This Shabbat we read about the first “Jewish Real Estate Agent,” Avraham Avinu, purchasing the Cave of Machpelah. The Torah goes into great detail, describing the title, deed and negotiations surrounding the purchase of the Double Cave. The commentaries are puzzled by Avraham’s insistence to bury Sarah Imeinu specifically in this cave when there were so many available burial caves elsewhere in Chevron.

The Zohar HaKadosh and the Midrash teach us that on the third day after his circumcision, Avraham Avinu was in emotional distress over being unable to invite guests. When the three angels came to visit him, Avraham personally went to prepare a great feast. The Zohar teaches us that the calf Avraham had been planning to serve to the angels ran away toward the area of the Ma’ara. While in pursuit of the calf, Avraham felt a great light and a beautiful fragrance emanating from the cave where Adam and Eve were buried. At that point, he desired the cave as a burial place for himself and his wife, Sarah. In Hebrew, the word HaBakar, the calf, is made up of the same letters as HaKever, the grave.

Although Efron the Hittite had owned this cave for so many years, he was unable to sense anything unique or special about it. All Efron saw was a dark, dingy cave and so he was willing to give it away for free. Avraham Avinu, the true owner, was able to sense the “entrance to paradise” and the fragrance and spiritual light emanating from within.

At the age of three, my son Yedidya was diagnosed with autism. He could not communicate with words and made no eye contact. Despite endless efforts and therapy to facilitate him to communicate, he was still lost in his own world.

One day, Yedidya joined me on a tour of Chevron and the Ma’ara. He climbed through the bars of the locked symbolic memorial of Avraham Avinu. This area is believed to be directly above the Double Cave. Suddenly, a big commotion ensued when the Israeli Police realized he was in the restricted area. They shouted at me to take him out. Immediately. However, Yedidya was in a trance, sitting on the floor, smiling and completely at ease. Then for the first time in his life, Yedidya spoke.

In a clear, strong voice, he proclaimed “אור פה” – a light here, “אור גדול פה” – a great light here. As he was pointing below in the direction of the Double Cave, he continued to speak, proclaiming “אבו בית, אימו בית, פה פה” – the House of my Father, the House of my Mother, right here.

3,800 years later, my son Yedidya amazingly sensed the great spiritual light emanating from the Cave of Machpelah.

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Just like our matriarch Sarah introduced us to candle lighting, The Hebron Fund is providing YOU with a beautiful copy of the bracha and Yehi Ratzon which you can fold into a table-tent and place by your Shabbat candles. In this way we hope that you will stay connected to Hebron. Download and print copies, and read more divrei Torah about Chayei Sarah, at hebronfund.org.

Rabbi Daniel Rosenstein
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