

CHAYUS

A Shabbos Stimulus

✧ THE EDA AND DAVID SCHOTTENSTEIN EDITION ✧

In honor of our parents, Tuvia and Lea Schottenstein and Rabbi Yisroel and Chana Sirota

Erev Shabbos Parshas Lech Lecha 5781, October 30, 2020

ערב שבת פרשת לך לך, י"ב חשוון, תשפ"א

✧ כתר שם טוב

PORTIONS OF LIGHT

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Growth Through Facing Evil

How can the Divine Presence maintain a state of perfect unity while simultaneously encompassing everything—including the conflicting extremes of good and evil?

The truth is that evil serves goodness. For example, when a righteous person witnesses evil, he rejoices that he is not an evildoer. The evil thereby brings him to a greater appreciation for his life of Divinity, to the extent that we can almost say it is elevated through his sacred delight.

When a soul of *atzilut* (the loftiest of the spiritual realms) descends into this world and sees humans belittling the honor of the King of the universe, it is grieved at the degradation, but it is subsequently delighted that it is not counted among such people.

G-d said to Avram (Genesis 12:1)—the Jewish soul. *Go from your land*—from *atzilut* to *beriah* (the next

of the spiritual realms). *From your birthplace*—from *beriah* to *yetzirah*. *From your father's house*—from *yetzirah* to *asiyah* (this physical world), which is *the land that I will show you*—where I will show you the deeds of mortals who belittle My honor.

Avram went as G-d said to him...and there was hunger in the land (Ibid., verses 4 and 10), meaning that he observed the people's lack of belief in G-d. *Avram descended to Egypt [Mitzrayim]* (Ibid., v. 10), meaning that he was pained [*meitzar*]. *Avram ascended from Egypt* (Ibid., 13:1), experiencing far greater delight in his Divine service by contemplating his good fortune at not being like them.

Focus: Even negative experiences are Divinely ordained. Don't wallow in dismay; turn every setback into a catalyst for a more meaningful tomorrow.

✧ גאולה

GEULAH

Yalkut Moshiah uGeulah al HaTorah

Translated by Yaakov Paley

When G-d is Your Shield

When Avraham fought against four mighty kings and their armies, he was under complete divine protection, so that no one could possibly harm him. G-d was his shield at that time, as G-d told him, "*Fear not, Avram, I am your shield*" (15:1). This state was granted to him so that he could rescue his nephew, Lot, whose soul contained the origins of his righteous descendant, Rus, the ancestress of Dovid *HaMelech*. G-d also served as the shield of Dovid, as he stated, "*You, G-d, are a*

shield for me" (*Tehillim* 3:4), ensuring that no evil could befall him. When we recite the blessings after reading the *Haftorah*, we conclude with *Magein David* ("Blessed are You, G-d, the Shield of Dovid"). For at the conclusion – the final redemption – Moshiah ben Dovid will bring G-d into the world to the extent that G-d will be our permanent shield, so that no sin or evil could ever affect us again.

Pri Tzaddik

STUDY CYCLE FOR SHABBOS DAY

Chumash

Lech Lecha, 7th reading: Ahead of G-d's promise to Avraham and Sarai that they would bear a son who would be their true legacy, G-d informs Avraham of the Covenant of circumcision, and instructs Sarai to change her name (identity) to Sarah. Avraham circumcizes himself, his other son Yishmael and all male servants of his household.

Tanya

Igeres HaKodesh #27: The Tzaddik's involvement in this world, even after his physical passing, it to a greater degree than in his lifetime. This is not only true with regard to spiritual matters, but even worldly affairs.

Rambam

Zmanim, Hilchos Shabbos Ch. 6 — Non-Jewish Work on Shabbos: Generally, a non-Jew is not allowed to do work for a Jew on Shabbos, nor are we allowed to benefit from such work. There are, however, specific details which would allow it. Primarily, if he is working for himself. Various situations which fall into these categories.

