

SHARE THE SHARING

by Rabbi Yisroel Ciner

This week we read the parsha of Vayera. Avrohom was sitting by the entrance to his tent fervently hoping for some passersby. Seeing how badly Avrohom wanted the opportunity to perform chessed [acts of kindness], Hashem sent three angels in the guise of men.

The Talmud [Bava Metzia 86B] reveals how every aspect of Avrohom's chessed reverberated through time. It was taught in the yeshiva of Rabi Yishmael: In the merit of the butter and milk that Avrohom served the angels, Bnei Yisroel [the Children of Israel] merited the manna from heaven. In the merit of Avrohom standing by them to attend to their needs, Bnei Yisroel merited the clouds of glory that accompanied them throughout the Midbar [wilderness]. In the merit of the water that was brought to them, Bnei Yisroel merited the spring of water that flowed from the rock.

The B'er Yosef asks an interesting question. We know that Avrohom's life was replete with chessed. If so, why was this particular encounter with its accompanying acts of chessed singled out as being the cause of Hashem's miraculous providence in the wilderness?

He explains that the other acts of chessed performed by Avrohom were within the parameters of a person's normal ability. However, this time Avrohom went far beyond the bounds of natural behavior.

He was in a debilitated state, a mere three days after his bris milah [circumcision] and yet he was sitting outside during an incredibly hot day hoping for guests. When he saw them he ran all the way to them, humbled himself by bowing to them, urged them to come to his house and served them a lavish meal. The happiness he felt in sharing what he had with others outweighed all of the pain that he was in.

By his breaking the bounds of normal, natural behavior, his descendants merited Hashem's supernatural supervision.

Avrohom's desire to share became an intrinsic part of the spiritual DNA that was passed down to his descendants. So much so that the Sages taught that a person who is not a gomel chessed [one who acts kindly by looking to help others] is suspected to not be from the descendants of Avrohom Avinu [the Forefather, Avrohom].

This middah [attribute] must be so deeply ingrained that we must be willing to share even our sharing...

Rav Yehonasan Eibeshitz, zt"l, married the daughter of a wealthy man and received three thousand gold coins as a dowry. After the marriage, he and his chevrusa {study partner} continued with their learning.

The gentiles of that city, in order to antagonize the Jews, built a church right across from the Beis Hamedrash {Torah Study Hall}. All were very upset, but Rav Yehonasan Eibeshitz's chevrusa, who was a very passionate person, decided to take matters into his own hands. At midnight, he climbed up to the roof and broke the cross. On the way down however, he was caught and incarcerated.

None of the Jews were aware of what had transpired and thought the man had simply gone missing. Search parties were organized but they all returned empty-handed. Meanwhile, the guard who worked at the church secretly approached one of the Jewish leaders, told him what had happened and informed him that the priest had decided that he would be burnt to death. This guard knew of a secret passage leading out of the cell and said that for three thousand gold coins he'd help him escape.

People were immediately sent out to try to raise this tremendous sum. When Rav Yehonasan Eibeshitz heard about his chevrusa's plight he didn't waste a second. He immediately went home, took out the three thousand gold coins he'd received as his dowry and delivered it to the guard. The guard helped the man escape and he was quickly sent to another town.

When the collectors approached Rav Yehonasan Eibeshitz for a contribution, he told them that he'd already taken care of it and the man was free. A disagreement ensued with the collectors feeling that Rav Yehonasan should accept the money that had already been collected in order to give those contributors a share in the mitzvah {commandment} of chesed. Rav Yehonasan insisted that he'd already taken care of it and they should return the money that had been collected.

With the news of the escape came suspicion that this guard had been involved. The priest decided that the fate of the Jew should now befall this guard. The guard caught wind of this decision and decided to escape. Needing a safe place to store his money and remembering the righteousness of Rav Yehonasan, he brought all of his wealth over to Rav Yehonasan's house. Rav Yehonasan wasn't there so the guard told his wife the entire story, not knowing that she had been totally unaware of all that had transpired.

"I'm returning the three thousand gold coins as a gift," he told her, "and I'm entrusting you with the rest of my fortune. I know it's safe by you and your husband and that it will be returned immediately upon my return. If I don't return, I've seen that your husband knows how to use money for worthwhile causes."

As he was running from the town, he was caught and killed and the entire fortune, in addition to the original three thousand gold coins, now belonged to Rav Yehonasan.

When Rav Yehonasan returned, his wife began to tell him how Hashem had paid back his kindness

manifold. To her shock, instead of feeling appreciation, Rav Yehonasan began to cry bitter tears. "My reward being given immediately in this world is a clear sign that my mitzvah was rejected. Otherwise, the reward would have waited for the World to Come."

Rav Yehonasan decided to fast for three days and then to make a sha'alos chalome [a kabbalic means of asking in a dream why certain things happened]. He was told that his mitzvah was 'returned' because he wasn't willing to share it with others...

The descendants of Avrohom have to be willing to share even their sharing...

Good Shabbos,
Yisroel Ciner

This parsha-insights is dedicated to the memory and merit of Yisroel Shmuel ben Yaakov Yitzchak, z"l, an incredibly strong person whom I had the pleasure of meeting and getting to know through parsha-insights. In the sadness of our loss we can only lift up our hands and accept the will of Hashem.

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