

Creative Chessed

"How was your day at school, Avi?"
"Great, Abba. We have an interesting homework assignment today."

"What is it?"

"We have to prepare a short talk about the good deeds of the person after whom we were named."

"That should be easy for you, Avi. You were named after Avraham Avinu, who loved doing chessed (acts of loving kindness)."

"Perhaps I can give a deeper explanation of that, Abba."

"Very good, Avi. Let's take an example. What would you do if an *oni* (poor person) came to you, starving, asking for food?"

"I would feed him."

"Good. That is called *rachmonus* (mercy). You have compassion on one who is suffering."

"Avraham Avinu had *rachmonus*."

"True, Avi. However, he had much more than that."

"What do you mean, Abba?"

"An *oni* asks for help. Avraham Avinu gave to those who did not even ask for help."

"That is a higher *madrayga* (spiritual level). What did he give them?"

"*Ruchnius* (spirituality) and *gashmius* (physical comforts). He gave them food, drink, lodgings, and escort. More importantly, he taught them to bless and thank Hashem for the good that they received."

"I see. I still sense that there was something more to his acts of chessed."

"You have a 'sixth sense', Avi. Avraham Avinu was 'plotzing' to do chessed (so to speak). The Malbim relates that he could not hold himself back from helping people."

"How is that, Abba?"

"Take the example from the beginning of this week's parasha, Avi. Avraham Avinu had just undergone bris milah three days earlier, at age 99. He was in tremendous pain. Hashem took the sun out of its sheath to make the day hot as an oven. He did not want Avraham to be troubled with guests. However, Avraham Avinu was more distressed that there were no travelers passing by to shower with chessed."

"Therefore, Hashem made three angels appear in the guise of Arabs."

"Right. Avraham was relieved, but he still had work to do until he could bestow chessed. The travelers were not planning to stop. Avraham ran out to them, bowed down, and beseeched them to rest for a moment under the shade of a tree and wash their feet."

"He was so clever! These travelers did not want to stop, so he only asked them to rest for a moment and wash their feet. He did not invite them into the tent, which would delay them. Instead, he ran out to meet them. He offered them a little bread, which was a short, quick snack."

"Very perceptive, Avi. He then rushed to his tent and had a sumptuous meal prepared for them."

"Avraham Avinu put so much of his physical and mental energy into giving."
"That is precisely the point, Avi. Bestowing chessed was the essence of Avraham's being."

Kinderlach . . .

We are all children of Avraham Avinu. His total love and dedication to chessed is ingrained within us. We see it throughout Klal Yisrael to this very day. People open "gemach's" (the letters of the word gemach are an acronym for the words "gemilus chassadim" - performing acts of loving kindness). Need to borrow money? Go to a gemach and get an interest free loan. On the road and need a place to stay for Shabbos? Call the gemach for Shabbos placements. Need to borrow anything from power tools to baby diapers to books to medical equipment? Gemach's are the place to turn. Kinderlach, you can join the gemilus chassadim bandwagon. Think of some chessed that you can provide people. Open a gemach. Be like Avraham Avinu. Put your physical and mental energy into gemilus chassadim.



No Tefillah is Wasted

"Where are you headed my fellow Jew?"

"To the big city, B'ezras Hashem. I hope to sell my wares and buy things for my family."

The older man smiled warmly at the young Jewish artisan.

"I am also headed there, for the same reason. Come, let us travel together."

The two men boarded the train and settled into their seats in the passenger car. They engaged in lively Torah discussions until they reached their destination. They left the railroad car and bid each other farewell at the station.

"May Hashem bless you with much success."

"Amen and the same for you."

A few days later, they met unexpectedly in a clothing store.

"How are you my fellow Jew?"

"Baruch Hashem. I am here to buy clothes for my children."

"I am also thinking about that. I have one unmarried son, my youngest child, left in

the house. I am a bit hesitant to buy him a suit, however."

"Why?"

"It may not fit him."

"I do not have that problem. All of my children are small and growing. If the clothes do not fit one child, they will fit another. If they do not fit anyone now, they will soon grow into them. Someone will get good use out of these clothes."

This story is based on a parable from the Dubno Maggid. Why did Hashem inform Avraham Avinu that He was going to destroy Sdom and Amorrhah? He surely did not need Avraham's approval, yet He wanted to reveal this information. As the verse states, "Shall I conceal from Avraham what I do?" (Bereshis 18:17). The Maggid informs us that Hashem wanted Avraham's *tefillos* for Sdom and Amorrhah. Therefore, He told him about the impending destruction, so that Avraham would pray for their salvation. There is a big question, however, on this answer. Hashem knew that He was going to destroy Sdom and Amorrhah, regardless of Avraham Avinu's *tefillos*. Were the prayers not in vain? "No," answers the Dubno Maggid. Sincere *tefillos* are always heard, even if they do not help the person who is praying, or those of his generation. As the verse states, "And Avraham will become a great and mighty nation. And all of the nations of the earth will be blessed through him" (Bereshis 18:18). The Maggid finishes by stating that even if his prayers do not come to fruition now, they will help future generations. The prayers are compared to the clothing that the young man was buying. Even if they do not fit any of his children now, they will fit them in the future.

Kinderlach . . .

We pray to Hashem three times each day. We ask him for all sorts of things: health, prosperity, success in learning, children, and peace, to name a few. Many times our request is not fulfilled. We ask over, and over, and over again. We soon come to the realization that the request may never be granted. Is this a reason to despair? Of course not! Hashem hears, listens to, and considers every prayer. The Maggid tells us that Hashem answers every prayer. If not now, in future generations. How comforting and encouraging! Parents always want the best for their children. Imagine that the request that you are making in your prayers may bring great blessing to your great-great-grand-child. Keep praying to Hashem kinderlach, with great kavannah (concentration). He will answer you with only good things.

Parasha Questions

- What bothered Avraham more – the heat of the day or the lack of guests? (Rashi 18:1)
- What would Avraham be if Hashem were not with him? (18:27 and Rashi)
- Why did Lot tarry in Sdom? (Rashi 19:16 & 17)
- How did Lot's wife sin with salt? (Rashi 19:25)