

LECH LECHA (GENESIS 12:1-17:27)

Hamas and the Abraham Accords

2025 · Rabbi Yerachmiel Sepowitz

Who would ever think that Abraham would have anything to do with Hamas?

Full disclosure: This is a play on words. The Hebrew word *Hamas* and the similar sounding Arabic name (which is actually an acrostic) have nothing to do with each other. But it IS an amazing coincidence!!)

Abram (later known as Abraham) and Sarai (later known as Sarah) were a team.

While Abram reached out to the men, Sarai reached out to the women and together they ...*created souls in Haran* (Genesis, 12:5, as explained in Rashi's commentary) and led them away from idol worship. They amassed a large following of disciples who were brought to the belief in one G-d.

But there was a problem. Abram needed a successor. Abram and Sarai were childless; there was no heir to follow in Abram's footsteps in teaching the world about G-d and kindness and justice.

The problem appeared to be Sarai's: *Sarai was barren; she had no child*. (Ibid, 11:30) Our Sages interpret that second, apparently redundant phrase, *she had no child*, as meaning that she was anatomically incapable of bearing children.

Sarai made a decision. Abram needed to father a child. Sarai was incapable of accommodating that need. She turned to her Egyptian maidservant Hagar.

Sarai convinced Hagar what an honor it would be to be the second wife of Abram, and to enable him to bring into the world an heir who could carry on his teachings. Hagar agreed.

The plan worked. Sort of.

...*she conceived; and when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress was lowered in her esteem*. (Ibid, 16:4)

Hagar came to the conclusion that Sarai wasn't as righteous as everyone thought. "How righteous could she be?" Hagar reasoned. She's been married to Abram for decades and G-d never blessed her with children. I spend a little time with Abram and I'm pregnant!!"

As a result Hagar lost her respect for her mistress.

Sarai was distraught. Here she sacrificed her unique status as the one wife of Abram in order to allow him to have a child. And now she's being "dissed" by the person who was supposed to help in the fulfillment of this Mitzvah.

So whom did she blame? Her husband!

Sarai said to Abram, *"This injustice against me is due to you! I gave my maidservant to you... and when she saw that she had conceived, I became lowered in her esteem. Let G-d judge between me and you!"* (Ibid, verse 5)

This injustice against me... The key word here is חַמָּס – *Hamas*. It is often translated as violence, cruelty or injustice. (Perhaps it's no coincidence that the fiends in Gaza who perpetrated the indescribably inhuman deeds of October 7 against our people call themselves by the same name – *Hamas*!)

Sarai was almost accusing her husband of violence against her. "My *hamas* – this cruel outrageous injustice to me is because of you!!"

Isn't that a bit much? What was Hagar doing? Was she physically attacking her? What was the *hamas*? What was the violence?

Actually, it seems that Hagar wasn't the one who did the *hamas*. True, she had less esteem for Sarai than in the past. But violence? No.

Apparently the culprit was Abram.

Rashi explains what was bothering Sarai. The problem was that Abram didn't pray for her.

"This is YOUR fault," she said. You said to G-d, *'You have not given me offspring.'* (15:2)

"And then G-d responded by promising you offspring. So now you will have offspring. But what about ME? Why didn't you pray to G-d that we should BOTH be blessed with children? Now you will be a father but I won't be a mother! You should have prayed for me too. You have caused *hamas* to me!"

Rabbi Elazar Shach was bothered by Sarai's extreme language. *Hamas* is a terrible thing. In fact, we see that G-d said to Noah, *"The end of all flesh has come before Me, because the world is filled with hamas from them, and behold, I am going to destroy them from the earth."* (6:12)

Hamas is such a terribly insidious thing that it led to the destruction of the world. Even if Sarai was upset with her husband for not praying for her, isn't calling it *hamas* a bit beyond the pale?

Rabbi Shach explains that as a great prophetess, one whose level of prophecy even exceeded that of her husband, Sarai truly understood the power of prayer.

She understood that if one person has the power to help another and refrains from doing so, it is theft; it is injustice. Abram could have gotten that blessing for Sarai and he didn't. She basically called him a thief!

It's not just about prayer.

If I know that you need a favor, and I refrain from coming to your assistance, I am stealing from you. Whether it's help with a task, offering a ride, or sharing a kind word of encouragement, if I can give it to you, I SHOULD give it to you. And if I don't, I am, in effect, stealing from you.

But it's also about prayer.

True, we are not Abrams or Sarais, but we ARE their children. And G-d DOES listen to our prayers. And we need to pray for peace in Israel and healing for the sick and uplifting the broken-hearted. Maybe G-d won't grant my prayer today. But maybe He will. And if He doesn't today, He might do so tomorrow. We OWE it to our friends and our families and for the Nation of Israel to give them our best efforts to assist them, including praying for them.

So let's take our cue from the IDF. Let's make this a world where hamas cannot exist. Let's DESTROY *Hamas*!

Have a great Shabbos.

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