

Chayai Sarah 5780

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Where is the Avraham Avinu (Our Father Avraham) of our Time?

Jewish tradition relates that God put Avraham Avinu through ten tests. The ninth was the “binding of Yitzchak” (Akeidat Yitzchak), and the tenth was the real estate negotiations between Avraham and the Hittite Council of Elders for the purchase of Ma’arat Ha’machpela as a burial site for Sarah.

Logic dictates that in an ongoing series of tests and trials each one is more challenging than its predecessor. So, what was the focus of Avraham’s last test that 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 the Hittite, who charged 400 shekels for a burial site that was not worth 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 Yaakov) guide their children (the Jewish people) along the path to redemption.” The moment of truth came when Avraham, despite the ramifications of what he was presently going to do, stood up before the Hittite council of elders and proclaimed: “I am a stranger and a resident among you.” Rashi quotes the Midrash that explains what Avraham meant: “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’.”

Recall that 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 and even more so the Americas. However, instead of sending Avraham to establish a Jewish State in an unpopulated area where there would be no protest, HaShem directed him to the most populous area in the world – a thin sliver of land at the eastern end of the Mediterranean Sea populated by seven nations numbering in the hundreds of thousands or even millions. Each of these peoples, all descendants of Cham the son of Noach, 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 junction 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 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 those people to be 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 campus, 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 Esav in the west or the secular Jews who believe that our ties to the land are historic and do not stem from God's promise to our forefathers.

If I were to merit the opportunity to stand before an international forum, I would shout the words of Avraham Avinu 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 of Israel.

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

In wake of the 1967 Six Day War, HaShem presented to Am Yisrael the entire area of Eretz Yisrael west of the Jordan river on a silver platter. The Jewish thing would have been to immediately erase the two abominations standing on 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 and help, facilitate, and inspire all the Arabs to leave the country; begin an ambitious project of

resettling the newly acquired land between the Sea 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 Jewish things.

However, since our leaders lack the Jewish pride exemplified by Avraham Avinu, we are witnessing the negation of everything which is right. 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 to face Mecca. And instead of diminishing the Arab population, our government turns a blind eye to polygamous Arab marriages (particularly among the Bedouin tribes) in which single families can number up to 75 and more children. The demographic problem is obvious.

All this because of the weakness of the "children" compared to the pride and strength of Avraham Avinu, who declared our God given sovereignty over every millimeter of this Holy Land. Fortunately, as in past desperate periods in our history, HaShem sends a leader who exhibits the Jewish pride exemplified by Avraham Avinu. When that day comes, Hamas, Hezbollah, Iran and all the other would-be Hitlers who slither around the planet will be no more. In their stead, the banners of the twelve Jewish tribes will be raised by the people who have returned to take possession of all of Eretz Yisrael.

Shabbat Shalom,

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