

THE TRIBE WEEKLY

CHAYEI SARAH

10-11 NOVEMBER | 27 CHESHVAN

Integrity in action



SHEVI GRUNEWALD

US Events

In last week's parasha, we learned about Avraham's preparation of a feast for three guests who visited him when he was unwell. A midrash says that, while preparing, a calf he intended to slaughter escaped; Avraham gave chase, leading him to the Cave of Machpelah in Chevron. Inside, he stumbled upon the graves of Adam and Eve, igniting his desire to establish this sacred place as his family's burial site.

Moving on to this week's parasha, we find Avraham engaged in discussions with Efron, the owner of the Machpelah plot, seeking to acquire it following the passing of his wife, Sarah. Local custom stipulated that only citizens could purchase land, leaving Avraham, though respected, without legal standing. In response, Efron offered the entire

plot as a gift.

However, Avraham wanted this to be a legitimate transaction. According to the Ohr Hachaim (Rabbi Chaim Attar, 1696-1743), Avraham proposed that Efron gift him the cave, bypassing the legal hurdles, and, in gratitude, Avraham would offer a return gift of silver coins. Avraham extended some coins, prompting Efron's greed to surface and he suddenly demanded 400 silver shekels. Avraham agreed. This turned the gift into a purchase, leading to the cave's spiritual and legal consecration as his family's burial plot.

These negotiations hold a vital lesson in integrity — keeping one's word. Shammai's wisdom, "Say little and do a lot" (Pirkei Avot 1:15) encapsulates this virtue. Avraham exemplified this when he promised bread and water to the three travellers, but surpassed expectations with a regal feast. Conversely, Efron initially promised a gift but later demanded a substantial

price. Integrity encompasses how we treat others and involves staying true to our beliefs, ensuring alignment between inner convictions and actions.

Chief Rabbi Warren Goldstein of South Africa underscores the value of integrity, saying that this concept aligns with a network of **essential** human values, including the sanctity of speech and the fulfilment of verbal commitments.

Speech holds a sacred place in Judaism, distinguishing humanity from other creations. Integrity is intrinsically connected to speech, passed down through Avraham's lineage and resonating with us today. It centres on aligning our inner beliefs with our actions, fostering consistency in our interactions with others and with ourselves.

Amidst what may seem a routine land negotiation in this parasha, we uncover profound lessons: maintain integrity, speak less and do more, and remain steadfast in honouring commitments to others and ourselves.

Maze of Machpelah

Help Avraham through the maze so that he can buy the Cave of Machpelah

