Kever Avot

A field that it became a “land of destiny” – the National Homeland of his descendants.

The Ramban (Bereishit 23:19), commenting on the many acts of kindness that G-d did for Avraham, highlights this point. First, despite the fact he was a stranger, Avraham was accorded great honor, thereby fulfilling in his lifetime the promise of "achuzah kemah – “I will make your name great” (12:2). Furthermore, when his wife died, he merited that she was buried in “nachalat Hashem” – the heritage-land of G-d. The Ramban thus implies that the acquisition of Ma’arat HaMachpelah, specifically as a field, represented the beginning of the fulfillment of G-d’s promise to Avraham that Eretz Yisrael would be his nachala.

Rav Soloveitchik (Divrei Hashkafah, 1994 ed., pp. 37-38) recounted an incident he heard from Alain de Rothschild of Paris. In 1949, after the War of Independence, the family of Baron Edmond de Rothschild, began to make plans to re-inter his remains and those of his wife in the National Homeland of his descendants. Although he was not that observant mitzvot, Baron Rothschild felt he should be buried in Eretz Yisrael, recognizing it as our National Homeland. Ya’akov told his children and his grandchildren, as did Yosef, that he wanted to be buried in Eretz Yisrael since he wanted everyone to keep in mind our strong connection to Eretz Yisrael. Nechemiah, upon being questioned by King Artachshasta over his downcast appearance, responded in a similar vein: “Why should my face not be downcast when the city of my ancestors’ graves is in ruin?” (Nechemiah 2:3).

People have a deep attachment to the place of kever avot, and Jews are similarly drawn to Eretz Yisrael, where our Avot and Imahot are buried. This relationship began in our parsha through the burial of Sarah Imeinu.1

Adapted from Rav Schachter on the Parsha II.

1 See MiPninei HaRav, 2001 ed., pp. 274-275.