

# Chayai Sarah 5782

BS"D Parashat Cha'yei Sarah 5782

Rabbi Nachman Kahana

## Faith & Courage

Our rabbis have taught that Hashem put Avraham Avinu through ten tests. The ninth was the "binding of Yitzchak" (Akeidat Yitzchak) and the tenth, the 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 since every succeeding test increases in difficulty, what was the focus of this last 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 the Hittite, who charged 400 shekels for a burial site which 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:

אברהם יצחק ויאקוב היו עומדים על דעתם

**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

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 which explains what Avraham meant:

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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 HaShem'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, not to speak of 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 10 nations numbering in the hundreds of thousands, 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 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 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. Does this sound strangely familiar? Don't we hear it daily from Arab spokesmen and on many campuses in the US, 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, 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.

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, HaShem and His people Israel are the sovereigns over the entire land between the two great rivers.

In the 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 correct Jewish thing to do

would have been to immediately:

1. Erase the two abominations standing on the Temple Mount.
2. Annex all the areas of Shomron, Yehuda, Aza, and the Golan Heights into the State of Israel.
3. Open the bridges over the Jordan River to Jordan and help, facilitate, assist, and inspire all the Arabs to leave our country.
4. Commence on an ambitious project of resettling the newly acquired land between the Sea and the River.
5. 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 Avinu, we are witnessing the negation of everything which is right.

Fortunately, as in past desperate periods in our history when HaShem sent a leader who exhibits the Jewish pride exemplified by Avraham Avinu, in our time when that day comes, Hamas, Hezbollah, Iran, the UN 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.

## **A Brief Glimpse into History**

Let us always keep in mind the following: Over the past 3,500 years, the Jews are the only people to have ruled over the land of Israel as a sovereign state.

The first Jewish Kingdom, the Davidic Dynasty, arose in 1030 BCE and the First Temple was built by King Solomon between 930-970 BCE.

The northern Kingdom of Israel was conquered by the Assyrian

Empire in 722 BCE, but the Jewish Kingdom of Judea continued to survive for another 136 years until the reign of Nebuchadnezzar (586 BCE), the Babylonian who exiled most of the Jews to the east. Thereafter, the Persian Empire conquered the Babylonians 538-332 BCE.

The Greeks, led by Alexander the Great, conquered the Persians and ruled from 332-167 BCE. Soon afterwards, the Israelites, led by the Hasmoneans, regained control of the land and ruled from 167 BCE-37 CE, until they were eventually defeated and exiled by the Romans in 70 CE.

The Byzantines conquered the Romans and ruled from 324 – 638 CE, until the Muslims conquered them and ruled until 1099.

The Crusaders continued this endless cycle of conquerors and defeated the Muslim Empire and ruled until 1260. The Mamluks then defeated the Crusaders and ruled until 1517, when they were conquered by the Ottoman Empire.

The Ottomans were eventually defeated and the British gained control of the land through the British Mandate. The British controlled the land from 1917 until 1948, and soon thereafter the Jewish state was formed.

It is crucial to recognize that even while conquerors have come and gone, a Jewish presence has never left the land and that Jews around the world have been praying to return for thousands of years.

A brief glimpse into history clearly proves two essential points: 1) that the Jews are the only People to have ever established a sovereign state in Israel, and 2) of all the nations in the world, the Jews have the oldest claim to the land of Israel in history.

*(Thank you Mr. Eliyahu Alan Mandelbaum and Mr. David Billet for this comprehensive historic summary).*

For all those doubting the legitimacy of the Jewish right to the land of Israel, the Jewish people were a majority in 1854, and have only grown since then.

Furthermore, ever since the Romans exiled our people the land lay as a desolate, barren wasteland that was uninhabitable to all. As early as 1267, Rabbi Moses ben Nachman (RamBan) fled from persecution in Spain by finding a new home in the land of Israel. He wrote to his son, "Many are Israel's forsaken places, and great is the desecration. The more sacred the place, the greater the devastation it has suffered. Jerusalem is the most desolate place of all."

Five hundred years later, Mark Twain stated in a written account that the land lay as a barren wasteland, essentially as RamBan had seen the land.

The land rejected each conqueror just as a human body rejects a foreign organ.

HaShem has watched over the land for 2000 years making sure that no other people would ever be able to settle it. Until 1948 when Medinat Yisrael was reborn, the land lay as a barren wasteland while patiently waiting for the Jewish Nation to return home.

This is the simple truth that must be reiterated over and over whenever an anti-Jew spews his poison, that the Land of Israel was given to the Jewish nation by the Creator Himself.

You may not convince anyone, but nevertheless, truth has a power of its own to destroy falsehood.

Shabbat Shalom

Nachman Kahana

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