

Taking Counsel from Future Generations

A special peace-deal was signed this week in Washington, which ignored the dictums of “land-for-peace” or the “two-state-solution.” Where did those ideas come from, and what ensured Israel’s establishment?

The Abraham Accords

This week in Washington, Israel, the UAE and Bahrain signed a peace agreement called the Abraham Accords, named for our common ancestor, Abraham.

Previously, every agreement with an Arab state was land-for-peace. For peace with Egypt, Israel returned Sinai. For peace with Jordan, other territories were given. This is the first time an Arab state has made an agreement with Israel which is solely peace-for-peace. Even more significantly, this is the first peace deal signed without reference to the “Palestinian issue.”

There were those who argued that peace would not come to the Middle-East until the Palestinian issue was solved. The solution, they said, is partitioning Israel into “two states for two nations.”

The Peel Commission

The idea of a two-state-solution was not born in 1967, after Israel liberated the territories of Judea and Samaria, nor after

the War of Independence in 1948. This concept has existed since 1937. A year earlier, in 1936, the Arabs' Great Revolt broke out in British controlled Palestine, to combat the growing Jewish presence in the country. Their anger was directed against the institutions of the British government, and they held demonstrations and strikes to force the British government to put an end to Jewish immigration to Israel.

In response to the revolt, the British Mandate set up a special committee to investigate the cause of the revolt and to try and create a solution to the Jewish-Arab conflict. The committee chairman was Lord William Peel, and it was therefore known as the Peel Commission.

The commission came to Palestine with the goal of understanding the core conflict of the Arabs and the Jews. They didn't get bogged down by the details of who terrorized whom in the recent uprising. They wanted to solve the fundamental problem of the conflict, and therefore investigated deeply, with input from people on both sides of the conflict.

After holding some eighty meetings and hearing from one hundred and twenty witnesses, they came to the conclusion that "an irrepressible conflict has arisen between two national communities within the narrow bounds of one small country. There is no common ground between them." Therefore, they proposed that western Palestine be partitioned into two parts - 85 percent for the Arabs, and the rest for the Jews. Jerusalem, the British kept for themselves.

Inter-Generational Consultation

The Jewish leadership in Palestine was bitterly divided about the plan. Ben Gurion felt that they should agree to the plan. The British were finally offering them full sovereignty; they should accept what they were given and from there it would ultimately grow.

Others among the ranks of leadership debated him fiercely. One of the opponents was later known as the “Rebbe of Ein Harod,” Yitzhak Tabenkin. He isn’t a well known personage in our times, but he was one of the leaders of the Kibbutz movement and thousands of people looked up to him. He was a Russian Jew, a scion of Chabad Chassidim, and he had a deep Chassidic soul.

He declared that it was forbidden to agree to partition the land of Israel. He maintained that it would be wiser to settle tens of thousands of Jews in the land, and then, with ‘men on the ground’ everywhere in the country, a sovereign Israel would be created sooner or later. Without partition, he explained, they were free to settle everywhere, but with partition, huge swaths of land would be out of their reach. (To our good fortune, the Arabs rejected the offer and in their ‘merit’ Israel is a much larger country today).

During one of the debates, Yitzchak Tabenkin said to Ben Gurion that he needed to take counsel before he makes a decision. The next day Tabenkin returned and said that he doesn’t agree to the offer. Ben Gurion asked him who he had consulted with, and he responded, **“With my grandfather who already died and with my grandson who hasn’t been born yet.”**

Rachel in Jeremiah?

Today we read a Haftorah from the book of Jeremiah. The Prophet Jeremiah lived and prophesied in the generation of the first Temple's destruction. In the Haftorah, he comforts the exiles from Israel that a day will come and G-d will gather them from the four corners of the world. And then he writes something very interesting.

"A voice is heard on high, lamentation, bitter weeping, Rachel weeping for her children, she refuses to be comforted."

How does Rachel our Matriarch come into the picture? Rachel lived one thousand years before Jeremiah. Why does she suddenly appear in his prophecy?

Jeremiah continues, "So says the Lord: Refrain your voice from weeping and your eyes from tears, for there is reward for your work...they shall come back from the land of the enemy, and there is hope for your future...and the children shall return to their own border."

The explanation to this puzzle is found in Rashi's commentary to Chumash Bereishit, where the Torah describes how Rachel was buried on the roadside. "When they will be exiled by Nebuzaradan," Rashi explains, "they will pass by her resting place and Rachel will come out and ask G-d for mercy."

When those Jews were exiled after the Temple's destruction, they stopped at Rachel's tomb and beseeched her to pray for them to be returned to their land. Jeremiah describes what happened in the heavenly realms; Rachel cried for her children

and refused to be consoled. G-d couldn't bear her pleas and asked her to "Refrain your voice from weeping." Why? Because "there is reward for your work...and there is hope for your future...and the children shall return to their own border."

The Power to Persevere

This promise is what gave the Jewish people the strength to survive the next two and a half thousand years and to persevere through the years of exile; it was the conviction that they would ultimately return to the Land of Israel.

In 1903, the British suggested that a Jewish settlement be created in Uganda. Theodore Hertzl was inclined to accept it, but a fierce opposition arose. One of the organizers of the opposition was the then young Yitzchak Tabenkin. The willpower and courage to oppose this plan came from the same promise as the one given to Rachel one thousand years after her death. The story of Rachel is a fascinating instance when a previous generation got involved in the fate of a later one, and ensured their future return. Rachel lived one thousand years earlier, but it was she who ensured the return of the Jews so many generations later.

This prophecy demonstrates the connection between the generations; a mother already in the World-of-Truth for one thousand years is still interested in the well-being of her descendants, and even ensures the well-being of those generations that have yet to be born - ensuring that they will yet return to their homeland.

What can we take from this story? Whenever we are faced with

a life-decision, we need to consult with “our grandfather who already died and our grandson who hasn’t been born yet.” When we look at the world with a wider perspective, with the view of the eternal Jewish people, we are sure to make the correct decision