



GEULAS YISRAEL

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Addressing the War Today

Religion Yes, But Not The Land of Israel

Though the revealed word of Torah had yet to be delivered, Avraham was still able to discover Hashem. Chazal compare his discovery to a person who witnesses a radiant city of light, thereby inferring that there must be an architect to this metropolis. Noticing that someone had finally discerned His creative presence, the Architect, or Hashem called Avraham to His Land.

MORAL SPIRIT

Evidently, Avraham did not discover Hashem through the wonders of nature or through the calculus of science. He saw Hashem in a *city of light* and a *city of life*. Studying our world, Avraham detected an inner moral spirit which had engineered it and continued to govern it. He observed a world delicately balanced to support life and reasoned that, evidently, the Creator of this finely tuned system desired human well-being. Planet Earth is located in what is known as the “Goldilocks zone”: 5 miles closer to the sun or 5 miles further from it and our planet would be almost uninhabitable. Discerning this delicate calibration of life, or a *city of light and life*, Avraham concluded that there must be a Creator with moral spirit. He saw the world through moral lenses and not through cold

spectacles of science.

Having detected a moral spirit “behind” the city of life, Avraham yearned to model himself after that moral Being. Sensing a compassionate and merciful G-d, he craved to, himself, become an agent of moral delivery. His philanthropy and altruism weren’t *incidental* to his religious awakening. He didn’t wear two hats, one as a philosopher and one as a humanitarian. His entire theology was predicated upon simulating the kindness and morality he sensed in Hashem. Without serving as an agent for moral welfare his philosophical treatise would be deficient.

Avraham’s revolution constituted a dramatic break with past religious thinking. For the first two thousand years of history, Man had incorrectly assumed that Hashem was angry and vengeful. After all, they had suffered successive waves of divine punishment: first humanity was expelled from Eden, subsequently Kayin’s descendants were condemned to roam the land as nomads. These struggles culminated in a great flood which wiped out the human race. Finally rebuilding after the flood, large populations were scattered across the planet. Humanity assumed, and for good

reason, that gods were angry and spiteful and that they toyed with human playthings for entertainment.

As the first human being to comprehend that Hashem is kind and compassionate, Avraham revolutionized religious thought. Though Hashem desires human welfare, there are consequences for criminal behavior.

THE TRADITION OF MORAL MONOTHEISM

Through his discovery, Avraham launched the great monotheistic tradition. Hashem is merciful and compassionate and craves human prosperity. The highest form of human welfare is to live by the will of Hashem and in His presence. Any improvement to the human condition, whether spiritual or material, is consistent with His will. For Avraham's descendants, the march of science and progress is driven by a divine impulse. Those who have adopted this approach of compassionate monotheism- the Judeo-Christian world in particular- have evolved into progressive and advanced societies, enjoying advanced education, sophisticated medical treatment, enlightened forms of government and equitable economic systems. Those who have not adopted this tradition have remained backward and regressive, stuck in the ancient quagmire of paganism and in the confused world of gods who care little about human welfare.

Sadly, Islamic fundamentalism, once part of the monotheistic tradition, has lost its course. By basing religion upon militantism and the capture and conversion of others, it disfigured the image of G-d. G-d was now imagined as Himself angry and militant, vengeful and capricious. Islamic fundamentalists, though they masquerade



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as religious people, are, essentially, atheists. Though they speak in the name of religion they describe a G-d who does not exist. There is no joy in Heaven when innocents suffer. They have vandalized the face of Hashem in our world and have abandoned the legacy of Avraham.

SURGING POPULARITY

Avraham's religious revolution began to gather steam. Slowly but surely, this unknown itinerant, who had relocated from a distant land, received widespread accreditation. In particular, his popularity surged after his successful intervention and triumph in a bloody war which had plagued the region for a quarter of a century. Those he saved from the vicious axis of five evil emperors gathered in an area known as the "valley of kings " עמק המלך or to celebrate Avraham's courageous intervention.

The monarch of Sedom offers him financial reward and population transfer, each of which Avraham politely refuses. Even Malki Tzedek, a legendary religious leader ruling a community in the ancient city of Shalem, or proto-Yerushalayim, journeys to meet Avraham and to pay him due homage.

The entire world witnessed the potential of Avraham's new religious doctrine. Serving a G-d of peace and welfare, Avraham himself became an agent of peace and welfare.

AVRAHAM'S CONCERN

Yet despite his surging popularity, Avraham is extraordinarily concerned. Though he receives reassurances from Hashem about his own security, he is still anxious. He wonders how he and his descendants will inherit the land. Despite his popularity and the acceptance of his new moral monotheism, and despite repeated divine promises about receiving the land of Israel, Avraham remains deeply worried.

Though the world eagerly embraced his ideological revolution they were less excited about the idea of granting him the land of G-d, and Avraham knew this. The locals would obviously oppose any Jewish presence in Israel. Even those who resided elsewhere would not easily grant Avraham's new nation a place under G-d's eye. Subconsciously, humanity realizes that Israel is the land where humanity was born and where history will end. Jewish presence in this land resonates with historical inevitability, and, for this reason, they opposed Avraham, and they continually battle us. This battle will only end when history ends and not a moment sooner. Avraham had good reason to worry.

Addressing Avraham's fears, Hashem

formed an eternal *brit*, delivering us full license to His land. As promising as the *brit* was it was also conducted under ominous conditions. As the *brit* was finalized a dark and great fear fell upon Avraham - אימה עליו חשיכה גדולה נפלה עליו . The process of settling the land of history would not be easy for the people of history. For thousands of years Avraham's children would wander this planet, unable to return home because of past religious breakdowns. When we finally did return home, we would face violent opposition by the dark forces of humanity. Amidst all this darkness, a billowing oven and a blazing torch appeared, assuring Avraham that, despite the darkness, the *brit* formed between himself and Hashem was inalienable and that enemies of G-d, who oppose our people would be consumed.

We are living through a dark period of modern Jewish history. Don't forget the *brit*. It hovers above history, and it will shape its trajectory.

KORBANOT

The *brit* was formed by selecting an assortment of animals which would, one day, be offered in the Beit Hamikdash as *korbanot* sacrifices. Hashem notified Avraham that his children would merit the land based on their ritual sacrifices in the Mikdash and the moral and religious lives which would underpin those sacrifices.

Sadly, on the dark day, three weeks ago Hashem took many sacrifices from our people. We don't know why. We ask Hashem to quickly redeem our people, restore our Mikdash, so that we can offer him the *korbanot* He desires. ■

(Written Sun Oct 22)