

דברי מנחם

Diarei Menachem

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Have you ever signed a contract for land purchase? If so, perhaps you read the small print, perhaps you skipped it. Now, when Avraham of old purchased the cave of Machpeila, it seems that the narrative added much detailed "small print" that on first glance appears irrelevant:

"And Efron's field, in Machpeila, facing Mamrei, the field and the cave within it - and all the trees in the field - within all its surrounding boundaries, was confirmed as Avraham's as a purchase in the view of the children of Cheit, among all who came to the gate of his city" (B'reishit 23:18). The text continues to tell us that later Avraham buried Sara - "in the cave of the field of Machpeila, facing Mamrei, which is in Chevron, in the land of Canaan. [And] thus the field with its cave [was] confirmed as Avraham's as an estate for a burial site, from the children of Cheit (23:18-19).

A close examination of this oh-so-long text, however, reveals increasingly more information about the nature and purpose of the purchased land. From just another regional burial cave, this particular cave changes status: It now belongs to Avraham; it is now an estate; it is an everlasting monument.

Outlined in every detail are the purchased items to the last tree, and every possible "GPS" location of the property. Yes, together with the Temple site and Yosef's tomb, there can never be a question of Jewish ownership of the Cave of Machpeila. How absurd then that the place gained recent recognition as a Palestinian World Heritage site!