

The Land of Israel in the Parsha & Our Lives

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Parashat Vayera

How Does the First Peace Treaty Teach Us Rectified Relations between Israel and the Nations?

Looking for the Little Light of Hashem’s Supervision Behind the Scenes

I am no political mavin; I don’t have the time or patience to read or listen to the news. However, I do believe in the importance of contemplating the historical events of our time to discover Hashem’s miraculous supervision behind the scenes. It is a known fact that things often have to get worse in order to get better. I have recently experienced in my own family life how an emergency conflict is now laying the foundation for a new and better restart. Whereas we all mourn our fallen soldiers and keep praying for the plight of hostages, we do see the light at the end of the tunnel. The last part of the lyrics of *Hurricane* (the only Hebrew part) song by Eden Golan expresses well the sentiment here in Israel across the spectrum of our people:

לא צריך מלים גדולות רק תפלות אפלו אם קשה לראות תמיד אתה משאיר לי אור אחד קטן.

“We don’t need big words, only prayers, even if it is hard to see, You always leave us a little light.”

I’m a light seeker who tries to live according to the principle of unless proven otherwise, choose to see the light, and believe in the good outcome! Through the thick and thin of our rollercoaster of life, my husband and I bless each other every night before going to sleep with, “There is still hope!” Believing that G-d is in charge of everything that happens personally and globally and believing that G-d is the ultimate good, I choose to look for underlying glimmers of light in everything happening in the world, including the effects of October 7th. Interestingly, Israel ranked in the top 5, in the 2024 World Happiness Report, despite, political turmoil, and the October 7 attack occurring during the observed period. Following the ‘October 7 crisis,’ many anticipated a significant mental health downturn in Israel. Contrary to these predictions, the Health Ministry reported a decrease in suicides from October to December compared to the previous years. The traumatic event spurred an unprecedented wave of solidarity and mutual support. The sense of ‘togetherness’ and shared destiny became palpable. The strong sense of belonging and community in Israel plays a pivotal role in its high happiness ranking. How can we continue to discover the light behind the political scene of the world, and how does it tie in with the First Peace Treaty in the world depicted in *Parashat Vayera*?

How Did October 7th Affect the Israeli Outlook on a Two-State Solution?

Parashat Vayera teaches us the foundations of understanding who the land of Israel belongs to, as well as the Torah’s conditions for Israel entering a peace treaty with other nations. Sarah, prophetically inspired, demands that Avraham expel his biological son, Yishmael because he has become a threat to Yitzchak’s life:

ספר בראשית פרק כא פסוק י' וַתֹּאמֶר לְאַבְרָהָם גֵּרֶשׁ הָאֵמָה הַזֹּאת וְאֶת בְּנָהּ כִּי לֹא יִירָשׁ בֶּן הָאֵמָה הַזֹּאת עִם בְּנֵי עַם יִצְחָק;

“Then Sarah said to Avraham, ‘Drive out this handmaid and her son, for the son of this handmaid shall not inherit with my son, with Yitzchak’” (*Bereishit* 21:9).

Rashi explains that Yishmael would quarrel with Yitzchak about the inheritance, saying, “I am the firstborn and will, therefore, take a double portion.” They would go out to the field, and he would take his bow and shoot arrows at him, as it states, “*Like a madman who casts firebrand*” (*Mishlei* 26:18). He would then say:

“I am just playing” (Rashi, *Bereishit* 21:10). Maharal explains that the reason Sarah stressed “he won’t inherit” [the right to the Land of Israel] as the main reason why Yishmael must be expelled, is because the inheritance threatened to cause Yitzchak’s murder. What else is new?!

ספר בראשית פרק כא פסוק יא וירע הדבר מאד בעיני אברהם על אודת בנו:

“But the matter greatly displeased Abraham, concerning his son” (*Bereishit* 21:11).

