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Lech Lecha

A PARSHA THOUGHT

Do I Really Love Hashem?



There's a question that's bothered me for as long as I can remember. The *parasha* starts off with Hashem instructing Avraham to leave his hometown and travel to an unbeknownst location that Hashem will show him. The very next *pasuk* states that Hashem informed Avraham that "I will make you into a great nation and make your name great." Rashi comments that this mission was for Avraham's benefit and pleasure.

I'm puzzled. Does Avraham *Avinu* really care about his name being great and the nation that may emanate from him? We are talking about Avraham *Avinu* – the first of our forefathers. He was someone whose greatness and excellence in every aspect of life is something that we can't even begin to fathom. In fact, Avraham proclaims about himself, "I am dust and ash (*Breishis* 18:27)." His humility is apparent. The question therefore begs: does Avraham really care about his own reputation and the nation that he may produce? Is that really his concern? Or is there something deeper going on? And why would this be his primary concern to the extent that Hashem "feels" the need so to speak to reassure him about it?



The psychologists out there may suggest that you clearly see from here even the holiest and humblest of people have a healthy sense of self and are concerned for their own reputation and the future they may

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THE RABBI WAS ASKED *ON THE PARASHA*

THIS WEEK WITH
RABBI YITZCHOK PREIS

Q: Rashi explains that the closing words of *Breishis* 12:2 as indicating that Hashem told Avrohom "The *brochos* (blessings) are placed in your hands; until now they were in My hands …from now on you can bless whomever you choose."

This implies that Avrohom was the first to have this capacity, but don't we find Noach giving *brochos* to Shem and Yefes in last week's *parasha*?

A: The Be'er Basodeh explains that Noach was not actually blessing his sons. Rather, he was articulating his prayer to Hashem that Hashem grant these *brochos*. Avrohom, on the other hand, was given the capacity to bestow *brochoh* as he saw fit, without having to ask Hashem to intervene.

It is worth noting that as the progeny of Avrohom, our

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THE RABBI WAS ASKED *ON THE PARASHA*

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culture is saturated with *brochoh*-giving. Even standard greetings tend to be *brochos*. "*Sholom*" is technically a "minor" name of G-d, reflecting on Hashem as the Source of all peace and harmony. As such, "*Sholom aleichem*" is a *brochoh* that "Hashem should be with, and provide peace to, you."

Something always bugged you about the upcoming parasha (or last week's)? Ask! Submit a question on the parasha by Monday at noon by emailing parasha@cincykollel.org. Questions will be selected to address at the discretion of the Rabbi who is answering that week. Questions may be edited for brevity/clarity.

A PARASHA THOUGHT

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produce – it's only normal and we're only human. I'd like to take a different route…

Let's digress for a short moment.

How does one actually love Hashem? Today many groups have many answers, but the Rambam in the third *mitzvah* clearly describes how one loves Hashem. *Ahavas* Hashem is when one thinks and contemplates about the *mitzvos*, Torah, and actions of Hashem until he ascertains them and derives pleasure from them. That's the *mitzvah*; but what is the barometer to determine if I am truly on the *derech*, or journey, to such a goal?

The Rambam continues with a simple parable. Just like when one person loves another he extols his virtues and calls others to love that person, so too when a person loves Hashem he desires to share his love of Hashem with others, including the fools, to know the truth about Hashem. When you genuinely love Hashem you share that love with others.



I heard in the name of Rav Yisroel Yaakov Fisher that the person who personified this *mitzvah* more than anyone else was none other than Avraham *Avinu*. His life's mission was to disseminate the knowledge of Hashem, his Torah, and His *mitzvos* throughout the world. His *Ahavas* Hashem was infectious, and that was the mantra of his life.

Perhaps we can suggest that the reason Hashem told Avraham that he would make him into a great nation was not because Avraham inherently cared about having a great nation. Rather the primary purpose of Hashem's promise to Avraham was to reassure him that He would enable him to bring his life's mission into fruition – sharing his *Ahavas* Hashem with the entire world. Despite all the challenges that he would face on his journey, Hashem would give him the wherewithal to accomplish his life's goal and any impediments on the journey wouldn't deter him from the finish line.

The lesson is simple yet profound. Act purely for the sake of Hashem and the mission will come to fruition.

TRACING OUR MINHAGIM

RABBI YEHUDAH LEVI

Jewish men are obliged to wear a small *tzitzis* garment all day (see *Iggros Moshe O.C.* 4:4), and accordingly it is traditional to train even very young children into this practice. Praying wrapped in a *tallis* (prayer shawl), however, is distinct in that in the majority of Ashkenazic communities only married men wear a *tallis*. Common practice notwithstanding, an argument can be made that *tallis* should be no different then any other *mitzvah* and worn by all men and perhaps even boys. As such, young men of Sefardic extraction, as well as from various Ashkenazic backgrounds, do in fact don a *tallis* in prayer well before marriage. (See *Sefer Chasidim* 456 for a possible indication of the merit of wearing a *tallis* as a bachelor.) The primary source limiting the *tallis* to married individuals is the illustrious Mahril's 14th century record of customs where he recalls this practice. The Mahril (Rabbi Yaakov Levi Moelin) finds allusion to the connection between wedding and *tzitzis* from the juxtaposition of the two topics in the Torah. Evidently, later sources offer kabbalistic insight in explanation of this custom. Whether an unmarried individual who wears a *tallis* should cover his head with it or not is a discussion of itself.