FUCHSBERG JERUSALEM CENTER STUDY PRAY EXPLORE

Parashah:	Chayei Sarah
Read On:	November 7, 2026 | 27 Cheshvan 5787
Torah:	Genesis 23:1-25:218
Haftorah:	I Kings 1:1-31

TORAH SPARKS

GRAVESITES AND CHILDREN

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Dvar Parashah

Abraham starts the genre of hero journeys in the Torah. Of people chosen to leave home to find God in the wilderness. Of people called to go forth into a new and foreign land. Of founders of new nations. Following in his footsteps are Rebecca, Jacob, Joseph and his brothers. They all receive promises, blessings from God, just as he did. They all leave behind a home in order to establish a great nation for their children. And they all die before the promise is fulfilled. Most of them get beautiful death scenes, content with their lot, secure in the knowledge that they have created a better world for the children.

If Abraham starts the genre, Moses would seem to be its highest calling. He, after all, gets 4 books to tell his story while Abraham gets only a handful of chapters. Both go on epic journeys to Canaan. Moses, seemingly, is the completion of Abraham. Abraham was promised the land and descendants as numerous as the stars of the sky. Moses stands poised with the teeming hordes, the myriads, to enter the promised land.

And yet where Abraham **dies** בְּשֵׂיבָה טוֹבָה זָקֵן וְשָׂבֵעַ, "at a good ripe age, old and contented," before וַיֵּאָסֶף אֶל־עַמָּיו, "he was gathered to his nation," Moses does not enjoy this blessing. We are **told**, simply, that he died. Moreover, Abraham is **buried** in the land of Canaan, in Maarat HaMachpela, the cave he had bought in the land of Canaan so that he could **bury** his beloved wife. He is buried by his sons, Isaac and Ishmael.

Moses is buried outside the land. The very last words that he hears are a reminder that he will not pass through to the land, as God **says**: זֹאת הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי לְאַבְרָהָם לְיִצְחָק וְלְיַעֲקֹב לֵאמֹר לְזַרְעֲךָ אֶתְּנֶנָּה הֶרְאִיתִיךָ בְעֵינֶיךָ וְשָׁמָּה לֹא תַעֲבֹר: "This is the land of which I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, 'I will assign it to your offspring.' I have let you see it with your own eyes, but you shall not cross there." It is not assigned to Moses' descendants. He is buried by God, not by his children. His wife and offspring disappeared decades ago from the story. His siblings are already dead and buried on the journey.

Abraham was **told** to שָׂא נָא עֵינֶיךָ וּרְאֵה ...צָפֹנָה וָנֶגְבָּה וָקֶדְמָה וָיָמָּה: "raise your eyes and see... to the north and south, to the east and west," the land, which would be given to his descendants. Moses was told, at the **beginning** of Deuteronomy, וְשָׂא עֵינֶיךָ יָמָּה וְצָפֹנָה וְתֵימָנָה וּמִזְרָחָה וּרְאֵה בְּעֵינֶיךָ, "raise your eyes to the west, the north, the south, and the east and see." See the land to which he would not cross.

Moses almost closes the circle begun by Abraham, but with protest. He rages against the dying of the light, he begs God to include him, to let him in. It would be so right for him to accompany Israel back into the land, to be buried and gathered to his nation in Maarat HaMachpelah. It is the resting place of the bones of Abraham and Isaac. It is the place to which Jacob's bones were returned after he died in Egypt. And Shechem will become the final resting place of Joseph's bones after all these long years in Egypt.

God won't do it. God won't relent. And Moses, perhaps, fears that he has broken the chain. That after passing the promise down, parent to child, Abraham to Isaac to Jacob to Bnei Yisrael for hundreds of years, Moses has not passed down the promise. There is no one to hold God accountable to his word, to demand that God keep his promise. Isaac buries Abraham and inherits the blessing. But Moses's children are gone and his nation moves on. So God takes on the role of Moses's child. God buries Moses. God steps in and his actions say, finally, do not worry. You no longer need to hold me accountable for the future promise. You no longer need to prove your right to the land by placing your dead in the tiny piece of it, the burial plot, your ancestor once bought. You have arrived. I have arrived. You can trust me to fulfill the promise, finally, finally. The Land of Israel will no longer be a grave but a birthplace.