Avraham was very reluctant to send away his son, but when Hashem validated Sarah’s assertion, he nevertheless, got up early to fulfill the difficult mitzvah:

ספר בראשית פרק כא פסוק יב ויאמר אלהים אל אברהם אל ירע בעיניך על הנער ועל אמתך כל אשר תאמר אליך שרה שמע בקולה כי ביצחק יקרא לך זרע:

“Then G-d said to Avraham, ‘Be not displeased concerning the lad and concerning your handmaid; whatever Sarah tells you, listen to her voice, for in Yitzchak will be called your seed’” (*Bereishit* 21:12).

This Torah verse gives a clue of how to solve the Middle East conflict and the war over the right to the Land of Israel. The Torah makes it clear that there is to be no “two-state solution” in the biblical land of Israel. The phrase “In Yitzchak, your seed will be called” implies that Hashem told Avraham, “My covenant, that I established with your seed; to give them the land of Israel... this promise pertains to Yitzchak [alone] (Rashbam, *Bereishit* 21:12). One of the little lights that October 7th ignited is that any residual public support for the establishment of a Palestinian state west of the Jordan River has disappeared (outside the fever swamps of the radical left). The onslaught from Gaza, which has been an independent Palestinian state since 2005, and the near-unanimous support the atrocities enjoyed among Palestinian Arabs in Judea and Samaria made clear that a Palestinian state is not a solution to anything. Rather, it is an existential threat to Israel no less severe than Iran’s nuclear weapons project. [Caroline Glick, Arutz 7, Israel National News, Nov 7, 2024.](#)

How do we Recognize Hashem’s Hand in Electing His World Leaders?

When I attempt to look at recent political events with G-d-colored classes, I’m amazed at the re-election as Presidents of both Benjamin Netanyahu with an open court case of accusations, and Donald Trump who recently was criminally convicted. With all the opposition prior to both presidents’ re-election, it just doesn’t make sense logically that they both became reelected as presidents! On top of this, the 78-year-old Trump is the oldest elected president in American history. Trump became the second president to be elected to a non-consecutive second term, 132 years after Grover Cleveland defeated Benjamin Harrison in the 1892 election; Trump, at the age of 78, is also the oldest person ever to be elected U.S. president. These circumstances seem to me to clearly show how none of these two men became presidents coincidentally nor due to their great popularity, as I have never heard of any president with more opposition than Donald Trump. When he became president for the first time in 2017, I even was asked to treat a Jewish woman in NY for her distress and anxiety due to Trump’s election. It is clearly the Hand of Hashem electing these men to positions of power to return the land of Israel to its rightful owners. Trump is well known for hosting the signing of the *Avraham Accords* in 2020, in which several Arab countries recognized Israel’s sovereignty over the Land of Israel without having to accept a future independent Palestinian state alongside it - the so-called two-state solution - previously a condition of Arab countries for such a regional deal. Trump has also repeatedly urged to Israel “finish the job” and destroy Hamas. Netanyahu has demonstrated bravery and strength in refusing to give in to world pressure of ending the war before its objectives have been procured, that is: permanent security. After decades of Israel’s tolerance of terrorism without responding with a strong hand,

under Netanyahu's government, the Israeli parliament has given its final approval to controversial legislation to expel family members of terrorists if they publicly supported or identified with the terrorist act or praised, sympathized with, or encouraged terrorism or terrorist organizations. The law passed 61-41 on November 7, 2024.

Why did Avimelech and his General Request a Peace Treaty After Yishmael's Expulsion?

