ready to cascade outwards, to fill you with a revealed holiness and the radiant light of Yerushalayim.

In your time of darkness, take it upon yourself to fulfill the words of the Prophet Yeshayahu: "I will wait for Hashem, Who has hidden His Face from the House of Yaakov, and I will hope for Him." Strengthen yourself continually with the *emunah* you inherit from the *Avos Ha-Kedoshim*. Cultivate *emunah* and nurture hope, for it is not the way of Hashem to reject any of His children forever, and soon He will turn to you again with great mercy and revealed kindness.

Wait for Hashem, with yearning and patience, as watchmen wait for the first light of dawn. Wait as the watchmen wait, knowing that the dawn must come, that soon the glory of Hashem will be revealed upon you, and in a moment the city of Yerushalayim will be rebuilt upon its holy place, and all its glory revealed.