

BEHAR (LEVITICUS 25:1-27:34)

The Palestinians are Right!

2010 · Rabbi Yerachmiel Seplowitz

Israel is ours.

From time immemorial, the Land of Israel has been inhabited by Jews. There is no such thing as Palestine. The so-called “Palestinians” need to wake up to that fact, get a life, and move on.

The Palestinians, on the other hand, dismiss this notion as wishful thinking on the part of the Jews. They continue to argue that there is no proof that the Land is ours.

The Palestinians claim that the Temple Mount, the holiest spot on earth to Jews, has no historical connection to the Jewish People. To augment that claim, they have, for years, been illegally destroying and disposing of Temple-era artifacts that they dig up on the Temple Mount.

Of course, as we know, the Palestinians are wrong. G-d promised that the Land of Israel would be given to the children of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Joshua led our People across the Jordan River, and we inherited the Promised Land. It is ours, always has been, and always will be. Right?

After all, let us look at the famous question and answer quoted in Rashi’s commentary at the very beginning of the Torah. Rabbi Yitzchak asks why the Torah begins with Genesis. Since the Torah is primarily a Book of Laws that tell us how to live our lives, it should have begun in Exodus, Chapter 12, where we are introduced to a multitude of Commandments. He answers that it is to prevent the nations of the world from calling us robbers. There were seven Canaanite nations inhabiting the Land, and Joshua & Company kicked them out! However, once we read Genesis, we see that G-d created the world, and gave it to whomever he saw fit. The Canaanites were permitted to live there for a while, but G-d promised the Land to the Patriarchs, and evicted the Canaanites.

This week’s Torah Reading contains some of the Laws pertaining to possession of the Land of Israel. Land in Israel cannot be sold permanently; in the Jubilee year, all land reverts to its original owner rather. The “sale” price is dependent upon how many years are left until the 50-year Jubilee. Also, after land is sold, the seller or his relative is entitled to “redeem”, or buy back, the land:

“The Land may not be sold permanently, since the Land is Mine. You are foreigners and temporary dwellers with Me.” (Leviticus, 25:23)

This verse appears to be contradicted by another verse:

As for the Heavens, they are G-d's Heavens, but as for the Earth, He has given it to mankind. (Psalms, 115:16)

So who owns the Earth? Mankind, as King David writes in Psalms, or G-d, as He proclaims in Leviticus?

The Sforno writes that there is no contradiction. The Earth does, in fact, belong to man; it is a gift from G-d. However, the Land of Israel is an exception to that rule. G-d never gave away the Land of Israel.

Rabbi Elazar Shach was bothered by this statement. How can the Sforno say that G-d never gave away the Land of Israel? Didn't G-d promise the Land to Abraham? Didn't we inherit the Land from our ancestors?

Rabbi Shach answered that our connection with the Land of Israel is different than the connections of other nations with their lands. Our inheritance of the Land was conditional:

If you will be careful to heed My commandments ... you and your children will long endure on the Land that G-d promised to your ancestors. (Deuteronomy, 11: 13, 21)

However, on the other hand:

...if your heart will be tempted to go astray ... you will quickly vanish from the good Land that G-d is giving you. (Ibid, 16-17)

THE TRUTH IS THAT IN ONE RESPECT, THE PALESTINIANS ARE RIGHT. ISRAEL DOES **NOT** BELONG TO THE JEWS. It never has. It is on loan.

As Rabbi Yitzchak said above, the Land of Israel was home to the Canaanites for as long as that arrangement suited G-d's purposes. Once the Canaanites began to engage in acts of sexual and spiritual perversion, they forfeited their right to live there. (See Ibid, 18:3-28)

Joshua and his army conquered the Land of Israel. The Israel Defense Forces (usually) defeated the Arab armies who sought and seek to drive us from our Homeland. But the military conquest of today does not guarantee defeat of the insurgency of tomorrow.

How sad that every decadent behavior that American and European society have accepted has been celebrated in Israel as well. Drug abuse and loose morals abound in certain segments of Israeli society. Is that why G-d shlepped us across the Sinai desert? For *this*?!

Or, perhaps, there's another reason. Maybe G-d allowed the establishment of the State of Israel so that European refugees would have a place to go where they could live as Jews. Or so that American Jews could go and raise their children in a culture where intermarriage is not the accepted norm. Or so that the

air of Jerusalem and Benei Brak would resound with the music of the Torah study of thousands of students.

G-d told us how to inherit the Land of Israel. He also told us how to lose it. And how not to.

Support Israel. Buy Israeli Bonds. Encourage your Congressman to support the only pro-Western democracy in the Middle East.

Then do the important stuff. Study Torah. Observe Shabbos. Keep Kosher. Be honest, moral, and ethical.

Support Israel. Live a Torah lifestyle. It's the REAL Zionism.

Have a great Shabbos.

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