

NOVEMBER 5, 2012

## Parashat Chayei Sarah

### Strangers No More

**I am a stranger and a resident (Genesis 23:4)**

**גר ותושב אנכי (בראשית כג:ד)**

Chizkuni (on 23:3) notes that in addition to mourning the death of his wife, Abraham cried for Sarah, “because he did not have a burial site prepared for her.” Simcha Raz (See *Shivim Panim L’Torah* vol. 1 p. 153) explains that at this moment, Abraham felt uniquely alone in the world. Despite the promise that he would inherit the entire Land of Canaan, when the time came to bury his wife, he did not even own a proper burial ground. Yet, Abraham realized that one day his children would take true possession of the Promised Land. Rabbi Raz suggests a different reading of Abraham’s declaration to the people, explaining that Abraham told the people that *right now*, “I am a stranger,” *but in the future I will be*, “a resident,” in the Land, as the true inheritor of the Land of Israel.

For generations the Jewish people, like their forefather Abraham, mourned their isolation and lack of a permanent homeland. Since it was established as a modern state in 1948, Israel has been a physical and spiritual homeland for the Jewish people— as well as America’s most important strategic ally in the Middle East.

For two millennia, the Jewish people wandered the earth as strangers, suffering persecution, oppression and ultimately genocide during the terrible destruction of the Holocaust. Even after the Holocaust ended, tens of thousands of Jews remained homeless in displaced persons camps, unable to immigrate to Palestine due to harsh quotas imposed by the British Mandate. Only in 1948, when the Jewish people established the Jewish state, were the 130,000 survivors finally brought to Israel where they could begin to rebuild their shattered lives. From then on, Israel has served as a refuge for Jews all over the world, and a vital ally of the United States. Only 11 minutes after its founding in 1948, the U.S. was the first country to recognize the Jewish state, establishing the special bond between the two nations. Every administration and Congress has understood the unique role of Israel as the homeland of the Jewish people and provided unprecedented political, financial, military and moral support. The military partnership between the U.S. and Israel has helped both countries keep their soldiers safe, strengthen their military and protect their homeland. Israel works with the U.S. government to develop technologies and equipment aimed at thwarting terrorism and safeguarding citizens from both nations. Americans and Israelis also partner to promote new energy solutions and ensure our long-term energy security. For more information on how Israel and the U.S. work together, click [here](#).

Abraham recognized his descendants would one day no longer be strangers in the Promised Land. We can be proud that the Jewish state continues to thrive as a beacon of democracy and America’s strongest ally in a hostile region. ■

### Respectful Negotiations

**And he spoke to the people of Het (Genesis 23:3)**

**וידבר אל בני חת (בראשית כג:ג)**

S’forno (on 23:8) notes that it was unusual for a respected individual to sell a portion of his land. This made Abraham’s goal of successfully purchasing the Cave of Machpelah as a burial site for Sarah especially delicate. For this reason, Abraham demonstrated exceptional deference and respect towards the people of Het and Ephron, the owner of the cave. Nahmanides (on 23:8) comments that Abraham first approached the people of Het to lobby Ephron on his behalf, in the hopes of securing the sale. Abraham also intentionally placed himself at a disadvantage stating, “I

am a stranger” (23:4), bowing respectfully (23:7) to the people, and despite his stature and position, never expecting favorable treatment and offering to pay the full value of the field.

Abraham successfully negotiated the purchase of the Machpelah Cave because he established trust and negotiated in good faith. If the Palestinian Authority (PA) truly desires peace with Israel, it must follow Abraham’s example.

The 1993 Oslo Accords, signed both by Yasser Arafat and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, committed the Palestinian Authority to resolve its dispute with the state of Israel through direct negotiations, which Israel has been calling for without preconditions for years. Yet, instead of sitting down with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu—who has repeatedly called for direct negotiations—Abbas has set unrealistic preconditions, including a freeze on construction in the Jewish neighborhoods of Jerusalem and the demand for release of Palestinian prisoners who committed mass murders. Moreover, Abbas has taken steps in recent months that threaten to undermine the trust necessary to reach a settlement. While the United States thwarted the PA’s attempt last September to unilaterally gain recognition in the U.N. Security Council, now the PA is once again threatening to take yet another one-sided step. According to [The Washington Examiner](#), Abbas recently sent a letter to President Obama declaring his intention to seek non-member observer status in the United Nations General Assembly, a move opposed both by Israel and the United States. Congressional resolutions in mid-2011 ([H. Res. 268](#) and [S. Res. 185](#)) warned the Palestinians that there will be serious implications if it continues its efforts at the United Nations reiterating that only direct talks between the parties can lead to a real and lasting peace. For more on the peace process, click [here](#).

Just as Abraham successfully negotiated the purchase of the Machpelah Cave by engaging the people of Het respectfully, openly and honestly, the Palestinian Authority must return to the negotiating table if it hopes to achieve peace and prosperity for its people. ■

## Now is the Time

**Delay me not (Genesis 24:56)**

**אל תאחרו אתי (בראשית כד:נו)**

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Abraham sent Eliezer on a critical mission in search of a wife for Isaac. Recognizing the importance of his task, Eliezer refused to waste time. When Rebecca brought Eliezer to her home, he refused to eat, saying “I will not eat, until I have told my errand” (24:33). The next morning, he pressed the family to allow Rebecca to return with him to Isaac immediately, telling them, “Delay me not, seeing the Lord has prospered my way; send me away that I may go to my master” (24:56).

Eliezer understood that his mission was too important to delay. With new members recently elected to Congress, we too must act with the same sense of urgency to educate them about the U.S.-Israel relationship.

Election season has ended and new members of Congress have been selected to serve in Washington. Many of these members have spent the past months and even years focusing their campaigns specifically on economic and domestic issues, with good reason. Yet, now that the campaigning is over, it’s time to address a wide array of issues including foreign policy and the U.S.-Israel relationship—issues that they might only know very little about. We must educate America’s policy makers about the challenges Israel faces as rockets rain down from Gaza, terrorists gather in the Sinai, Hizballah stockpiles missiles in Lebanon, and Iran continues to enrich uranium. Now, before they enter office, is the very best time for passionate advocates to reach out to these new members of Congress and convey support for America’s continued deep friendship with the Jewish state. We must act with alacrity and take the time now to educate our elected officials about the challenges that Israel faces and the critical role America plays in supporting the only true democracy in the Middle East. For more on how to get involved, click [here](#).

When the time was right to secure a match for Isaac, Eliezer acted with urgency. Now is our chance to follow his lead, take action and educate our newly elected representatives about America’s important relationship with Israel. ■

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