

Chayai Sarah 5776

BS"D Parashat Chayai Sarah 5776

Rabbi Nachman Kahana

Lack of Jewish Pride

Our rabbis have taught that HaShem put Avraham Aveinu through ten tests. The ninth was the "binding of Yitzchak" (akeidat Yitzchak) and the tenth, the negotiations between Avraham and Efron the Hittite for the purchase of Ma'arat Ha'machpela as a burial site for Sarah.

Logic dictates that each succeeding test increases in difficulty. The question arises: what was the focus of the final test set before Avraham which caused it to be more difficult than the Akeida.

Was it the necessity to deal with worldly matters of "real estate" while in the midst of a profound emotional crisis at the loss of his beloved Sarah? Perhaps! Was it his being taken advantage of by the unscrupulous Efron, who charged 400 shekels for a burial site which was worth not nearly that much? Perhaps!

These were indeed aggravating realities, but the real hard core of the test, I believe, ran far deeper into the area which was to impact upon Jewish history.

A fundamental religious principle appears in many of our classical commentaries and responsa:

The actions of the fathers (Avraham, Yitzchak and Ya'akov) guide their children (the Jewish people) along the path to redemption.

The moment of truth came when Avraham, despite the dangerous ramifications of what he was presently going to do, stood up before the Hittite council of elders and proclaimed:

אני זר ודורש אצלכם

"I am a stranger and a resident among you."

Rashi quotes the Midrash that explains what Avraham meant:

אם תרצה למכור את מקום קבורתי אעשה זר ודורש
'אני זר ודורש' כלומר דורש רשות

If you wish [to sell the burial site], I will act as a stranger who recognizes your right of ownership over the area; but if you do not [sell me the burial site], I will implement my right of sovereignty and seize the land by virtue of God's promise to me, "And to your children will I give this land."

Avraham was told by HaShem to leave his land, his birthplace and his father's home to take up residence in a land which HaShem would identify later.

At that time, Europe was desolate, as were most parts of Africa and Asia, not to mention the Americas. But instead of sending Avraham to establish a Jewish State in an unpopulated area where there would be no protest, Avraham was directed to the most populous area in the world. A thin sliver of land at the eastern end of the Mediterranean Sea populated by 7 pagan nations numbering in the hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions!

Each of these peoples descended from Cham, son of Noach, and arrived in the land much before Avraham. They cultivated its fields, constructed buildings and established places of worship, which taken together served as a common civilization.

At this juncture in their history, a stranger arrives from the east and declares that he is the true sovereign over all the land. Not just the area of Canaan; but of all the lands from the Euphrates in the north to the Nile in the south, and from the Mediterranean in the west to Mesopotamia in the east.

By this statement, Avraham challenged the rights of countless peoples who considered themselves as the owners of these lands by virtue of conquest and possession. This was an act of immense courage, because from that moment on Avraham was perceived by all of those people as a threat to their way of life, to their very existence.

We were here before you! You are a foreign implant in the Middle East. We do not tolerate other beliefs! Does this sound strangely familiar? Don't we hear it daily from Arab spokesmen, echoing the feelings of the ancient children of Cham when reacting to Avraham's declaration of sovereignty? These anti-God, latter-day advocates of denial spew their venom in the media, on campuses, in the Security Council, on Capitol Hill and on the Temple Mount.

And we ask ourselves: where is the Avraham of our generation who will stand up before the world and declare that Eretz

Yisrael is our God-given heritage?

This is obviously too huge a test for today's Jewish leaders; whether they be great talmidei chachamim, who, almost to the man, advocate a low profile when dealing with Yishmael in the east and Eisav in the west, and certainly the secular Jews who believe that our ties to the land are historic and do not stem from God's promise to our forefathers.

Were I to merit the opportunity to stand before an international forum, I would shout the words of Avraham Aveinu. That although we recognize certain individual rights of non-Jews in the Holy Land, God and His people Israel are the sovereigns over the entire land between the two great rivers.

The rejection of our sovereignty over Eretz Yisrael as God-given is the root cause of all our problems today in Eretz Yisrael.

In wake of the 1967 Six Day War, when Hashem presented to Am Yisrael the entire area of Eretz Yisrael west of the Jordan river on a silver platter, the Jewish thing to do would have been to immediately:

- Erase the Moslem entities from the Temple Mount.
- Annex all the areas of Shomron, Yehuda, Aza, and the Golan Heights into the State of Israel.
- Open the bridges over the Jordan River to Jordan and help, facilitate, assist, inspire all the Arabs to leave the country.
- Commence on an ambitious project of resettling the newly acquired lands between the Ocean and the River.
- Open ever wider the gates of Aliya for the millions who would have returned had the government acted according to the first four.

However, since our leaders lack the Jewish pride which filled Avraham Aveinu, we are witnessing the negation of everything

which is correct.

- The Temple Mount has become the focal point for Moslems in Eretz Yisrael, when on a Friday in Ramadan 300,000 Moslems ascend the Mount and turn their backs on Yerushalayim and face Mecca.
- Official government policy is to plan together with the United States the establishment of one more Arab state in the area of Shomron, Yehuda and Aza.
- Instead of diminishing the Arab population, our government does all to increase it, as they turn a blind eye to the multiple Arab marriages, so that a Bedouin family can number from 50 to 75 and more children, and thus slowly take over the entire Negev.
- The government creates multiple hardships for people wishing to settle in the liberated areas.
- The long-awaited in-gathering of all Jews to Eretz Yisrael has not yet materialized, because of the weakness of the "children" compared to the pride and strength of Avraham Aveinu, when he declared our God-given sovereignty over every millimeter of this Holy Land.

Fortunately, as in past desperate periods in our history, HaShem sent a leader who exhibited the Jewish pride exemplified by Avraham Aveinu.

It will happen again in our time. And when that day comes, Hamas, Hezbollah, Iran and all the other would-be Hitlers who slither around the planet, will be no more. And the banners of the twelve Jewish tribes will be raised by the people who have returned to take possession of all of Eretz Yisrael.

Yitzchak Never Left Eretz Yisrael

In the parasha, Avraham instructs Eliezer to travel to Ur Kasdim, Avraham's birthplace, to find an appropriate wife for Yitzchak.

Avraham warns Eliezer that at any event, Yitzchak was not to leave Eretz Yisrael even for a short period of time. And in fact Yitzchak never left Eretz Yisrael.

A true story.

Two years ago, I was in the bet midrash of Kol Yehuda in the Old City. Four Israeli men from the city of Atlit in the north entered. We began discussing the unique qualities of Yerushalayim and the sanctity of Eretz Yisrael.

At one point I told them the following not knowing, at the time why, but it soon became clear.

I told them that the Holy Land has four names:

Eretz Yisrael – the Land of Israel ארץ ישראל

Eretz Tzvi – the beautiful Land ארץ צבי

Eretz Chemda – the desired Land ארץ חמדה

Eretz HaKodesh – the sacred Land ארץ הקודש

Then I told them that the first letters of the four words Yisrael, Tzvi, Chemda and Kodesh (י צ ח ק)

make up the name Yitzchak – and Yitzchak never left the Land.

They were very impressed by this, and after shaking hands left the bet midrash.

A few moments later, one of the men returned and sat near me. He said: "I am in a relationship with a Jewish woman from America, and we are discussing marriage. But her condition for this union is that we live in New York."

However, in the light of what you just told us about Eretz Yisrael and Yitzchak never leaving, I am breaking off our relationship, and my name is YITZCHAK.

Shabbat Shalom,

Nachman Kahana

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