

# PUT G-D ON HOLD

*by Rabbi Dovid Green*

The Torah paints a scenario of an aged Abraham, sitting at the door of his tent, after just recently having performed his own circumcision. G-d appears to Abraham to "visit the sick". Three "men" whom we find out are really not men at all, but divine messengers of G-d, come to visit Abraham. "Guests! Please excuse me, G-d, while I attend to my guests. Please wait for me until I return." Abraham runs and welcomes the strangers and offers them some bread, water, and a place to rest for a while.

As soon as they accept, Abraham gets to work. Sarah bakes the bread; the lad (Yishmael) prepares the meat, and before you know it Abraham is personally standing over the guests serving them a sumptuous meal. Here is a 99 year old man who just performed a minor operation on himself running around at the hottest point of the day to serve guests who are perfect strangers! To top it all off he has the unmitigated audacity to walk away from the presence of the Creator and ask Him to wait until he returns!

It seems that Abraham understood that this is simply what G-d wanted him to do. There seems to be a prevailing concept of spirituality which depicts the "seeker" contemplating existence atop a Himalayan mountain. Separation from mundane day to day existence is prerequisite to living a spiritual life. This is far from the Jewish concept of spirituality. Abraham gave up spending private time with the Creator to perform kindness. These travellers may have been hungry, thirsty, or tired from their travels. Abraham's sole concern was their physical needs even to the exclusion of concerning for his own physical comfort. Physical existence is meant to use as a vehicle for spirituality. It was not meant to completely avoid. This "seeker" is selfish and self-centered in Jewish terms.

For example, relationships are the supreme opportunity to attain heights in spirituality. How often we are placed in family situations where a kind word can break the tension that sometimes hangs densely in the air. How often a day can be started on the right foot by a parent's or a spouse's kind word or gesture. Friendly words create an atmosphere which bonds. How far does a compliment go? People remember the compliments they were given even years ago! It's a very inexpensive way to elevate oneself, but very profound and effective. Small things matter. This is what we understand from Abraham's actions. There is nothing audacious about Abraham excusing himself from G-d's presence to go and do G-d's will. This is what we are here for. There will be plenty of time later to spend in G-d's presence.

Rabbi Paysach Krohn is an author, and a speaker, as well as a mohel, a ritual circumciser. He tells the following story of himself. Rabbi Krohn was in his early twenties when his father, a well-known mohel, passed on. It is understandably quite difficult to break into the field of circumcision, and Rabbi Krohn fell upon hard times, as he was the eldest supporting his large family. A friend of his family asked him to his office one day. At the appointment, the man handed him an envelope filled with a sizable sum of cash. Rabbi Krohn thankfully refused, saying that was not interested in charity. "This is a loan" replied the man. "When you're able you'll repay it." On that condition he accepted the loan. The day came when Rabbi Krohn was indeed able to repay the loan, and he returned to the office of the kind man. "No I won't accept repayment," came the reply. "I told you at first I didn't want charity," said Rabbi Krohn. "When I was young," began the man, "I also found myself in a similar situation. A good friend offered me a similar loan. When I came to pay him he also refused. He told me that I should hold the money until I find someone in my situation and I should "repay" the money to them. Now I must refuse to accept the money in return, but the day will come when you'll repay the money to someone who needs it." That is just what Rabbi Krohn did.

G-d loved and singled out the Patriarchs and Matriarchs of the Jewish religion. They were of the most exceptional people. We are blessed with the opportunity to know of them and emulate their deeds and attitudes. We connect ourselves to them by emulating them, and we thereby connect ourselves to the relationship they had with G-d. Kindness is the way of Abraham. It is the path to true spirituality. The Torah student understands that spirituality is not a result of transcending the physical world, but rather living as part of the world in an elevated fashion. What a privilege it is to be able to have a share in the heritage of such people.

Good Shabbos!

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