

CHAYEI SARAH (GENESIS 23:1-25:18)

A Torah Jew's Guide to 'Losing' Elections

2012 · Rabbi Yerachmiel Sepowitz

[Often my readers get upset when my Torah Talks touch on politics. If you are one of those readers, you may prefer to skip this week's message and read something from the Archives instead. Or, at least, skip to the end and read my last two paragraphs first.]

Abraham sent his servant Eliezer to Abraham's homeland to find a bride for Isaac. The local Canaanite women simply would not do. The future "Mrs. Isaac" needed to be righteous and kind. So Eliezer set off for the city of Nachor in search of a relative of Abraham who would be qualified to marry his son.

Eliezer asked G-d for a sign that would show him that he had found the right girl. Once he met Rebecca and saw the sign, he gave her valuable gifts. After giving her the gifts, he asked her who she was. Sure enough, she was a relative of Abraham and Isaac.

Why did he give her the gifts before asking her about her family? Why did he guess and take a chance like that? Why didn't he first inquire to see whether she was a relative?

The answer is that he didn't have to. He knew. He knew for a fact. He knew because G-d had showed him a miraculous sign. This was definitely the right girl. So he gave her the gifts.

(Interestingly, when Eliezer met Rebecca's family, he didn't tell them that he had given her the gifts without asking who she was. He assumed that they would not accept such a level of faith on his part. For more on this event, see "Do You REALLY Believe That?!")

It's nice to know definitively what is the right thing to do. Sometimes you do. Often you don't.

Many of my friends are depressed and despondent.

They have waited four years for the opportunity to vote President Obama out of the White House. They tried. And they failed. And they are depressed.

And they are wrong.

It will probably come as no surprise to my readers that I too voted against the President. And I had good reasons to do so.

I believe that the President is wrong on Israel. He is wrong for appeasing the enemies of Israel and America. He is wrong for apologizing for America. He is wrong for weakening defense. (The Iranians, the Russians, and the Chinese wanted America to continue to have a weak President. They got what they wanted.) He is wrong on socialized medicine. He is wrong on energy. He is wrong on same-sex marriage. He is wrong on destroying jobs by overtaxing and overregulating small and large business owners. He is wrong on illegal immigrants.

And now that he no longer needs to run for reelection, his radical agenda will probably get worse.

If you disagree with what I wrote above, you're not alone. More than half the voters in this country agree with you.

And that's why so many people are depressed. Slightly less than half the voters in the country feel that the majority have made a mistake.

I am not depressed. Disappointed? Most certainly. Apprehensive? Definitely. But not depressed.

Whenever I go to vote, I utter a prayer. I prayed this past Tuesday. What do you think I prayed for? Do you think I prayed for Obama to be defeated? It would be logical for me to recite such a prayer, would it not? Especially in view of all my reasons for voting against him, shouldn't I enlist G-d to assist in my campaign?

Actually, that was not my prayer. To recite such a prayer, I believe, would be arrogant. It would imply that I know, as a definitive fact, that Obama is bad for our country. I do believe that that is the case. But I don't know it as an absolutely incontrovertible fact. I'm not smart enough to tell G-d what to do.

What I prayed for on Tuesday was that G-d would insure that the right decisions will be made by the voters. I trust G-d to know better than I what is best.

Our job in life is to make the best decisions we can, based upon the information available to us. Sometimes we'll get it right, and sometimes we'll get it wrong.

There ARE certain absolutes in life. I KNOW that stealing is wrong. I know that it is wrong for two men to "marry" each other. I know that it is wrong to deprive a pre-born human being of the right to be born simply as a matter of convenience to his parents.

I know these things because G-d told me so. He told me so in the Torah. (No doubt, there are people who would ridicule my absolute certainty on this issue, just as Rebecca's family would question Eliezer's certitude. But that's okay. I'm willing to take G-d's Word for it.)

But there are other things that I think, and that I assume, and that I intuit. Sometimes I'll be right, and sometimes I'll be wrong.

I voted, based upon what I believe to be correct. Will Obama end up harming our country? I believe that he already has. But do I know for a fact that over time his election will do more harm than good?

America is bigger than Obama. And G-d is bigger than America.

King Solomon writes that *A king's heart is like streams of water in the hand of G-d; wherever he wishes, so He directs it.* (Proverbs, 21:1)

G-d directs a leader to do what G-d knows is best. Harry Truman and Richard Nixon were anti-Semitic in their personal lives. Yet Truman supported the establishment of the State of Israel, and Nixon approved vast and immediate arms shipments to Israel during the Yom Kippur War.

Yes, I still oppose much of Obama's agenda. Most Americans support the repeal of ObamaCare, and almost half the voters oppose much of what Obama hopes to accomplish. And I do hope that the House of Representatives will vigorously represent the interests of that constituency.

But the bottom line is that Barak Hussein Obama is the President of our great country, and he will, G-d willing, continue in that role for the next four years.

No political leader is a Messiah. I have never voted for a candidate whom I assumed was perfect and would totally meet our needs. A politician is a politician. They all have warts! They all say what they feel they need to say. You pick the guy who makes the most sense, and you pray for the best.

The Talmud says that one of the reasons that Queen Esther invited Haman, an enemy of the Jews, to her party was so that the Jews of the kingdom wouldn't become complacent. She didn't want them to say, "We have a sister in the palace. Esther will take care of everything." She wanted them to sweat a little. Let them turn their hearts toward G-d and pray for His assistance.

Here's the bottom line – Are you happy with the election results? Good. Pray to G-d that our President will do the right things. Are you disappointed with the election results? Good. Pray to G-d that our President will do the right things.

But don't be too specific in telling G-d what the right things are. He knows.

I pray that G-d will bless our President. I pray that He will watch over him and guide him and all of our government officials to make the right decisions for our country, Israel, and the world.

May G-d bless America.

Have a great Shabbos.

