

Israel's Real Story

BY RABBI DAVID WOLPE

The politics of Israel at times leads us to forget what matters most. To remember, let us retell the story of Max Nordau.

Max Nordau became a leader of the Zionist movement, co-founding the World Zionist Organization with Theodore Herzl. In his diaries he tells the following story:

An assimilated Vienna physician, Nordau once treated an indigent family, saving the life of their twelve year old girl. Knowing she could not pay him, he said he would take a kiss as payment. She said that as a religious girl she could not kiss a grown man. So he asked her instead to pay him with the Torah lesson she had learned this morning. The girl recounted the tale of Jacob's choosing not to walk the 20 miles to bury Rachel in Marat Hamachpelah, the traditional burial cave of the Patriarchs. She was buried instead at the side of the road. Our Rabbis teach, the girl told Nordau, that Jacob made that choice so that, when the Jews went into exile as they passed by her tomb, "Rachel would weep for her children." (Jeremiah 31:15,16)

Nordau wrote in his diary that if after 2000 years of exile Jewish children still learned about returning to Israel, it would certainly come to pass.