



Text:

And Abraham passed away, old and content.

[Bereishis 25:8]

He saw [the fulfillment of] all his heart's desires, and was satiated with all [manner of] good things ... This recounts the kindness of G-d towards the righteous, as well as their good character: they do not crave "extras" ... [Abraham's attitude stands in contrast to normal human behavior]: "No person leaves the world with half his desires fulfilled. If he has one hundred, he wants two hundred; when he reaches two hundred, he yearns to make it four hundred."

[Ramban]

Question:

Abraham is praised for being content with his lot, and not craving "extras." But Abraham had all his hearts' desires fulfilled! Who *wouldn't* be happy under those circumstances?

Answer:

Happiness is never the result of one's life circumstances; no matter how much blessing we enjoy, it is only our spiritual perspective –connection with G-d and recognition of our purpose in life – that can bring us the contentment we long for. Abraham – wealthy, famous and respected as a "Prince of G-d," the father of Isaac and the entire Jewish People – was not happy because of any of these gifts. It was his own spiritual achievement and recognition of his Divine mission that granted him find inner peace.

Message:

Man is always searching. The root of this drive is the quest for spiritual fulfillment; unless we identify it as such, we will always be unhappy. Abraham *was* happy – not because of anything he had, but because he never lost sight of his mission on Earth. Even after a lifetime of monumental accomplishments, this was an achievement worthy of praise – the final epitaph of our forefather Abraham.

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Sarah passes away in Hebron at the age of one hundred and twenty-seven. Abraham wishes to bury his wife in the Cave of Machpela, identified by Tradition as the grave of Adam and Eve. He purchases the site from Ephron, a local Hittite; Ephron first makes a show of offering the land as a gift, but ultimately charges an exorbitant fee. Abraham willingly pays, and the Cave of Machpela becomes the ancestral burial ground of the Jewish Patriarchs and Matriarchs.

The aging Abraham decides that it is time for Isaac to marry. Abraham refuses to allow Isaac to marry into one of the corrupt Canaanite tribes. Instead he sends his steward – identified by Tradition as Eliezer – eastward to Mesopotamia, Abraham's ancestral home, to seek a wife from Abraham's extended family.

Eliezer, praying for Divine guidance, devises a test to identify the right wife for Isaac: he positions himself near the well at the outskirts of the city. The young lady who will willingly draw water not only for him but for his camels will have demonstrated the devotion to *chesed* – kindness – that is the hallmark of the House of Abraham.

No sooner has Eliezer concluded his prayer than a young lady approaches; when Eliezer asks her for a drink, she responds precisely as foretold, drawing water for him and his ten camels. When Eliezer asks her identity, the girl, whose name is Rebecca, reveals that she is a descendant of Abraham's brother Nachor. Eliezer gives thanks to G-d for granting him success in his mission.

Eliezer is invited into Rebecca's home, where he tells her family the story of their encounter. Impressed by this obvious display of Divine Providence, Rebecca's family agrees to allow her to return to Canaan with Eliezer.

Rebecca marries Isaac, and proves a suitable successor to the legacy of Sarah.

Abraham passes away at the age of one hundred and seventy-five, and is buried by his sons, Isaac and Ishmael, in the Cave of Machpela.

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