

Nitzavim 5779

BS"D Parashat Nitzavim 5779

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Where is the Avraham of our generation?

Parashat Nitzavim: The last Shabbat of the year 5779

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.

Since logic dictates that each succeeding test should increase in difficulty, what is it about the last test set before Avraham that made it more trying 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? Was it his being taken advantage of by the unscrupulous Efron, who charged 400 shekels for a burial site which was not worth nearly that much?

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

A fundamental religious principle appears in many of our

classical commentaries and responsa:

בראשית פרק יב

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 dangers inherent in what he was presently going to do, stood up before the Hittite council of elders and proclaimed:

בראשית פרק יב

I am a stranger and a resident among you.

Rashi quotes the Midrash that explains Avraham's intent:

אברהם אומר לנשיא חתים כי אני זר ודורש אצלכם

בראשית פרק יב

If you wish [to sell the burial site], I will act as a stranger who recognizes your rights 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."

At the time when 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, Europe was mostly 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 some 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 seven pagan nations numbering in the hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions.

Each of these peoples descended from Cham, son of Noach, who had 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 and east to the Nile in the south and west, and from the Mediterranean to Mesopotamia!

By this statement, Avraham was challenging the rights of countless people who considered themselves the owners of these lands by virtue of conquest and purchase. 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 and 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 not 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.

However, on Sunday we were witness to an immense chillul HaShem when representatives of the four Arab Knesset parties arrived at the president's residence to discuss who they would support for Prime Minister.

The spokesman, Dr. Achmed Tibi stood before President Rivlin

as a proud Arab and stated, "We are not guests in this country, we are the ba'alei batim – owners of the land".

And the President did not respond!

Here was a reverse scenario of the Avraham and Hittite episode; when instead of Avraham the Jew stating proudly and emphatically that he is the God given possessor of all these lands, it is a sworn enemy of the Jewish nation standing before the President declaring that the Arabs are the possessors of the Land of Israel.

Were I the President, I would have directed the security people to put him and his entourage on the first plane out of the country with no right to ever return.

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. It makes no difference whether they be great talmidei chachamim who almost to a man advocate a low profile when dealing with Yishmael in the east and Eisav in the west, or 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 denial of our sovereignty over Eretz Yisrael as God-given is the root of all our problems today in Eretz Yisrael. 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 Jewish thing to have done would have been to immediately:

- 1- Erase the Moslem entities from 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 and help, facilitate, assist, and inspire all the Arabs to leave the country,
- 4- Begin an ambitious project of resettling the newly acquired lands between the "Ocean" 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 then lacked, and still lack, the Jewish pride which filled Avraham Aveinu, we are witnessing the negation of everything which is right.

1- The Temple Mount has become the focal point for Moslems in Eretz Yisrael, when on each Friday in Ramadan 300,000 Moslems ascend the Mount and turn their backs on Yerushalayim and face Mecca.

2- 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.

3- Instead of decreasing the Arab population, our government does everything 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 slowly take over the entire Negev.

4- The government creates multiple hardships for people wishing to settle in our liberated areas.

5- The long-awaited in-gathering of all Jews to Eretz Yisrael has not crystallized 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.

Our prayers before Hashem at the onset of this new year 5780, are that as in past desperate periods in our history, HaShem will send a leader who exhibits 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.

Shabbat Shalom,

Nachman Kahana

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