After the expulsion of Yishmael and his mother, Hagar, Avimelech, the King of 'Palestine' and his general came to request to make a peace treaty with Avraham:

סֵפֶר בְּרֵאשִׁית פָּרָק כָּא פֶּסוּק כָּב וְיְהִי בְּעֵת הַהוּא וַיֹּאמֶר אֲבִימֶלֶךְ וּפִיכֹל שֵׁר צָבָאוֹ אֶל אַבְרָהָם לֵאמֹר אֱלֹהִים עִמָּךְ
בְּכָל אֲשֶׁר אַתָּה עֹשֶׂה: (כג) וְעַתָּה הַשְׁבַּעָה לִּי בְּאֱלֹהִים הַנָּה אִם תִּשְׁקַר לִי וּלְנִי וּלְנִי כִּחְסָד אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתִי עִמָּךְ
תַּעֲשֶׂה עִמָּדִי וְעַם הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר גָּרְתָה בָּהּ:

"Now it came to pass at that time, that Avimelech and Pichol his general said to Avraham, saying, 'G-d is with you in all that you do. Now, swear to me here by G-d, that you will not lie to me or to my son or to my grandson; according to the kindness that I have done with you, you shall do with me, and with the land wherein you have sojourned'" (*Bereishit 21:22-23*).

Why would the king of the land and his general ask a stranger to swear not to harm them? Why would they want to make a peace treaty with a mere sojourner? One answer is that when his neighbors saw Avraham's great cruelty in sending away to the wilderness – the woman lying in his bosom together with his firstborn son – with only a container of water and bread – they feared him lest he become angry with them and take revenge. They took counsel to precede the 'healing' to the 'wound,' by making a covenant with him. This is the reason it states, "and it was at this time..." (Meshech Chachmah, *Bereishit 21:22*). Another response is that when Avraham had sent away his firstborn son, and all his future became rooted in Yitzchak, it became clear to Avimelech that he is not just relating to Avraham as an individual person. Rather he is facing the seed of Avraham's entire future, as an entire people facing his people. He is aware of Hashem's promise to Avraham that would now be fulfilled through Yitzchak. Yishmael is no longer, and Avraham is at the end of his life, although Yitzchak is still swinging in his crib – with him the future of the entire people will rise (Rabbi Shimshon, Raphael Hirsch, *Bereishit 21:23*).

Israel's Conditions for Entering into a Peace Treaty with Other Nations

The very first Peace Treaty in the world is described in *Parashat Vaera*. A careful, in-depth reading of the Torah verses about this Peace Treaty teaches us important principles that pertain to current politics. After having taught the Torah Reading for the first day of Rosh Hashana for about two decades, Hashem revealed Ten of these principles to me, which I share with you below:

Biblical Peace Treaty Based on the *Brit* Between Avimelech and Avraham *Bereishit 21:22-30* The Peace Treaty must be:

1. Inspired by Experiencing the Strength and Gevurah of Israel to Act Harshly When Necessary

וַיְהִי בְּעֵת הַהוּא – "It was at that time" (verse 22)

When his neighbors saw Avraham's great cruelty in sending away to the wilderness – the woman lying in his bosom together with his firstborn son – with only a container of water and bread – they feared him lest he become angry with them and take revenge. They took counsel to precede the 'healing' to the 'wound,' by making a covenant with him. Therefore, it states, "and it was at this time..." (Meshech Chachmah, *Bereishit 21:22*).

2. Initiated by the Party Who Wants to Make a Covenant with Israel

וַיֹּאמֶר אַבְיִמֶלֶךְ וּפִיְחֹל גִּבּוֹרָאָיו אֶל אַבְרָהָם - "Avimelech and Pichol his general said to Avraham" (**verse 22**).

3. Prompted by Recognizing that G-d is with Israel

אֱלֹהִים עִמָּךְ בְּכֹל אֲשֶׁר אַתָּה עֹשֶׂה - "G-d is with you in all that you do" (**verse 22**).

4. Motivated by the Fear of Israel's Power ..." (verse 22).

(Meshech Chachmah, *Bereishit* 21:22).

G-D IS WITH YOU - Therefore I fear you, not because of your might and wealth. Therefore, I request that you swear to me (Sforno, *Bereishit* 21:22).

