

Ya'akov Avinu follows the path of Avraham Avinu, by showing that a Jew can live a life separate from the rest of society but at the same time be a part of that society and contribute to it. Avraham said it all when he chastised the people of Cheit telling them, “Ger Ve'Toshav Anochi Imachem”, [Bereishit 23:4] I behave like a total stranger [Ger] in this community, but I give of my service, my talent and share my wealth as a [Toshav] a fully participating member of the community. The two are not mutually exclusive.

Ya'akov learns this lesson well. Upon returning to Eretz K'na'an, he “encamped” [Vayichan] on the outskirts of city of Shechem [33:18]. The Gemara Shabbat comments [33a] that in addition to camping there he improved the city by instituting a “coin system” to facilitate commerce, he built public bath houses [hygienic reasons] and even a shopping mall. Ya'akov established his “home” and his “life” by determining where and how his limited area of involvement would be.

From where did the Avot learn this fundamental truth that a Jewish religious person must not only serve HaShem but all mankind as well? Rav Soloveitchik suggested that they learned it from Me'arat HaMach'pela. Why was this area called “Kir'yat Arba”? Rashi explains [Bereishit 23:2]: It was so called because of the four couples who were buried there, man and wife; Adam and Chava, Avraham and Sarah, Yitzchak and Rivkah, Ya'akov and Leah. Why indeed were our Avot and Imahot who personified Chesed and devotion to G-d, buried in the same cave as Adam and Chava who were the progenitors of ALL MANKIND?

We see a compelling truth emerging. There is no contradiction between laws rooted in the universal concept of “Tzellem Elokim, G-d's Image” and those rooted in Kedusha, sanctity, but rather, they blend together. Being a Mamlechet Kohanim VeGoy Kadosh does not relieve us of our universal obligations towards all mankind. Upon visiting Me'arat HaMach'pela and seeing Adam and Chava, who personified “all mankind” buried side by side with our holy Avot who personified “chesed and monotheism” reminds us of that Yiddish saying that a Jew must be good “Tzu G-t und Tzu leit”,
To G-d and to man.

SHABBAT SHALOM, FROM YERUSHALAYIM,
Rabbi Aharon Ziegler

QUESTIONS

1. **Yaakov Avinu comes to the city of Shechem** to purchase there a plot of land [33:18]. Who was eventually buried there??
2. By what name do the Arabs call this city of Shechem??
3. What two mountains stand on either side of Shechem?

THIS HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH THE PARASHA---WHY DO PEOPLE SAY “I SLEPT LIKE A BABY”, WHEN BABIES WAKE UP EVERY TWO HOURS