

SICHA SUMMARY

Likkutei Sichos, Vol. 30

Chaye Sarah, Sicha 1

The Context:

In Pirkei DiRebbi Eliezer, the Midrash narrates the discussion that took place between Avraham and the Bnei Cheis regarding the purchase of the Maaras Hamachpela. In the course of the negotiations, Avraham swore to the Yevusei, the children of Cheis, that in recognition of their sale of the cave, the Jewish people would not dispossess the Yevusei of their city without their acquiescence.

As a result of this oath, when King David approached the city to conquer it (for the eventual purpose of building the Beis Hamikdash there), he was unable to do so. He instead promised greatness to whoever would remove evidence of the oath, and after Yoav son of Tzeruya did this, David conquered the city, and then purchased the city of the Yevusei from them.

The Questions:

1. How could Avraham take an oath in opposition to the promise of G-d that “to you and to your descendants I will give this land.”?
2. What is the purpose of removing the record of the oath between Avraham and the Yevusei — if the agreement was still binding, how does destroying the evidence address that?

The Explanation:

The Jewish people have two forms of ownership over the Land of Israel. 1) A communal, general ownership, and 2) a specific, individual ownership of a particular plot of land. These two levels of ownership are not contingent upon one another. It is possible to have general ownership of the land, but to allow non-Jews to still have specific ownership of a plot of land. And it is possible to lose the communal ownership of the land while still holding onto one's private ownership of a plot of land.

The Torah relates that Avraham told the children of Cheis that, “if you want, I will be a sojourner” — meaning, if they would sell

the plot to him, then the general ownership of the land would remain with them, and he would have only the particular ownership of the cave. "But if not, I will be a resident" — meaning, if they refuse to allow him to purchase this plot, that is evidence that the time has come for Avrahma to assert his right to general ownership of the land, and he will take the land by force, as a resident.

When the children of Cheis sold him the plot, he responded in kind, and guaranteed that when the Jewish people would eventually take general possession of the land, they would allow the Yevusei to still maintain particular ownership of their towns.

When David came to conquer the city so that the Beis Hamikdash could be built, this was on behalf of the entire Jewish people, relating to their general ownership of the land. Therefore, he wanted to remove the documentation of the agreement with Avraham, since they were using that oath unlawfully, since the oath did not pertain to the general needs of the Jewish people for the land, but rather, only for their individual claims of ownership.

Nonetheless, once David did conquer the city, he wanted to also have particular ownership of the city, therefore he paid for the city to assert the Jewish people's particular ownership of the city, not just the communal ownership.
