

Chayei Sarah - Shabbat Chevron

- Milton Polin.

What is our attachment to Chevron? Why are Adam & Chava buried there? Netziv's suggestion of it being the first permanent Jewish settlement in Eretz Yisrael.

Chayei Sarah

Parashat Hayye Sarah has been designated in the past as Shabbat Hevron. The texts and thoughts that follow are based upon a sermon I delivered in 1996. They are appropriate for Parashat Hayye Sarah whether or not the day is designated Shabbat Hevron.

Now that Israel has "disengaged" from Gush Katif and northern Shomron, we are likely to hear voices about evacuating Hevron. Although the numbers of Jews in Hevron are smaller than in Gush Katif, the Jewish attachment to Hevron is longer and deeper.

What is our attachment to Hevron? Obviously, it goes back to our patriarchs and matriarchs who were buried there. And they were buried there because Adam and Havah were buried there. But that only begs the question, why were Adam and Havah buried there?

Zohar Hadash 79,4 (check the text) explains that after Shet was born God brought Adam and Havah to what was later Hevron. Upon Havvah's passing, Adam began to dig a grave for her in the Mearat Hamakhpelah because there he once again smelled the fragrance of Gan Eden.

Then why did Avraham wait until Sarah died to purchase the Mearat Hamakhpelah? Was Avraham afraid, like so many people, to purchase a cemetery plot before it was needed?

The Netziv suggests a different approach in his commentary to Bereshit 13:18 (check the text). Whereas Avraham and Sarah traveled throughout the country living in tents, only in Hevron did they first settle permanently. Hevron is therefore the first permanent Jewish settlement in Eretz Israel!

Evacuating Hevron would be tantamount to America abandoning the Tidewater country in Virginia, the site of Jamestown, the first English settlement in North America in 1607, or Plymouth, MA, the site of the Pilgrim's settlement in New England.

A history of Hevron from David's time, through the return from Babylonian Captivity, through the Maccabees, through the 1929 massacre might be included.