

THE PURPOSE OF CREATION PART VI

by Rabbi Aron Tendler

Combining Family and Business

Avraham was the oldest of three brothers. According to the Medresh he first attempted to share his newly found awareness and understanding of monotheism with his immediate family.

At first his father Terach was antagonistic, but in the end "did Teshuva" and accepted the basic tenets of his son's teachings.

Haran, Avraham's middle brother, was attracted to Avraham's assertions and insights but would not oppose the religious and societal norms with which he had been raised. In the end, his indecisiveness cost him his life.

His three children, Sara, Lot, and Milkah survived Haran. Sara fully embraced the teachings of her uncle Avraham and became his life's partner. Lot followed Avraham for many years but in the end deviated from Avraham's beliefs. He realized that he would not be Avraham's designated heir, and would not accept a lesser position. Milkah married her uncle Nachor, Avraham's youngest brother. Nachor totally rejected Avraham's beliefs and devoted his life to undermining Avraham's mission. In the end, he bequeathed a legacy of hatred and opposition to his son Bisuel, grandson Lavan, and his great-great grandson Bilam.

What would have been if Avraham had been successful in influencing his two siblings to accept monotheism and its attendant obligations?

Had Haran and Nachor accepted Avraham's teachings all of history would have been different. Haran would not have died young. Instead, Sara and Lot would have had their father's support in making the changes demanded by Avraham's beliefs in monotheism. Sara would have still married Avraham and raised Yitzchak. It may also have been that Avraham would have never married Hagar. Instead, Avraham would have married one of his other grand nieces rather than take an additional wife from outside the family.

When it came time for Yitzchak to marry, the obvious choice would have been, as it was, Nachor's daughters and grand daughters. However, the difference would have been extreme. Nachor, rather than a nemesis and adversary to Avraham would have been a supportive partner. It does not mean

that he, Bisuel, Lavan, and Bilam would have been Jewish. It does mean that they would have willfully contributed to the eventual redemption of the world.

As we know, Nachor's and Haran's contributions were mostly against their wills. Lot becomes the seemingly unwitting progenitor of Dovid Hamelech while Nachor, through the offices of Bisuel and Lavan, reluctantly releases Rivkah, Rachel, and Leah into the genetic pool of the Jewish people. Had they joined Avraham and Sarah early on, destiny would have been amazingly altered.

How do we know that there was even a chance for Avraham to succeed with his immediate family and specifically his two brothers?

The Medresh regarding Terach describes him as exceptionally capable and talented. He was seen as the distillation of the capabilities of the nine generations that preceded him, from the time of Noach and the Mabul. It stands to reason that he exerted great influence over his sons. As the respected right-hand of Nimrod or the successful merchant of idols and artifacts, Terach was a very dominant figure in the lives of his sons. The Medresh, although very critical of Terach (see Rashi 11:31) suggests that he did repent at the end of his life. That means that it was possible for Avraham to have influenced his immediate family. It didn't only have to be strangers and acquaintances that became the "souls that they had made in Charan."

Historically, our greatest enemies have been the children of Eisav and Yishmael. Both are descendents of Avraham and our "mishpacha." Had Avraham's family joined him in changing the world there may never have been a Yishmael. Had Nachor joined Avraham in his quest for G-d and meaning the likes of Bisuel, Lavan and the evil Bilam would have never attempted to destroy us in our infancy. Instead, the strength and determination that powered their evil machinations might have been turned to the benefit of the Jewish nation and the world.

More so would have been the affect their support would have had on Eisav. Within the family of Yitzchak and Rivkah Eisav was the odd man out. His strengths were not those of his twin brother Yakov. He needed a supportive setting that would have allowed him to explore the limits of his physicality in a responsible fashion. Had he had the role models of Nachor, Bisuel and Lavan, he might have turned out much differently. Just as they would have been Avraham's supporters, subjugating their individual talents to further Avraham's and G-d's goals, so too Eisav would have embraced his designation as the strong hands supporting the voice of Yakov.

More so than that would have been the combined qualities of Bilam and Moshe. Had Bilam been raised in a family devoted to the advancement of humanity's obligations to their Creator and to His chosen people - the children of Avraham - Bilam would have devoted himself to the same. It would have meant that both the Jews and the non-Jews would have been gifted with a figure of sanctity and prophecy. It would have meant that the non-Jewish world would have the means for preparing themselves to accept G-d's word as taught to them through Moshe and the Bnai Yisroel. It would have meant that Mattan Torah would have ushered in the Messianic era.

However, it didn't happen. Terach influenced his sons away from G-d. Avraham was unsuccessful in transforming his two brothers. Lot and Milka took torturously circuitous routes in contributing their potential to the future redemption of the world. Bisuel died an evil man. Lavan earned the reputation of our greatest enemy ever. And Billam almost succeeded in destroying us both spiritually and morally.

Which brings us to Eisav. Eisav was the wild-card in all of this. Regardless of the failure of Avraham's two siblings, the world still had a chance. Eisav was born with the potential to physically dominate the world! Eisav was born into the perfect world of Yitzchak and Rivkah. Eisav was born as the older twin of Yakov. Why a twin? Because nothing is as powerful as the bond between twins. They read each other's minds. They talk their own language. They finish each other's sentences. Yet they are distinct and individual. They live their own lives making their own mistakes and deserving credit for their own successes.

Eisav's potential was so great that the Saatan mistook him instead of Yakov for the source of Isrel's spirituality. (see Sefer Haparshios) Had he been inspired to extend his abilities in support of blessing ("And the nations of the world will be blessed through you...") the Lavan's and Billam's of the world could have never harmed us.

We know that Chesed (kindness) should start at home. Avraham attempted to do so, but his family was not interested. The question we end with this Shabbos is, If Yakov as Eisav's twin was in the best position to influence him, did Yakov ever attempt to do so? If yes, where and when? If not, what were his consequences?

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