

Kinder Torah

Parashas Lech Lecha

The Chessed Pipeline

"Boys, I have a big mitzvah for you."
"Great Mr. Abraham! We love mitzvot!
What can we do?"

"I need a trench dug to connect this pool of water to my irrigation pipe. It will enable the water to flow from the pool down to my field. I will then be able to grow crops there. I am not able to dig the entire trench myself. Boys, your help in digging would be a big *chessed* (act of kindness) for me."

"Our pleasure, Mr. Abraham. You have given us a great mitzvah - making your land bloom. We want to see that pool of water bring blessing to your field."

"What are your names, boys?"

"My name is Avi."

"Mine is Chaim."

"Avi, by doing this mitzvah, you are emulating your namesake, Avraham Avinu."

"Really? In what way, Mr. Abraham?"

"Our *Avos* (forefathers) - Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov, changed the world. Their deeds activated powerful forces in heaven and on earth. They made a lasting impression on humanity, which is still felt to this day. Avraham Avinu was the paragon of *chessed*. His astounding acts of kindness created a pipeline (so to speak) which transported blessings from heaven to earth."

"How?"

"Rav Yerucham Levovitz, the Mashgiach of the Mirrer Yeshiva, begins his explanation of this point with the words of the verse 'Viheyi bracha (and you shall be a blessing) [Bereshis 12:2]'. The Medrash (Bereshis Rabba 39:11) instructs us to read the word *bracha* as *braycha* - a pool. A pool of water brings life to plants and animals. Life is a blessing, therefore the very essence of this pool - *braycha*, is blessing - *bracha*. On a bigger scale, Hashem is the source of all blessing. His desire is to bestow goodness upon the world. Therefore, He created life, and sustains it. When Avraham Avinu performed his colossal acts of *chessed*, he transformed the world. This power of bring blessings was transferred into his hands. He would pray for barren women, and they would give birth. Sick people would recover from his prayers. Anyone who did business with Avraham Avinu would prosper."

"Astounding."

"The Medrash relates that Hashem Himself fixed the *bracha* of "Magen Avraham" in the *shemoneh esray*. Then He placed it before His Own *bracha* of "mechaye mesim," to show that Avraham and his descendants would now dispense blessings in this world. He became the 'pipeline' that carries *chessed* down to this world."

"Fascinating."

"Rav Yerucham explains that the subject of the *shemoneh esray* is requests from Hashem - knowledge, *teshuva*, forgiveness, redemption, health, livelihood, etc. We fulfill our obligation by saying the first blessing with *kavannah* (proper concentra-

tion), even though we may not have *kavannah* for the last eighteen blessings. Avraham Avinu's blessing counts for all of the requests! Why? Because he is the pipeline - the transfer point of all blessings from heaven to earth."

"Mr. Abraham, it is really a pleasure to help you. We gain so much from your Divrei Torah. You said that Avraham Avinu's descendants also bring blessing. Is this still true?"

"It certainly is boys. Rav Mordechai Gifter zt"l, once told a story about his years in the Telshe Yeshiva in Lithuania. The *bochurim* would sometimes take walks in the countryside for relaxation and fresh air. Of course, they would discuss their Torah learning while they were walking. The local Lithuanian farmers would beg the *bochurim* to walk through their fields."

"Why?"

"They noticed an amazing phenomenon. The crops would grow better in the fields where the *bochurim* walked. The righteous descendants of Avraham Avinu still carry the power to bring blessing."



"Mr. Abraham, it is almost poetic. You asked us to do a *chessed* by helping to dig an irrigation pipe. Our *chessed* is literally bringing *bracha* to your field by drawing water from the *braycha*."

"As I said boys, by doing this mitzvah, you are emulating, Avraham Avinu. You are proving yourselves worthy descendants of his heritage."

Kinderlach . . .

Avraham Avinu was the first of the Avos. He laid the foundation of Hashem's avodah (service) in this world. His whole essence was chessed. Therefore Rav Yerucham concludes that chessed is the backbone of Avodas Hashem. It is not merely "extra credit" or a nice thing to do. Rather it is "step one." The Torah has many facets - judgment, truth, humility, etc. Each one is a world unto itself. However, they only exist to preserve chessed. For chessed is the pillar upon which the world is built. Therefore, we begin our Avodas Hashem with chessed. And as we rise up the ladder throughout our lives, each step is a higher madrayga (spiritual level) of chessed. Kinderlach, make your whole life a continuous flow of chessed. Be a braycha that brings bracha to everyone, everywhere, all of the time.

The Middle Path

Bris Ben Habesarim. Hashem instructed Avraham Avinu to take three calves, three goats, three rams, and cut them in half. What was the significance of this command? What did our holy forefather gain from it? The Malbim has a deep explanation, which touches the very heart of Avraham Avinu's ten tests.

The splitting of these three types of animals hints to the triumph of the *neschama* (soul) over the *guf* (body). Each animal represents a different force to be overcome. The calf is the force of imagination, which draws a person's thoughts out of the reality of serving Hashem, and into the fantasy world of throwing off the yoke of heaven. The calf is free. Unlike the ox that carries the load and pulls the plow, the calf bears no yoke. Avraham Avinu overcame that false "freedom" with unshakable *emunah*. The second animal is the goat, which runs on the mountains and deserts. This *koach* (force), if not put in its' place; will drive a person over mountains and deserts to amass wealth. Lastly, the ram has a strong body, which personifies the desire for food and other pleasures. Avraham Avinu had all of these forces under control.

How? He split the animals down the middle. Similarly, he took the middle path with these *kochos*. Each trait has its two extremes, both of which are bad for the person. The middle path is the best. The verse uses the word "*meshulash*," which can mean triangular. The triangle has three points - two extremes and a middle. Avraham Avinu split the triangle, taking the middle path between the two extremes. In this way, he showed us how a person can overcome all of his physical forces, and subjugate them to serve Hashem. Then he can serve The Almighty with all of his talents.

Kinderlach . . .

We are all like Avraham Avinu. Our mission in this world is to pass the tests that Hashem gives us. Each one is an opportunity to grow by overcoming the yetzer hara and using his strength to do good. Split him down the middle, kinderlach. Use him power in moderation, to serve Hashem with all of your kochos.

Parasha Questions

- Who was Malki Tsedek? (14:18 and Rashi)
- What did Avram give him and why? (14:20 and Rashi)
- What was Avram worried about? (Rashi 15:1)
- Why did Avram not split the bird at Bris-Ben-Habesarim? (Rashi 15:10)
- What is the punishment for not having a bris-mila? (17:14)
- How old was Yishmael when he had his bris-mila? (17:26)

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