

Rabbi David Wolpe's

Off The Pulpit

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Following Your Heart

The first piece of land purchased in Israel is the cave of Machpelah that Abraham buys to bury Sarah. Of course, Abraham too, will be buried there, as will Isaac and Rebekah and Jacob and Leah. So while the first plot of land in Israel is an acknowledgment of the sovereignty of death it is also a marker of the eternity of love.

Love in the Torah is more often enacted than explained. When God tells Abraham to go, God uses *L'cha*, which is singular. Abraham takes Sarah, for they are one. In traditional couplings there are separations and sacrifices and complications galore. Nonetheless, as he points to his wife Rachel, Rabbi Akiba tells his students, "What I am and what you are you owe to her."

Perhaps that is why the sages teach us that, "had the Torah not been given, the Song of Songs would have been worthy to guide the world." Love poetry seems a strange

sort of legislation. Yet in what the medieval sage Bachya Ibn Pakuda called "the duties of the heart," there is a powerful pathway to the secrets of one's own soul, to another, and to God.

The Double Standard of Religious Leadership