5. Acknowledging the Divine Promise that the Land of Israel Belongs to the People of Israel

הִנֵּה אֲנִי וְלִנְיָאֵי וְלִנְכְדֵי - "Now, swear to me here by G-d, that you will not lie to me or to my son or to my grandson..." (**verse 23**).

IT CAME TO PASS AT THIS TIME - when Sarah gave birth, the kings of the land said, "Surely G-d will fulfill His oath to Avraham as He said, 'To your seed, I have given this land from the river of Egypt...'" (*Bereishit* 15:18). Therefore, Avimelech requested of him "that you will not deal falsely with me, my offspring, or with my grandchild." Avimelech could not ask for more, for behold Hashem had promised Avraham, "But the fourth generation shall return to here" (*Bereishit* 15:16). That is, after the fourth generation of the Amorites, your children will return and conquer this land. Therefore, when Avimelech, the second came in the days of Yitzchak, he said; "Let us make a covenant between us, between our sons and yours" (*Ibid.* 26:28). He did not ask on behalf of their grandchildren, since it stated, "but the fourth generation will return here" (Chizkuni, *Bereishit* 21:22).

6. Believing in the G-d of Israel and the Truth of His Torah

Avimelech believed in the *Brit Bein Habetarim* (the Covenant between the Pieces), that the land of Israel was promised to Avraham's descendants (**Verse 23**).

7. Israel Must Not Allow the Partner in a Covenant to Sign it, as They Can't be Trusted to Keep Their Word

וַיֹּאמֶר אַבְרָהָם אֲנִי אֶשְׁבַּע - "Avraham said, 'I will swear'" (**Verse 24**).

Davkah (precisely) "I will swear" and not you, as I don't desire your swear (Be'er Mayin Chayim, *Bereishit* 21:24).

8. Required to Repair the Injustice They Have Afflicted Upon Israel Before Entering a Brit with Israel

סָפַר בְּרֵאשִׁית פְּרֹקַן כֹּא פְסוּקַן כֹּה וְהוֹכַח אַבְרָהָם אֶת אַבְיִמֶלֶךְ עַל אֲדוֹת בְּאֵר הַמַּיִם אֲשֶׁר גָּזְלוּ עַבְדֵי אַבְיִמֶלֶךְ: "Avraham contended with Avimelech about the well of water that the servants of Avimelech had forcibly seized" (**verse 25**). By rebuking Avimelech about the wells his servants had stolen, Avraham made it clear that the Brit is mutual, and both must keep their part. If one party breaks his promise, the other is exempt from fulfilling his part of the Brit. This is why David could conquer the Yibusi (descendants of Avimelech) since they broke the Brit first (Malbim, *Bereishit* 21:25).

9. Agreeing to Grant Israel's Rights

וַיֹּאמֶר כִּי אֶת שִׁבְעַת כְּבָשֶׁת תִּקַּח מִיָּדִי בַעֲבוּר תְּהִיָּה לִי לְעֵדָה כִּי חָפַרְתִּי אֶת הַבְּאֵר הַזֹּאת: "He said, 'For these seven ewe lambs you shall take from my hand so that it be to me for a witness that I dug this well'" (**Verse 30**). Avraham is saying these seven cattle and sheep are a sign that I have dug this well,

10. Israel Must Never Agree to Give Away Any Part of the Land of Israel Permanently Even for The Sake of 'Peace'

(Verse 30) Since Avraham was concerned that Avimelech's descendants would hold this oath eternal, he placed the ewes as proof that "I have dug this well - Tzion..." It is the way of someone who holds a house or a city as a guarantee as collateral for a long time to place a rock or engraved wood as proof that the collateral is only for a certain time. Afterward, it will return to become his. The seven sheep and cattle were a sign that the Brit with Avimelech would only last for seven generations until Avraham's children would conquer the land for his children. (Be'er Mayim Chayim, *Bereishit* 21:28). Full autonomy over Yerushalayim will thus eventually return to Avraham's descendants.