

RABBI FRAND ON PARSHAS LECH LECHA

by Rabbi Yissocher Frand

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape # 522, Calling Avraham, Avrum. Good Shabbos!

Avraham Received The Keys To All Blessings

At the beginning of the Parsha, Hashem promises Avram: "I will make you into a great nation; I will bless you, and I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing (heyey bracha)" [Bereishis 12:2].

Rashi comments that the words "heyey bracha" mean: "the blessings are put in your hand." In other words, since he was already promised that G-d will bless him, what do the words "heyey bracha" add? Until now, blessings were in the Hand of G-d. He blessed Adam. He blessed Noach. He blessed Avram. However, the words "heyey bracha" add the ability to bless. From now on, you -- Avram -- will bless whomever you wish.

Hashem thus invested in Avram an unparalleled power. The blessings all belong to him! The etymology of the word bracha [blessing] is related to the word bereicha [a pool or reservoir]. "Baruch Ata" does NOT mean: "Blessed art Thou." It means: "You are the source (i.e. - reservoir) of blessing."

G-d is telling Avram that he will now become the source of blessing. If someone in this world wants blessing, Avram is the address to which he must direct himself. It is as if G-d handed over the keys to the storehouse of blessing to Avram and put him in charge of the entire inventory.

Rashi continues along the same lines in interpreting the phrase "And through you will be blessed all the families of the earth." [Bereishis 12:3].

"There are many aggadic interpretations of this phrase, and the following is its simple meaning: A man says to his son, 'Be like Avraham.' Similarly, every instance of the phrase 'they will be blessed through you' in Scripture has this meaning. And the following proves that this is so: 'By you will Israel bless, saying, 'May G-d make you like Ephraim and like Manasseh.' [Bereishis 48:20]"

In other words, it will be so self evident that Avraham is the source of blessing in the world that the biggest blessing a person will be able to give his neighbor is "You should be like Avraham." This is the epitome of blessing.

The story is told that in Radin the Gentiles used to ask the Chofetz Chaim to walk over their fields or touch their cows. Although, to put in mildly, Gentiles in Poland generally did not think much of the Jews, they nevertheless recognized that the Chofetz Chaim was a great holy man and that his footsteps would bring prosperity to their fields. They were convinced that his touch would bring increased milk supply to their cows.

We must ask, how can the Almighty have so much confidence in Avram, to literally "turn over the keys of the warehouse of blessing" to him? How can He give such unprecedented power to Avram? Might he not hoard it? Might he not misuse it? Might he not abuse it? There is a well-known expression, "Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts, absolutely." There is no greater "power" than being the source of all blessing in the world. It certainly had the potential to corrupt. Why was the Almighty so confident that this power would not corrupt Avraham?

The answer lies in the expression "Give Emes to Yakov; Chessed to Avraham." [Micha 7:20] The Almighty knew that Avraham's Chessed [Kindness] was akin to His Own. Just as He is non-corruptible and does "good" simply because He is a 'Metiv' [doer of good], so too it was with Avraham.

It is inconceivable to think of Him as being stingy, not wanting to give blessing. After all, He is the source of all favors. In a human form, Avraham Avinu is the source of Chessed. The Almighty did not have to worry that he will take it all for himself or misuse it. Avraham was the ultimate master of kindness. He was the human representative of the Master of the World who is the ultimate Doer of Good.

There is a lesson here for all of us. G-d decides how much he is going to shower on each person -- in terms of wealth, in terms of health, wisdom, power, talent and all forms of Heavenly Blessings. It stands to reason that if G-d is going to invest extraordinary blessing in a person, He will invest in that person when He has a measure of confidence in that person. G-d wants to know that the person will know how to use these blessings correctly.

Chazal state that before a child is born, an Angel brings the drop before the Almighty and asks what type of attributes to bestow upon this future person: Strong or weak; wise or foolish; rich or poor?

I once heard that it makes sense to determine "Strong or weak" before the child is created, because a "strong" person cannot be given the body of a "ninety pound weakling." Likewise "wise or foolish" makes sense. The Almighty needs to know ahead of time whether the person will be given a brain with a 140 IQ or one with a 75 IQ.

But why is it necessary to know ahead of time whether the person will be "rich or poor"? The various physical attributes that go into making a person do not correlate with the size of his bank account. Why does the Angel have to know "rich or poor" prior to "equipping" this person in the pre-natal creative phase?

The answer is that the Angel needs to know whether to equip him with a Lev Tov [a good heart] or not. A person who G-d will make into a wealthy person needs to be given the right heart, to properly dispense that wealth and make use of that wealth in a fashion that meets Divine Approval.

If we want to merit blessings, the best way is to demonstrate to G-d -- up front - that we will know what to do with those blessings. We need to prove we are a "safe bet". We need to demonstrate that we will treat the blessings properly.

The best way to merit becoming a dispenser of blessing is to be the type of Baal Chessed that was characteristic of Avraham Avinu.

This write-up was adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tape series on the weekly Torah portion. The complete list of halachic topics covered in this series for Parshas Lech Lecha are provided below:

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- Tape # 166 - The Childless Couple in Halacha
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