



FROM THE DESK OF RABBI MOSHE HAUER

OU EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT

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Strangers in Our Land

Much of the world around us has adopted a narrative and perspective that eludes our understanding. This has been deeply disorienting and confusing for us in the context of the existential battle that the Jewish people is engaged in, both in Israel and in a world enflamed with antisemitism. This has been even more difficult than the challenges we have become more accustomed to facing from the main streaming of non-traditional values that have similarly placed the traditional religious community on the defensive, portrayed consistently as archaic and intolerant and as an impediment to the culture that others wish to create.

Is this our unique contemporary experience, living as we do in times of rapid and disorienting change? Maharal of Prague (*Gevuros Hashem* end of ch. 9) thought otherwise, as he considered this a phenomenon basic and endemic to those who wish to live true and elevated lives. He saw this attitude expressed in the words of our daily *Amidah*: “To the righteous, the pious, the elders of Your people the House of Israel, the remnant of their scholars, the righteous strangers (*geirei hatzedek*), and to us, may Your compassion be aroused.” To Maharal, the righteous strangers are part of this listing because in fact every

moral and pious person whose primary drivers are the Torah’s eternal moral and spiritual values experiences life in this world as a bit of an outsider.

This tension is reflected as well in the dialogue of Avraham with the inhabitants of Chevron (Bereishit 23:4). “I am a stranger and a resident amongst you.” Generations of commentary struggled to understand how one person can characterize himself both as a stranger to and a

**In Memory of
MIRYAM VITERBI a”h
on her first yahrzeit
and her husband
NATAN BEN HORIN z”l**

Miryam was a proud descendant of the rabbis of Padua, Italy and was hidden in Assisi during World War II, and Natan was an Israeli war veteran and a diplomat representing the Jewish people at the Vatican in Rome. Both were accomplished in their fields and their extensive research.

Remembered and honoured for their devotion and contribution to our people.

זכרונם לברכה

**Our condolences to her nephews
Emanuele and
Rabbi Benedetto Carucci Viterbi**

*From their neighbours
in Yerushalayim
Tova & Colin Robinson*

resident of the same community.

Rav Soloveitchik saw the phrase as reflecting this duality that is the lot of the Jew within society, especially within modern civilization. "Certainly, I am a resident, I am one of you. I engage in business as you do, I speak your language, I take full part in your social-economic institutions. But at the same time, I am a stranger and, in some aspects, a foreigner. I belong to a particular world, one that is completely foreign to you. It is a world in which I am at one with the Creator. It is a world populated by characters unknown to you, with a tradition that you do not understand, with spiritual values that seem impractical in your eyes. It is a world filled with altars and sacrifices, a world of Torah, of loving-kindness, of sanctity and purity."

Avraham was known as the *Ivri*, the person who was at odds with the entire world, even as he was beloved and impactful in that world. This is a legacy that we, his descendants, carry. As fully integrated, successful, and appreciated as we may become within the worlds of science, business, government, or medicine, we necessarily maintain our core value system that leaves us independent and apart, and often feeling foreign. We feel that due to our unique values, and we feel that deeply due to our identity as Jews.

We hope and pray for a time when those around us will look to us as Avraham's contemporaries looked to him. *Nesi Elokim atah b'tocheinu*. "You are a Prince of G-d in our midst." "Avraham, we see you as neither a resident nor a stranger. You are amongst us but above us, distinguished by the nobility of your faith, your spirit, and your values." ■

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