—Chayei Sarah—

Saturday Morning Torah Study

Shabbat November 7, 2026

(Plaut pp. 156-57)

Genesis 23:1-9:

א וַיִּהְיוּ חַיֵּי שָׂרָה מֵאָה שָׁנָה וְעֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה וְשֶׁבַע שָׁנִים שְׁנֵי חַיֵּי שָׂרָה:
ב וַתָּמָת שָׂרָה בְּקִרְיַת אַרְבַּע הִוא חֶבְרוֹן בְּאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן וַיָּבֹא אַבְרָהָם
לִסְפֹּד לְשָׂרָה וְלִבְכֹּתָהּ: ג וַיָּקָם אַבְרָהָם מֵעַל פְּנֵי מֵתוֹ וַיְדַבֵּר
אֶל־בְּנֵי־חֵת לֵאמֹר: ד גֵּר־וְתוֹשָׁב אָנֹכִי עִמָּכֶם תְּנוּ לִי אֲחֻזַּת־קֶבֶר
עִמָּכֶם וְאֶקְבְּרָה מֵתִי מִלְּפָנָי: ה וַיַּעֲנוּ בְנֵי־חֵת אֶת־אַבְרָהָם לֵאמֹר לוֹ:
ו שְׁמָעֵנוּ | אֲדֹנִי נְשִׂיא אֱלֹהִים אַתָּה בְּתוֹכֵנוּ בְּמִבְחַר קְבָרֵינוּ קְבֹר
אֶת־מֵתֶךָ אִישׁ מִמֶּנּוּ אֶת־קִבְרוֹ לֹא־יִכְלֶה מִמְּךָ מִקְּבֹר מֵתֶךָ: ז וַיָּקָם
אַבְרָהָם וַיִּשְׁתָּחוּ לְעַם־הָאָרֶץ לִבְנֵי־חֵת: ח וַיְדַבֵּר אִתָּם לֵאמֹר אִם־יֵשׁ
אֶת־נַפְשְׁכֶם לִקְבֹּר אֶת־מֵתִי מִלְּפָנַי שִׁמְעוּנִי וּפִגְעוּ־לִי בְּעֶפְרֹן בֶּן־צֹחַר:
ט וְיִתֶּן־לִי אֶת־מְעָרַת הַמַּכְפֵּלָה אֲשֶׁר־לוֹ אֲשֶׁר בִּקְצֵה שָׂדֵהוּ בְּכֶסֶף מָלֵא
יִתְּנֶנָּה לִי בְּתוֹכֲכֶם לַאֲחֻזַּת־קָבֶר:

Sarah's lifetime—the span of Sarah's life—came to one hundred and twenty-seven years. Sarah died in Kiriath-arba—now Hebron—in the land of Canaan; and Abraham proceeded to mourn for Sarah and to bewail her. Then Abraham rose from beside his dead, and spoke to the Hittites, saying, "I am a resident alien among you; sell me a burial site among you, that I may remove my dead for burial." And the Hittites replied to Abraham, saying to him, "Hear us, my lord: you are the elect of God among us. Bury your dead in the choicest of our burial places; none of us will withhold his burial place from you for burying your dead." Thereupon Abraham bowed low to the people of the land, the Hittites, and he said to them, "If it is your wish that I remove my dead for burial, you must agree to intercede for me with Ephron son of Zohar. Let him sell me the cave of Machpelah that he owns, which is at the edge of his land. Let him sell it to me, at the full price, for a burial site in your midst."

Commentary of Rashi (Rabbi Shlomo ben Yitzhak: 1040-1105):

ויהיו חיי שרה מאה שנה ועשרים שנה ושבע שנים. לְכָךְ נִכְתַּב שָׁנָה בְּכָל כְּלָל וּכְלָל, לוֹמַר לְךָ שֶׁכָּל אֶחָד נִדְרָשׁ לְעַצְמוֹ, בַּת ק' כְּבַת כ' לְחֵטְא, מַה בַּת כ'

לֹא חָטְאָה, שֶׁהֲרֵי אֵינָהּ בַּת עֶנָשִׁין, אַף בַּת ק' בְּלֹא חֵטְא, וּבַת כ' כְּבַת ז' לְיֹפִי:
שני חיי שרה. כֻּלָּן שָׁוִין לְטוֹבָה:

1. Sarah's lifetime—the span of Sarah's life—came to one hundred and twenty-seven years. The Hebrew literally says, "A hundred years, and twenty years, and seven years." It was written that way so each of the number's three parts could be interpreted separately: At 100, Sarah was as free of sin as a 20-year old (for a 20-year old is not subject to (punishment for sin); and at 20 she was as beautiful as a 7-year old. Such was **the span of Sarah's life**—all of her years were equally good.