GATE OF TRUST

Understanding Your Wealth

If a person relies on his abundance of wealth, it will be removed from him and left to someone else. As the verse says (Job 27:19): A rich man lies down with his wealth intact, he opens his eyes and it is no longer his... Alternatively, even if the riches themselves are not removed from him, his ability to enjoy the wealth will be held back from him by G-d. As the wise man, King Solomon said (Ecclesiastes 6:2): G-d gives him no power to eat of it... It is possible that his money will be the cause of his misfortune, as well as the cause of the destruction of his soul. As the verse says (Ecclesiastes 5:12): There is a sickening evil that I have seen under the sun—riches hoarded by their owner, to his own misfortune...

Commentary: There are three possibilities of what might happen to a person who relies solely on his wealth: 1) He might lose it; 2) even if he retains it, he will not be able to enjoy it; 3) not only is he not able to enjoy his wealth, but the wealth itself could cause bad things to befall him.

Wealth is often a reason for arrogance and a feeling of superiority, which leads to sinful acts and betraying G-d. As the verse states, *And He will add to your silver and gold, then your heart will become arrogant and you will forget the L-rd, your G-d* (Deuteronomy 8:13-14; *Pat Lechem*).

The Midrash says, "Three great gifts were created, and if a person merits any one of them, he receives the delight of the entire world. If he merits wisdom, he merits it all; if he merits strength, he merits it all; and if he merits wealth, he merits it all. When does this apply? When he sees it as a gift from heaven that is bestowed

through the power of the Torah; however, human strength and wealth are valueless..." (*Midrash Rabbah, Numbers 22:7*).

There is nothing to boast about for having wisdom, wealth, and strength in and of themselves, because when these gifts (are viewed as) coming from a source other than G-d, they will eventually cease. However, if the recipient sees them as a gift from G-d and as tools to serve Him, then there is, indeed, something to boast about (*Or Hatorah, Nach II, p. 877*).

The first spiritual advantage of *bitachon* is that it causes the person to be relaxed. A person who relies on other people or his own talents or wealth always has to worry that his success will not last.

וְאֶבְרַכְהָ מְבַרְכֶיךָ וּמְקַלְלֶיךָ אָאֵר

“And I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse...” (Lech Lecha, 12:3)

Driving Question 1: Later on, when Yitzchak is blessing his son Ya'akov, the order in which the blessing is mentioned is switched (“Those who bless you **will be blessed**.”). Why is it different from the order in which it is brought here “**And I will bless** those who bless you”, G-d’s blessing first?

Driving Question 2: Why is the order of blessings and curses different? (By the blessing, G-d’s blessing is mentioned at the outset (“**And I will bless** those who bless you”). In contrast, by the curses it is the reverse, G-d’s curse following that of a human being.)

Central Point: Avraham embodied the character trait of Chesed — kindness. In the world of kindness — giving in abundance and without restraint — G-d’s reciprocal blessing is bestowed on the giver of a blessing upon merely planning to do so, before it even happens. Yitzchak, in contrast, embodied the character trait of Gevurah - restraint, discipline. In the world of Gevurah, the blessing must first be given, and only then does G-d bless that individual in return.

In this verse, G-d promised Avraham that He will bless those who bless him, and, conversely, the one who curses Avraham, will be cursed.

Interestingly though, in Parshas Toldos¹, when Yitzchak blesses Ya'akov the blessings appear in the reverse order: “And those who bless you shall be blessed (וּמְבַרְכֶיךָ בָּרוּךְ).” Although on the surface they both seem identical, there is a subtle, yet significant difference in the order of how this blessing appears.

In our Parsha, where G-d blesses Avraham, first G-d guarantees His own blessing (“I will bless those...”) followed by a clarification of whom will be blessed (“who bless you”). In contrast, by Yitzchak’s blessings of Ya'akov, first he mentions the blessing of the individual (“those who bless you”) and then he mentions G-d’s response (“shall be blessed”).

