

CHAYEI SARAH (GENESIS 23:1-25:18)

Not All Jews Buy Wholesale!

2025 · Rabbi Yerachmiel Sepowitz

Abraham's beloved wife had died. Where should she be buried?

It was not yet time to sit Shiva and grieve. There was business to attend to.

They were living among the Hittites, a Canaanite nation living in Hebron. Abraham approached them in search of a burial place.

"Sell me property for a burial place..." (Genesis, 23:4)

The locals were more than happy to oblige*. "Listen to us, Sir. You are a prince of G-d among us. Take our best burial site, No one among us will deny you his burial site to bury your dead."* (verse 5)

Abraham asked them to intervene with Ephron, who owned the Machpela Cave, a site that was already known to Abraham as the burial site of Adam and Eve. He made it clear that he wasn't looking for a discount; he intended to pay full price.

Ephron too was most cooperative. (Or at least he appeared to be.)

"I have already given you the field... and the cave that is there... I have given it to you. Bury your dead." (Verse 11)

Very impressive! Despite Abraham's plan to pay full price, Ephron doesn't want his money; he is offering him the property for free!

But Abraham would not accept a gift.

"I am giving you the money for the field, take it from me." (Verse 13)

In the end, Ephron charged Abraham a "mere" 400 shekels of silver, payable in negotiable currency.

To give you an idea as to the extent of Ephron's "discount", Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan in his "Living Torah" points out that Jeremiah purchased a comparable property for 17 shekels (Jeremiah, 32:9), and that at that time a year's wages for a working man was between 6 and 8 shekels.

Rashi comments that the Torah demonstrates its disdain for Ephron in verse 15 by writing his name minus one letter, indicating that "he said a lot, but didn't even do a little."

Like many subsequent so-called “friends of Israel”, he was all talk and no action!

Why was Abraham so insistent on paying full price? What’s wrong with a discount? Especially, in view of the fact that G-d had already promised him that the whole land would someday belong to his children anyway, let him take what is rightfully his!

Abraham was not a man who liked to accept gifts. If he was going to get something, he was going to pay for it!

When Abraham liberated the captive city of Sodom, he was entitled, under the Rules of War (“To the victor go the spoils”) to keep all of its riches. Even the king of Sodom agreed. He offered to let Abraham keep all the spoils of the battle. Abraham replied. *“I lift my hand to G-d... (to swear that I will not take as much as) a string or a sandal strap or anything that is yours. You will not have the opportunity to claim, ‘I made Abram rich!’ ”* (Ibid, 22-23) (See "The Reward for a Mitzvah".)

Similarly, Abraham didn’t want Ephron to claim the honor as the benefactor of the Abrahamic Burial Site. More importantly, he didn’t want to give Ephron the opportunity to renege on his gift and claim that it really didn’t belong to Abraham and his decedents.

Fast forward to today’s news.

The U.N and hundreds of countries who recognize the fictitious State of Palestine view the Israelis as occupiers. That tomb that Abraham purchased for his HEBREW wife Sarah, where he and his HEBREW son Isaac, his HEBREW grandson Jacob and their HEBREW wives, Rebecca and Leah are buried is known to the Arab world as الحرم الإبراهيمي (al-Haram al-Ibrahimi), the Sanctuary of Abraham.

True, they recognize Father Abraham as their father. But clearly, he bought it for his Jewish family, not for the children of Ishmael. And yet the Islamist revisionists somehow make the claim that that which our ancestor bought for US is THEIRS. A Palestinian website states, when showing a picture of a synagogue at the Cave of Machpela that “You can have a glimpse of how Israel invades Palestine.”

The Torah tells us very clearly that Abraham purchased the Cave of Machpela for top dollar and used it as a burial place for himself and the other fathers and mothers of Israel. And, for a change, the rest of the world actually agrees.

Now please explain to me how it comes to be that a building that houses the graves of Jewish Patriarchs and Matriarchs is misidentified as a holy **Islamic** mosque!

The explanation is simple.

It is the same explanation that answers the following question:

The Torah tells us that G-d created the world, including the then-Land of Canaan, gave that Land temporarily to the Canaanites and then gave it to us. Included in that gift were Jerusalem and the so-called West Bank, which includes Hebron and the Cave of Machpela.

In view of all of this, why are the Israelis called occupiers?

It's quite simple.

As the Talmud (Bava Basra, 74a) tells us, there is place in the Sinai desert where there is a hole in the ground and the former followers of the rebel Korach call out an announcement that the rest of the world needs to hear:

“Moses is true, and his Torah is True, and they are all liars!”

Have a great Shabbos.

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