Commentary of Abarbanel (Don Isaac Abarbanel: 1437-1508):

1. One hundred and twenty-seven years. It seems to me that her age is divided into three parts because she was physically youthful until age 100, when she gave birth; spent the next 20 years older but active; and then spent 7 years in extreme old age. These are the stages of life described by Avicenna. But all three stages were good and could thus be called her "life"—for years of grief and pain cannot be called living.

Commentary of Hizkuni (Rabbi Hizkuni ben Manoah: mid-13th Century):

תנו לי אחזת קבר אם אקבר את מתי באחד משדה אנשי העיר היום או למחר יבא בעל השדה לחרוש ויחטט בקבר וישלך העצמות, אבל משתתנו לי אחוזת קבר אין לחוש שיחרשו בו.

4. Sell me a burial site. If I simply bury her in someone's field, sooner or later the owner or someone else will plow up the grave and scatter the bones. However, if you sell me a burial site then no one will plow it up.

Commentary of Radak (Rabbi David Kimchi: 1160?-1235?):

נשיא אלהים, שאלהים נשאך ואנחנו חושבים אותך כן בתוכנו. במבחר קברינו, כי היה להם מערות לקבור מתיהם שם וכל משפחה לבדה היתה לה מערה קוברים שם כמה מתים כל אחד בארונו, וכל המערה ההיא תקרא קבר, וכן המנהג עדיין במקומות רבים. והיה דעתם שישאל מהם שיתן אחד מהם לו מקום

בקברו לקבור את מתו, לכן אמרו איש ממנו את קברו, ולא כן שאל הוא אלא שתהיה לו אחוזה ידועה לו ולמשפחתו לקבור שם מתיהם לא שיקבר מתו בקבר אחרים.

6. You are the elect of God among us. God has chosen you, and among ourselves we acknowledge this about you. **Bury your dead in the choicest of our burial places.** They had many burial caves there; each family had a separate cave, where they would bury multiple corpses each in its own coffin. Each such cave was called a *Kever*—not a grave, as the word sometimes means, but a "burial place." This is still the custom in many locations. **None of us will withhold his burial place from you.** They thought he was asking one of them to give him a spot in his family's burial cave, but that was not what he was asking; he wanted a separate burial cave for himself and his family, not a spot in someone else's cave.

Commentary of ibn Ezra (Rabbi Abraham ibn Ezra: 1091/92-1167):

ודקדוק וישתחו בספר היסוד והאומרים כי השתחיתו היתה לשם, לא אמרו כלום, כי הכתוב אמר שהשתחוה לבני חת, והשתחויה שישוח ראשו וזה משפט הנותן שבח לאחר, וגם משה השתחוה לחותנו:

7. Abraham bowed low. For the grammar of this unusual verb, see my *Basic Hebrew Grammar*. Those who say that Abraham was "bowing low" here to the Holy One are talking nonsense. The verse says quite clearly that he was bowing to **the Hittites.** It simply means that he bowed his head to them, as one does in acknowledging a kindness. Moses too "bowed low" to his father-in-law (Ex. 18:7).

Genesis 23:10-16:

י וְעֶפְרֹון יֹשֵׁב בְּתֹוךְ בְּנֵי־חֵת וַיַּעַן עֶפְרֹון הַחִתִּי אֶת־אַבְרָהָם בְּאָזְנֵי בְנֵי־חֵת לְכֹל בָּאֵי שַׁעַר־עִירֹו לֵאמֹר: יא לֹא־אֲדֹנִי שְׁמָעֵנִי הַשָּׂדֶה נָתַתִּי לָךְ וְהַמְּעָרָה אֲשֶׁר־בֹּו לְךָ נְתַתִּיהָ לְעֵינֵי בְנֵי־עַמִּי נְתַתִּיהָ לָּךְ קְבֹר מֵתֶךָ: יב וַיִּשְׁתַּחוּ אַבְרָהָם לִפְנֵי עַם־הָאָרֶץ: יג וַיְדַבֵּר אֶל־עֶפְרֹון בְּאָזְנֵי עַם־הָאָרֶץ לֵאמֹר אַךְ אִם־אַתָּה לֹו שְׁמָעֵנִי נָתַתִּי כֶּסֶף הַשָּׂדֶה קַח מִמֶּנִּי וְאֶקְבְּרָה אֶת־מֵתִי שָׁמָּה: יד וַיַּעַן עֶפְרֹון אֶת־אַבְרָהָם לֵאמֹר לֹו: טו אֲדֹנִי שְׁמָעֵנִי אֶרֶץ אַרְבַּע מֵאֹת שֶׁקֶל־כֶּסֶף בֵּינִי וּבֵינְךָ מַה־הִוא וְאֶת־מֵתְךָ