[Upon closer scrutiny we find this same difference in our own Parsha in the way the blessings’ and the curses’ consequences are positioned; they are not in the same sequence.

When it comes to the blessings, “**I will bless** those that bless you” - G-d’s blessing is mentioned immediately at the outset. When mentioning the curses, however, the Torah switches the order and says, “the one who curses you, **I will curse**” - first comes the individual’s cursing of Avraham and then followed by G-d’s reciprocal response.

Clearly, the language is extremely precise and the order intentional.]

In resolution: In Avraham’s context (our Parsha), the words “I will bless those who bless you” indicate that G-d’s blessing comes even *before* the actual blessing took place. The moment a person makes a decision to give a blessing, G-d already reciprocates proactively with a blessing. Thus, G-d’s blessing is mentioned at the very outset.

Whereas, by Yitzchak’s blessings to his son, the words “and those who bless you shall be blessed” imply that first the giver delivers his blessing and only then is that individual bestowed with G-d’s blessing in response.

Why is this so?

Avraham corresponds to the character trait of Chesed - Kindness². The hallmark feature of Chesed, and subsequently a prime feature of Avraham’s character and life, is giving and giving without restraint. It therefore follows that G-d promises Avraham the blessing of blessings in a manner that fits his Middah - character trait: “I will bless those that bless you,” even before the blessing is given, G-d gives His blessing.³

2. Pardes Rimonim (22:4), in the name of Sefer Habahir, states: The divine attribute of kindness (Chessed) said before G-d, “All the days of Avraham’s life, I did not need to do my role, since he is doing it on my behalf”.

3. In the book of Micah, 7:18, G-d is called a G-d who “desires loving kindness”. This falls in line with the idea of giving blessing to those who have merely had the intention of giving a blessing.

[When it comes to cursing, however, it is clear that G-d will not punish someone who only intends to curse but rather will wait until the actual curse has been delivered.]

Yitzchak, on the other hand, corresponds to the character trait of Gevurah - restraint and discipline. The hallmark feature of Gevurah and subsequently a prime feature of Yitzchak's character and life, is judgment and a measured response. It therefore follows that when

Yitzchak bestows a blessing on his son, it is in a manner that befits his Middah - character trait; "Those that bless you will be blessed," first you give the blessing and then you will receive one in return⁴.

(Adapted from Likkutei Levi Yitzchak, Ho'oros on Zohar. Shemos - Devarim, page 372.)

4. Yalkut Levi Yitzchak Al HaTorah, Vol. 1, Siman 83

פרשת השבוע

PARSHA INSIGHT

By: **Rabbi Moshe Wisnefsky**

From: **Daily Wisdom #3**

The Foundation of Jewish Education

Abraham said to G-d, "If only Ishmael would live in awe of You." (17:18)

Ishmael was born under natural circumstances, whereas Isaac's birth was miraculous. Secondly, Ishmael was circumcised at an age at which he could comprehend the significance of the act, whereas Isaac was circumcised as an infant, before his mind could grasp its importance.

Ishmael's birth and spiritual development followed a natural and logical order. His connection to G-d hinged on his own understanding. Isaac's birth and spiritual development, in contrast, reflect the fact that his bond to G-d was immutable, transcending nature and reason.

G-d therefore told Abraham that Isaac, not Ishmael, would be the forebear of the Jewish people.

Isaac's early life encapsulates the unique, eternal, and unalterable bond between G-d and the Jewish people.

Isaac's birth and upbringing serve as the model for Jewish education. A Jewish child should be raised from birth to live a G-dly, spiritual life. We must not wait idly for the children to grow up, hoping that they develop a commitment to Judaism based on their own understanding. As Isaac's life teaches us, the Jewish people's connection to G-d is entirely supra-natural and not bound by the limitations of human intellect.

Likkutei Sichot, vol. 1, pp. 18-22

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