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*by Rabbi Dovid Green*

The question has been asked regarding the purpose of the Book of Genesis: Since the laws we need to follow begin in the Book of Exodus, the Torah really could have started there. However, had we started there, we would lack the knowledge of the deeds of the Forefathers, Avraham, Yitzchok, and Yaakov. From their deeds and words we learn the foundations of having a relationship with The Creator.

The Chofetz Chaim points out that many righteous men lived in the days of Avraham. We know that Shem, one of the sons of Noach lived then. The Torah refers to him as a "servant of the high G-d." Shem and his descendant Aiver founded a school for people who flocked there to learn the ways of serving G-d, among them Avraham's son and grandson. Why then, asks the Chofetz Chaim, did none of them establish a family or a nation the way Avraham did? The Chofetz Chaim distinguishes the key difference. Avraham's sole desire was to bring about awareness of G-d into the world. Avraham rebuked kings for the dishonesty of his subjects. "And he called in the name of G-d", is a commonly found phrase regarding Avraham. Avraham was G-d's public relations man, and he was completely given over to the ad campaign for his entire life. The others were faithful servants of G-d, but their efforts were concentrated on their personal service of G-d.

Rabbi Eliyahu Dessler explains the differences between Avraham and Noach. The Torah writes that Noach walked with G-d. Rashi quotes that Noach needed a help to support him. Noach walked with G-d. He lived with the awareness of G-d constantly. His awareness and resulting closeness to G-d preserved him in his righteousness. However, Noach needed the extrinsic stimulus of G-d's awareness to strengthen him. Noach cared for the animals in the ark, feeding them at all hours around the clock. He spent an entire year doing so. It is impossible to voluntarily do such work without love and compassion for the animals. However, his motivation was to give the animals their needs. The extrinsic motivator of the needs of the animals moved Noach to feed and care for them. No doubt Noach was an elevated person, but this is not the character trait of Avraham; the trait of kindness.

About Avraham the Torah states that he walked **before** G-d. this means that his motivation was intrinsic. His essence was simply to perform deeds of kindness. Avraham's whole person was to be a "giver". When most people give time or money to a cause or an individual, it's often because it hurts them to see the needs of the receiver. Giving takes away that pain. Sympathy and empathy are elevated levels, but they still fall short of the level of Avraham who gave with no further expectation

of receiving in return; even easing his pain over the needs of his fellow.

Avraham's efforts on behalf of mankind extended themselves to his children. He put great effort into raising his children to join "the family business." He was an exemplary model to follow, and his children accepted the responsibility to plant the seeds of belief and faith in G-d.

Rabbi Dessler concludes that every Jew has sparks of his forefather Avraham in him. It is possible for these sparks to ignite a fire of kindness which can counteract selfishness, hatred, and greed. May we all merit to be recognized as part of Avraham's family, by maintaining our connection with him through our deeds of kindness.

Good Shabbos!

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