קְבֹר: טז וַיִּשְׁמַע אַבְרָהָם אֶל־עֶפְרוֹן וַיִּשְׁקֹל אַבְרָהָם לְעֶפְרֹן אֶת־הַכֶּסֶף
אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר בְּאָזְנֵי בְנֵי־חֵת אַרְבַּע מֵאוֹת שֶׁקֶל כֶּסֶף עֹבֵר לַסֹּחֵר:

Ephron was present among the Hittites; so Ephron the Hittite answered Abraham in the hearing of the Hittites, all who entered the gate of his town, saying, "No, my lord, hear me: I give you the field and I give you the cave that is in it; I give it to you in the presence of my people. Bury your dead." Then Abraham bowed low before the people of the land, and spoke to Ephron in the hearing of the people of the land, saying, "If only you would hear me out! Let me pay the price of the land; accept it from me, that I may bury my dead there." And Ephron replied to Abraham, saying to him, "My lord, do hear me! A piece of land worth four hundred shekels of silver—what is that between you and me? Go and bury your dead." Abraham accepted Ephron's terms. Abraham paid out to Ephron the money that he had named in the hearing of the Hittites—four hundred shekels of silver at the going merchants' rate.

Commentary of Nachmanides (Rabbi Moshe ben Nachman: 1195?-1270):

לעיני בני עמי. לאמר הנה כל העם הנה, והם היודעים ועדים ואל תחוש לכפירה או לחזרה, וקבור מתך שם מעתה כי שלך היא ולא אוכל לשוב. ואברהם לא עשה כן כי גם אחרי שפרע הכסף מלא החזיק תחלה בשדה ובמערה והקימם ברשותו לעיני בני העיר וכל באי שער העיר, הסוחרים והגרים הנמצאים שם, ואחר כן קבר אותה:

11: **In the presence of my people.** They are all here, and they all know about this and can bear witness to it. There will be no denial that I am giving it to you, and no reneging. **Bury your dead.** From this point on, it is yours and I will not go back on the deal. But Abraham did not accept this, he did not bury Sarah until after the field and cave had passed to him as his possession.(v. 18)

Genesis 23:17-20:

יז וַיָּקָם | שְׂדֵה עֶפְרוֹן אֲשֶׁר בַּמַּכְפֵּלָה אֲשֶׁר לִפְנֵי מַמְרֵא הַשָּׂדֶה
וְהַמְּעָרָה אֲשֶׁר־בּוֹ וְכָל־הָעֵץ אֲשֶׁר בַּשָּׂדֶה אֲשֶׁר בְּכָל־גְּבֻלוֹ סָבִיב:
יח לְאַבְרָהָם לְמִקְנָה לְעֵינֵי בְנֵי־חֵת בְּכֹל בָּאֵי שַׁעַר־עִירוֹ: יט וְאַחֲרֵי־כֵן
קָבַר אַבְרָהָם אֶת־שָׂרָה אִשְׁתּוֹ אֶל־מְעָרַת שְׂדֵה הַמַּכְפֵּלָה עַל־פְּנֵי

מַמְרֵא הֲוא חֶבְרוֹן בְּאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן: כ וַיָּקָם הַשָּׂדֶה וְהַמְּעָרָה אֲשֶׁר־בּוֹ לְאַבְרָהָם לַאֲחֻזַּת־קָבֶר מֵאֵת בְּנֵי־חֵת:

So Ephron's land in Machpelah, near Mamre—the field with its cave and all the trees anywhere within the confines of that field—passed to Abraham as his possession, in the presence of the Hittites, of all who entered the gate of his town. And then Abraham buried his wife Sarah in the cave of the field of Machpelah, facing Mamre—now Hebron—in the land of Canaan. Thus the field with its cave passed from the Hittites to Abraham, as a burial site.

Commentary of Rashbam (Rabbi Samuel ben Meir: 1085-1174):

לא קם והוחזק לאברהם עד שקבר שרה אשתו אז.

20. Thus the field with its cave passed from the Hittites to Abraham. The field and cave did not become his "possession" until he had buried his wife Sarah there.