

The Treasure Beneath the Bridge
November 14, 2025 – Chayei Sarah
Rabbi Megan Brumer

There is an old story about a poor man from a small village. His life was humble and often hard, yet he carried a quiet spark of hope inside him.

One night, he dreamed of a great treasure buried beneath a bridge in the faraway city of Vienna. The dream felt vivid and real. The second night, he dreamed it again. And then again. The same bridge. The same treasure. The same sense that something awaited him.

At first, he tried to ignore it. He had never left his village or seen the world beyond the fields he worked in. How could he travel all the way to Vienna? How could a dream possibly be true?

But the dream continued, persistent and insistent. Eventually, he could no longer shake it. He gathered what little he had and set off on the long journey.

When he reached Vienna, he found the exact bridge from his dream. He lingered near it, unsure what to do. He could not dig in daylight with people passing by. So, he waited and watched, trying to gather courage.

A guard who patrolled the bridge grew suspicious of the stranger who kept returning. Finally, he asked, “What are you doing here?”

The poor man decided to tell the truth. He shared the story of the dream, the treasure, the long journey. Perhaps the guard would help him.

But the guard burst into laughter. “Dreams. Foolish dreams. Why, I too once dreamed of a treasure. It was buried under the cellar of a little house in a distant village. I even remember the crooked door and the tiny yard beside it. But only a fool would chase such a dream.”

The poor man froze as the guard described his own home. Every detail matched. Every stone. Every corner.

He left Vienna immediately and hurried back to his village. When he arrived, he ran straight to his cellar and dug beneath its floor. And there, shining in the dirt, was the treasure.

He fell to his knees as tears filled his eyes. “All this time,” he whispered, “I searched the world for something that was waiting for me at home.”

He realized that the long journey had never been about Vienna. It had been about seeing his home with new eyes and discovering that everything he needed was already his.

•••••

This story holds a deep truth about the meaning of home, a theme that echoes all the way back to this week’s parashah, Chayei Sarah.

When Sarah dies, Abraham insists on purchasing the Cave of Machpelah to bury her, even though Ephron offers it as a gift. He even pays above the market price, 400 shekels. The rabbis ask why. Why overpay for a burial place he could have received for free?

Our tradition teaches that Abraham pays full price to set a precedent of ownership and rootedness. Abraham, who has wandered his entire life, finally makes a statement. This land is ours. This is where our story will take root. This is where home begins.

Home is not only what you own. It is where you invest your heart. It is where identity forms. It is the earth that holds memories. And sometimes it takes a loss, like Sarah's death, for Abraham to realize it is time to stop wandering and build something lasting and holy.

The poor man in the story learns this, too. He crosses rivers and roads searching for something he believed he lacked, only to discover the treasure beneath the floorboards he stepped over every day.

We are often like that. We imagine that meaning or belonging live far away, in a different job or city or community or version of ourselves. Yet the truth both Abraham and the poor man learn is simple and profound.

The treasure is at home.

It is in the relationships we tend. The communities we nurture. The traditions we pass down. The daily choices that make a space feel sacred. The roots we allow ourselves to grow.

As we move deeper into this season, may we look at our own homes, our own hearts and our own communities, and ask: What treasure is already waiting here that I have not yet uncovered?

And may we have the courage to dig, to tend and to claim the holiness that has been ours all along.

Shabbat Shalom.