

Rabbi David Wolpe's

# *Off The Pulpit*

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## God Is Not Your Business Partner

The first chapter in the bible in which God's name does not appear is the 23rd chapter of Genesis. The chapter recounts the negotiations that Abraham strikes with Ephron to buy Me'arat ha-Machpela, the land on which Sarah and Abraham and their descendents will be buried.



This is the first parcel of land that a Jew purchases in Israel. Perhaps the Torah is offering a subtle lesson. Why is God's name not mentioned? When it comes to commerce, land and politics, people invoke God, usually to justify whatever position they would have taken anyway, but the Torah is more honest. This is a secular transaction on sacred land. God is not your business partner.

There is both beauty and poignancy in a burial ground being the first holding of a Jew in Israel. It emphasizes care, planning for the future and also presages some of the tragic fate of the Jewish people in Israel. We should always be ethical but not everything we do is godly. There is a division *bein kodesh l'chol*, between sacred and everyday activities. When we mix them, it is to the detriment of both faith and the secular world.