

CLEAR GOAL

by Rabbi Pinchas Avruch

Avraham was greatly distressed by the prospect of banishing his son Yishmael from his home, but was commanded by G-d to follow the advice of Sarah, his wife, whose prophecy was superior to his own. "So Avraham awoke early in the morning, took bread and a skin of water and gave them to Hagar." (Beraishis/Genesis 21:14)

The Chofetz Chaim (1) notes that in this episode the Torah reveals to us the enthusiasm and alacrity of Avraham to fulfill the desire of G-d. His personal difficulty with the situation notwithstanding, he utilized great energy and self motivation, not to simply complete his mission, but to do so with a swiftness and eagerness that demonstrated a complete subscription to the Divine will.

Mesilas Yescharim (2) explains that man's ultimate goal is an eternity of deriving humanly incomprehensible pleasure from the splendor of G-d's Presence; toward that end we are given a lifetime to develop our G-d consciousness, to utilize the mitzvos (Divine commandments) to refine our spiritual palate so we may truly enjoy that ultimate pleasure.

Obviously, as mere mortals of flesh and blood, there is great challenge in dedicating a lifetime to striving for an intangible, incomprehensible pleasure. We find ourselves able to forsake inestimable hours of sleep and part with vast sums of money to develop the potential of our children; our image of what we desire our children to be is sufficiently tangible to negate the sense of sacrifice. But for the indefinable World to Come, such sacrifice is, for many, not simple, and, for many more, not happening.

But for our Patriarch Avraham, who independently discovered monotheism and whose spiritual mettle had already been forged by passing eight Divinely orchestrated challenges to his faith, G-d's love and splendor were tangibly evident. While the act of Yishmael's expulsion was extremely painful, his keen comprehension of the generation and fortification of his relationship with the Divine compelled him to grab this opportunity for growth.

As his grandchildren, our spiritual DNA contains the ability to follow suit. It may take a lifetime to become true connoisseurs of spirituality, but - as Avraham understood - that is a paltry investment for an eternity of ecstasy.

Have a Good Shabbos!

(1) Rabbi Yisrael Meir HaKohen Kagan of Radin; 1838-1933; author of basic works in Jewish law,

philosophy and ethics and renowned for his saintly qualities (2) "Path of the Just", one of the most popular Mussar (introspective Jewish self-improvement) works in Jewish literature; a moving, inspiring work describing how a thoughtful Jew may climb the ladder of purification until he attains the level of holiness; authored by Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzatto, 1707-1746 of Padua, Italy, and Amsterdam

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