

NOVEMBER 14, 2011

## Parashat Chayei Sarah

### Rewriting History

And Sarah died in Kiryat Arba (Genesis 23:2)

ותמת שרת בקרית ארבע (בראשית כג:ב)

Why does the Torah refer to the place where Sarah died as Kiryat Arba (literally meaning “Borough of Four”)? Rashi (on 23:2) explains that the city was “...named for the four couples that were buried there [in the Cave of the Patriarchs], husband and wife: Adam and Eve, Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebecca, and Jacob and Leah.” According to this interpretation, Abraham had the foresight to understand that the place where he and his family would be interred would ultimately play a critical role in the history of his descendants, serving as a shrine for the Jewish people.

While the Jewish connection to the burial site of our forefathers can be traced back to the bible, if the Palestinian Authority (PA) has its way the United Nations could play in to Palestinian efforts to discredit the Jewish connection to the Land of Israel by assigning ownership of the Cave of the Patriarchs, and other heritage sights, to the Palestinians.

Following the PA’s successful bid for full membership in the U.N. Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), [The Salt Lake Tribune](#) reported that the PA planned on utilizing its membership to seek World Heritage status from the organization for several sites, including the Cave of the Patriarchs, which it calls the Ibrahimi Mosque. Should UNESCO accept these applications, the PA could then use this status to claim ownership over ancient Jewish heritage sites in contested territories. In fact, [The Jerusalem Post](#) reported that, in addition to using the UNESCO membership to “pursue Israel legally in international forums for allegedly stealing Palestinian antiquities and changing the Arab and Islamic character of holy sites in Jerusalem...the Palestinians are also planning to ask UNESCO to declare several sites in Jerusalem and the West Bank international heritage sites belonging to Palestine, not Israel.” The successful Palestinian membership bid at UNESCO, which constitutes part of a larger U.N. campaign, represents an attempt to manipulate the U.N. system for their own political agenda. Similar Palestinian efforts at other U.N. agencies will only serve to undermine the worthy goals of those agencies and impede efforts to realize Israeli-Palestinian peace. For more on how the Palestinian U.N. bid is undermining the world body, and peace, click [here](#).

In referring to the city as Kiryat Arba the Torah notes the importance that the site would hold for the Jewish people throughout the generations. The PA, through its efforts in the United Nations, looks to erase our eternal connection to the Cave of the Patriarchs and deny the relationship between the Jewish people and our historic homeland. ■

### Watering the World

And she gave him to drink (Genesis 24:18)

ותשקהו (בראשית כד:יח)

When Eliezer arrived at the well in Aram Naharaim, searching for a wife for Isaac, he tested the first woman he saw by asking her to give him water from the pitcher she had just filled. She not only gave him water, but generously said: “I will also draw water for your camels” (24:19). How did Eliezer know that this was the right woman to marry Isaac? Ohr Hachayim (on 24:17), quoting the Midrash, explains that she had a special way with water. “He saw that the water [of the well] rose [to the lip of the well] to greet her.” Eliezer saw this miraculous sign, as well as her willingness to share her water with a stranger, as clear indications that she was the best match for Abraham’s son.

Our matriarch Rachel clearly recognized the importance of water, and showed remarkable strength of character as she so willingly shared her resources with others. Today, the people of Israel honor Rachel through their amazing work with the very same element—developing unique technologies to produce water, and sharing their skills to help people the world over.

This month, an estimated 20,000 people, representing roughly 150 international delegations, are expected to land in Israel to learn about Israeli ingenuity in desalination, drip irrigation, gray-water recycling, water metering and management at the 6<sup>th</sup> International Exhibition and 3<sup>rd</sup> International Conference on Water Technologies, Renewable Energy & Environmental Control (WATEC) in Tel Aviv. The conference represents Israel's third biannual event highlighting water technology developed in Israel, which can now be found on Caribbean Islands, in Chinese desalination plants, in meters and valves across America and in greenhouses in far-flung regions of the world. According to Israel's [Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#), because Israel has had to deal with water shortages since its founding, Israel's water carrier has had to develop innovative alternatives. "All the leaders of these water utilities—all the global leaders from five continents—are coming to Israel," says WATEC Chairman Bookie Oren. "They understand that there is something here and that we are open to share our experiences..."

Just as Rachel's unique ability to draw water from the well caught the attention of Eliezer, Israel has caught the attention of an international community seeking to learn from her incredible innovations in water technologies. ■

## Laban's Lying Ways

**Rebecca had a brother whose name was Laban (Genesis 24:29)      (ולרַבֵּקָה אֶחָא וּשְׁמוֹ לָבָן (בראשית כד:כט))**

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During his journey to locate Isaac's future wife, Eliezer met Laban, a biblical figure who tormented Jacob and his family. Interestingly, the Torah often refers to Laban specifically as an "Aramite" (see Genesis 25:20, Deuteronomy 26:5). The Midrash (Bereishit Rabbah 63) explains that this term describes not just Laban's homeland, but also his character. "What is the [reason that the verse refers to Rebecca as] 'the sister of Laban the Aramite'? This teaches us that...her brother was a liar..." The Sages note the similarity between the words *Arami* (אַרְמִי - Aramite) and *ramai* (רַמְאִי - liar, charlatan), further cementing Laban's libelous legacy. Therefore, it is no coincidence that in the Passover Hagadah, we refer to Laban's attempt to kill Jacob by reciting, "An Aramite tried to kill my father."

Laban used his deceitful nature to not only cheat Rebecca's son Jacob, but to attempt to destroy the Jewish people entirely. Now, Iran seems determined to use Laban's trait of deception to further a similarly destructive goal.

According to [The New York Times](#), "Iranian diplomats have repeatedly challenged United Nations weapons inspectors to publish any evidence that Iran is seeking nuclear weapons," consistently claiming that Iran's nuclear program was for peaceful purposes only. Recently, the United Nations did just that, releasing a report detailing the advanced military dimensions of Iran's illicit nuclear program. The International Atomic Energy Agency's (IAEA) report marks the first time the U.N. agency has publicly confirmed that a signatory to the Non-Proliferation Treaty has engaged in activity related to the development of nuclear weapons. Specifically, the report details an elaborate and highly organized program dedicated to acquiring the skills necessary to produce and test a nuclear bomb. In response to the IAEA report, top U.S. lawmakers called for renewed sanctions pressure on Iran, [Agence France-Presse](#) reported. "The international community must step up its support and enforcement of a robust sanctions regime—or risk an unthinkable alternative," said Rep. Howard Berman (D-CA), ranking member on the House Foreign Affairs Committee. House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairwoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL) called the report "further proof that the U.S. and other responsible nations must take decisive action to stop the regime from acquiring a nuclear capability." For more information on the IAEA report, click [here](#).

Laban utilized deceit to take advantage of Jacob and nearly destroy his family. By covertly working to build nuclear weapons, Iran has followed Laban's lead, looking to deception and falsehood to endanger innocent lives. ■

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