

OCTOBER 25, 2010

Parashat Chayei Sarah

The Land of Abraham

Four hundred shekels of silver (Genesis 23:16)

ארבע מאות שקל כסף (בראשית כג:טז)

When describing the purchase of the Cave of Machpelah, the Torah not only includes the specific plot of land, but also the amount and type of money that Abraham used to buy the tract—“four hundred *shekels* of silver, current money with the merchant” (23:16). Why does the Torah include so much seemingly superfluous information? Rabbi Moses Avigdor Amiel, Chief Rabbi of Tel Aviv during the British Mandate, explained that the Torah foresaw the modern-day disputes that the Jewish people would have over control of Israel. For this reason, scripture recorded Abraham’s purchase in minute detail to establish the Jewish people’s history there.

However, despite the well chronicled relationship between the Jewish people and the Land of Israel, the Palestinian Authority (PA) continues to refuse to recognize that a Jewish state should exist there.

PA President Mahmoud Abbas recently said that under no circumstances would the PA sign an agreement with Israel that requires the recognition of Israel as a Jewish state, [Ha'aretz](#) reports. While speaking at the opening of the third session of the 18th Knesset, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu offered to halt settlement construction if the Palestinians were to recognize Israel as a Jewish state. According to Netanyahu, “If the Palestinian leadership will say unequivocally to its people that it recognizes Israel as the homeland of the Jewish people, I will be ready to convene my government and request a further suspension.” Netanyahu went on to say that accepting Israel as a Jewish state would show that the Palestinians “are truly ready to live with us in peace.” The Palestinian leadership swiftly rejected the proposal. Nabil Abu Rdainah, Abbas’ spokesman, said that “The issue of the Jewishness of the state has nothing to do with the matter.” For more on the peace process, click [here](#).

The Torah records Abraham’s careful steps in order to establish the connection between the Jewish people and the Promised Land. Unfortunately, for the PA it seems that no level of detail could suffice. ■

Going the Extra Mile

And she said, I will also draw for your camels (Genesis 24:19) (בראשית כד:יט)

How would Eliezer, who was sent by Abraham to find a wife for Isaac, know he was choosing the proper bride? In his prayer to God, Eliezer seemingly asked God to provide a sign. Eliezer decided that the woman who would provide water not only for himself but also for his camels would be the divinely chosen mate for Isaac. Why did he choose this specific trait? Rashi (on 24:14) explains that Eliezer sought a woman who demonstrated the willingness and desire to go above and beyond for someone in need, stating that “She is appropriate for [Isaac] for she performs acts of kindness.” Indeed, when Rebecca insisted, “and I will also water your camels,” she demonstrated her commitment to the well-being of others, offering Eliezer clear proof that she was the proper match for the son of Abraham.

Rebecca revealed her true nature by demonstrating her willingness to make the additional effort to help a person in need. When it comes to Israel, the United States has long followed Rebecca's example, going the extra mile to ensure the safety and security of the Jewish state.

This summer, governmental agencies in the United States and Israel have strengthened their ties, pledging to work together on common challenges. In July, the United States and Israel signed an agreement to upgrade the Arrow II ballistic missile shield in order to enable it to shoot down missiles at a higher altitude. As the only operational system that has consistently proven that one missile can shoot down another at high altitudes and speeds, the Arrow program has the ability to shield the Jewish state from incoming ballistic missiles, which, in the future, may carry nuclear warheads. Also this summer, a group of 15 nations—including the United States and Israel—signed an agreement aimed at reducing the threat of attacks on their computer networks. The agreement, reached at the United Nations, includes recommendations for producing accepted norms of behavior on the Internet as well as ways to safely exchange information and strengthen computer networks globally. To learn more about initiatives that strengthen ties between the United States and Israel, click [here](#).

Rebecca's efforts on behalf of Eliezer were the hallmark of her sterling character. In following her footsteps and going the extra mile on behalf of Israel's security, the United States demonstrates its dedication to the values that she cherished. ■

Reckless Endangerment

And her brother and mother said... (Genesis 24:55)

וַיֹּאמֶר אֲחִיָּה וְאִמָּהּ (בְּרֵאשִׁית כד:נה)

When Eliezer asked permission to take Rebecca and return to Abraham, why did Laban and his mother answer while Rebecca's father, Bethuel, remained silent? The Midrash (Midrash Avakir) explains that Bethuel did not answer because in fact he was dead, accidentally poisoned by his own family. "When [the people] saw the riches and jewels, they thought he was wealthy and plotted to kill Eliezer...When they saw his [physical] strength they said, 'We cannot kill him [ourselves]' so they placed a platter before him laced with deadly poison. In the merit of Abraham the plates were switched, and Bethuel ate from it and died."

In their zeal to kill Eliezer, the members of Bethuel's household ignored the danger inherent in their own actions. Today, terrorists bent on killing innocent Israelis also ignore the danger inherent in their actions. As a recent event tragically demonstrated, surrounding civilians with dangerous weapons is a recipe for disaster.

Five children and three women were among the casualties after a recent blast at Hamas's al-Qassam Brigades site located in the southern Gaza Strip, [The Jerusalem Post](#) reports. The blast shook through the densely crowded Tel As-Sultan neighborhood in Rafah. Hamas said 13 people were injured during the explosion, all by flying glass shrapnel. A similar explosion in August wounded 58 people and destroyed seven houses. For more on Hamas, click [here](#).

Meanwhile, Lebanese construction workers recently uncovered 300 kilograms of explosives in southern Lebanon according to a [Ha'aretz](#) report. The materials were likely part of Hizballah's stockpile. The Iranian-backed group has as many as 60,000 rockets and tons of explosives stored in southern Lebanon—mostly in civilian population centers. Earlier this year, Israel published maps showcasing weapon storage facilities in 160 villages in the region-including many in mosques, schools and homes. For more on Hizballah and Lebanon, click [here](#).

In their zeal to accumulate weapons capable of striking innocent Israelis, Hamas and Hizballah, like the members of Bethuel's household, recklessly endanger the very populations they claim to represent. ■