

By the Grace of G-d

Testimony in support of HB 1368 by Rabbi Yonah Grossman of Fargo, ND

Regarding the initiative to come together in support of Israel, the first thing that comes to mind is a teaching often quoted by the greatest Jewish leader of our generation, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, also known as “The Rebbe”.

By divine providence, we are approaching the day that marks the Rebbe’s 121st birthday, a day that has been proclaimed annually in the **State of North Dakota** and around the world as “Education and Sharing Day” recognizing the Rebbe’s promotion of the moral and ethical component of education.

When the conversation would come up regarding Israel's right to exist, the Rebbe pointed out that the truth is the simplest and most effective argument. And the truth is that the foundation for Israel's right to exist is right at the beginning of the Bible.

You are likely familiar with the first verse of the bible: In the beginning, G-d created the heavens and the earth.

Every Jewish child that studies the Bible is introduced to Rashi, a medieval French rabbi and author of a commentary on the Hebrew Bible that is studied to this day by scholars and students alike, and gives its students a basic understanding of scripture.

Although the Hebrew Bible, which we call the Torah, is rich with historical narrative, this is not its primary function.

The Torah is G-d’s instruction manual. From the 10 commandments given on Mt Sinai, to the many other laws that give man the ability to know what G-d wants from us.

Rashi - the medieval commentator, asks: Wouldn’t it make more sense for a book of law to begin with the law? Perhaps start with the 10 Commandments, or the laws the children of Israel were given at the exodus from Egypt. Why does the Torah begin with the story of creation?

The commentator proceeds to answer that the reason the Bible starts with the story of creation is to answer those who claim that the Israelites stole the land of Israel from the Canaanite nations.

G-d **created** the earth, and he is the **owner** of the earth.

The same G-d made a covenant with Abraham that he would give the land of Israel to his descendants, the Jewish people.

G-d doesn't change, and his words don't change.

So Rashi teaches - that the placement of the entire book of Genesis and half of Exodus is to express that G-d, as creator of the universe, has the right to give the **land** of Israel to the **Children** of Israel.

Thank you therefore for your commitment to defend truth, helping protect the safety of Israel, and upholding G-d's promise to Abraham.

Surely G-d will keep another promise that he made to Abraham, "I will bless those who bless you", and will protect and support you and your families for the rest of your life with blessings of good health, sustenance, and success in all your endeavors.