Before the purchase of Ma’arat HaMachpelah, the resting place of our Avot and Imahot, Avraham Avinu gives a speech to Bnei Chet:

גֵּר וְתוֹשָׁב אָנֹכִי עִמָּכֶם תְּנוּ לִי אֲחֻזַּת קֶבֶר עִמָּכֶם וְאֶקְבְּרָה מֵתִי מִלְּפָנָי.

“I am a stranger and a resident among you. Grant me a holding for a grave with you that I may bury my dead from before me” (Bereishit 23:4).

Rav Soloveitchik, coincidentally, a former RZA–Mizrachi Honorary President, explains that Avraham is making a fundamental statement about what it means to be a Jew.

“Avraham’s definition of his dual status, we believe, describes with profound accuracy the historical position of the Jew who resides in a predominantly non-Jewish society. He was a resident [תושב] like other inhabitants of Canaan, sharing with them a concern for the welfare of society, digging wells, and contributing to the progress of the country in loyalty to its government and institutions... However, there was another aspect, the spiritual, in which Avraham regarded himself as a stranger [גוי]. His identification and solidarity with his fellow citizens in their secular realm did not imply his readiness to relinquish any aspects of his religious uniqueness. His was a different faith and he was governed by perceptions, truths, and observances which set him apart from the larger faith community. In this regard, Avraham and his descendants would always remain ‘strangers.’”

This was true in Avraham’s time and remains true to this day. We live in America, and believe in contributing to wider society, being good citizens, and also in enjoying the many blessings this country has to offer. But we also have another identity, one that connects us to our Torah, to all Jews around the world, to the Land of Israel, and to our hopes that next year we will be in Yerushalayim. Throughout our lives, as committed religious Zionist Jews living in a modern world, we are constantly trying to balance these two identities.

As the incoming Executive Vice-President of the RZA, I am eager to strengthen the connection and build the bridge between our American Jewish community and the State of Israel. In our globally interconnected world, we have so many new opportunities to connect with the spirit and people of Israel. There is so much Torah and Jewish culture from Israel from which we can learn and be inspired, and vice-versa. Through this connection, through such ties, we will be continuing Avraham Avinu’s legacy of being both גוי and תושב.

Reflections of the Rav, pp. 169–177.

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