

CHIZUK & IDUD

Divrei Torah from the weekly sedra

with a focus on living in Eretz Yisrael

Chizuk for Olim & Idud for not-yet-Olim

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Ramat Shiloh, Beit Shemesh

Vayishlach 2016

In this week's parsha, the Torah relates that Yaakov Avinu, upon returning to Eretz Yisrael, proceeds to buy a private estate in the city of Shechem: "And Yaakov acquired the portion of the field in which he had set up his tent from the sons of Chamor, Father of Shechem, for 100 Kesita (gold pieces)" (B'reishit 33:19).

Why did the Torah feel that this real estate transaction needed to be recorded for posterity? After all, the Torah is beginning to recount the shocking events that transpired between Shechem and Dina, leading up to the violent reprisal instigated by Shimon and Levi. How is the storyline enriched by stating that Yaakov "acquired the portion of the field in which he had set up his tent"? Why is this information so important?

Ibn Ezra answers this question noting that the Torah mentioned this acquisition in order to educate us regarding the elevated status of Eretz Yisrael: One who buys a portion

in the Land of Israel is as though he has purchased a portion in Olam Haba, the World to Come. This then is the lesson: One who owns a chelek in Eretz Yisrael has ipso-facto acquired a chelek in Olam Haba!

Perhaps, though, the real significance of the events lies in the Torah's next pasuk. In 33:20, we are told that having acquired the field, Yaakov placed an altar SHAM - there. The point we are to internalize is that this could not have been accomplished beforehand while Yaakov was in Chutz Laaretz. As the S'forno writes, this is in keeping with the verse in T'hilim (137:4) - EICH NASHIR ET SHIR HASHEM AL ADMAT NEICHAR - "How can we sing Hashem's song in a foreign land?" Perhaps those davening abroad can remind themselves of this same question each time they open the siddur by silently whispering: EICH NASHIR ET SHIR HASHEM AL ADMAT NEICHAR...

Whatever Yaakov's exact purpose may have been in purchasing the land, the end result is clear: As stated by Rav Yudin Bar-Simone in Midrash Rabba (79:7) - Shechem is one of three locations throughout the Land of Israel, which the nations of the world cannot accuse us of having stolen from their rightful owners, since the transactions were duly and

painstakingly recorded in the Torah. The three locations are the Temple Mount, Me'arat HaMachpela and the Tomb of Yosef in Shechem. [In Yehoshua 24:32 we read that the bones of Yosef, which Bnei Yisrael brought out of Egypt, were buried in Shechem in the parcel of land which Yaakov purchased for a hundred pieces of money, "And they became the inheritance of the children of Israel."]

The Chatam Sofer says that the three purchases parallel the three pillars upon which the world stands: Torah, Avoda and Gemilut Chasadim. Me'arat Hamachpela was purchased by Avraham, the Man of chesed, thereby signifying Gemilut Chasadim. Har Hamoriah, the site of Akeidat Yitzchak, parallels avoda - prayer at the Beit Hamikdash, while Kever Yosef, which Yaakov purchased, represents the Amud HaTorah as Yaakov spent fourteen years studying Torah in the Yeshiva of Sheim and Eiver.

This is perhaps why the world cannot seem to come to terms with Jewish ownership of these three sites since they represent the basic principles of the Jewish People's historic mission to the world. For one reason or another, this continuously breeds resistance. As Rabbi Benjamin Blech

wrote "Jews are hated not because they are bad but because they persist in reminding the world of what it means to be good."

While the attempts to challenge Jewish rights to Chevron and Yerushalayim are well known, less publicized is the ongoing struggle over the right to visit Yosef's Tomb in Shechem. Yosef's Tomb served as a prayer site with a restored synagogue from 1967 until the Oslo agreement. With the rise of the Intifada, the Arabs burnt and destroyed all vestiges of the Jewish presence at Yosef's Tomb. Today, there is an on-going attempt by the Arabs, to claim possession of the premises while some heroic Jews attempt to actively maintain Jewish presence and possession over the site. This struggle often resembles the swinging of a pendulum where, to borrow the phrase the Rabbis used to describe the struggle between Caesarea, the symbol of Roman power, and Jerusalem: "When one rises the other falls."

Jews living in the Diaspora often look on with interest and concern as such events unfold. They are like the arm-chair generals, sitting on their couches while giving instructions as to how the battle should be fought. What Israel needs is not "eitza

givers", but doers who are prepared to match their convictions with action. Every Oleh coming to this land translates into a new home being built, a new community being developed, thus strengthening our "achiza", the grasp of Eretz Yisrael.

