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"For your benefit and for your good": two sides of the same coin!

(ויאמר ה' אל אַבְרָם לֵךְ לְךָ: (יב א)

Hashem said to Avram, "Go forth from your land and from your birth-place and from your father's house, to the land that I will show you. (12:1)

The Rashi here is famous: להנאתך ולטובתך "for your benefit and for your good". But is this not redundant? If something benefits you, is it not good for you ipso facto? Not necessarily, since we see counterexamples. We see wicked people apparently benefiting from their transgressions, at least in the short term, but we know they will eventually have to recompense for the ill-gotten gains or pleasures. Does not Shlomo HaMelech write about the rich man: יֵשׁ רָעָה חוֹלָה עִשָּׂר שָׁמֹר לְבַעְלָיו לְרַעְתּוֹ... *There is a grievous evil... riches kept by their owner for his harm.* (Koheles 5:12)? He may enjoy his wealth, but it is ultimately not for his "good", or his benefit. Further along these lines, on the familiar posuk from Thillim (136:1), הוֹדוּ לַה' כִּי טוֹב כִּי לַעֲוֹלָם חֶסֶדוֹ, *Give thanks to Hashem because He is good, for His kindness is eternal*, the Gemara (Pesachim 118a) explains: Hashem can cause events to seize an ox from the wealthy farmer while causing the poorer man to lose a sheep. These acts seem to be misfortunes for the affected owners, but that is only until they realize that they paid their due with a light punishment, which could have been far worse. The Gemara (Brochos 60b) states explicitly, not allowing for any debate: כל דעביד רתמנא לטב עביד, *what Hashem does is only for the best* which is the oft-cited hallmark of a Yid who is a *ba'al bitachon*/one trusting 100% in Hashem's beneficence. Now, Rashi's explicating Hashem's brocho to Avram is well understood. Everything that he encounters should be BOTH for his benefit AND for his continuing good. A word and its Rashi from verse 2 dovetail nicely: וְאָבְרָם, I will bless you' How? בממון? "with money". As we learn from the Koheles above, this was a steadfast brocho that Avram's wealth should be blessed, and unreservedly good.

(דברי ישראל מאדוניץ)

Nurturing brings one under the Wings of the Divine Presence

וְאֵת הַנַּפְשׁ אֲשֶׁר-עָשׂוּ בְּחָרָן: (יב ה)

and the souls they had acquired in Haran (12:5)

How can one "acquire" or "make" (עָשׂוּ) a soul? Rashi writes שהכניסן תחת כנפי השכינה, אברהם מגייר את האנשים, ושרה מגיירת "whom he had brought under the wings of the Shechinah. Abraham would convert the men, and Sarah would convert the women, and Scripture ascribes to them [a merit] as if they had made them." But how is converting someone to Yiddishkeit tantamount to creating them?

וַיֵּטַע אַבְרָם בְּבְאֵר שֶׁבַע וַיִּקְרָא שָׁם: (יב א) *he planted an "eishel" in Beer-Sheva, and he called there in the name of Hashem, the G-d of the world.* Rashi explains that Avram's guests ate from his food, after which he would teach them, משל מי שאמר והיה, *משל מי שאמר והיה, the world came into being!* "Avram's food served as a vehicle of awareness of the Borei Olam/ Creator of the Universe. The text conveying the initial creation of Adam HaRishon, נִעְשָׂה אָדָם בְּצַלְמֵנוּ כְּדֹמוֹתֵנוּ, reflects this. How? נִעְשָׂה "let us make" refers to a wealthy man who provides food for a poor one. It is as if Hashem is saying to the rich man, "I will create the person and you take care of his livelihood." (Malbim, Sefer Eretz Chemda.) Clearly, in giving a poor man food, one partners with the Oibershter in creating that person. While that is quite inspiring, it pales in comparison with the way that Avrohom and Sarah fed the hungry: their feeding brought them under the Wings of the Divine Presence, and not less. (The "candy man" in shul can echo this teaching. When he gives a candy to a child, and makes sure that the child makes the proper brocho, and the child has at least an inkling that he is thanking, משל מי שאמר, then the candy man becomes a partial partner with the Creator in that child, and that child has a good chance of growing to be a Frum, upstanding Yid. (Y. Z. Klitnick))

(בית ישראל השנים למוח"ז האדמו"ר ממאסטערסדארף צדוק"ל)

Why would Avrohom want -- or need -- gifts from other people?

אֲמַרְי נָא אַחֲתִי אֶתְּ לִמְעַן יֵיטֵב לִי בְּעֵבְרָה

Please say [that] you are my sister, in order that it go well with me because of you (12:13) Rashi's comment surprises us at first blush: They will give me gifts. This motivation surely seems out of character for one on as lofty a level as Avrohom. Mishlei (15:27) teaches, וְשׂוֹנֵא מִתְּנַת יְהִיָּה, the one who spurns gifts is assured of life. So what could Avrohom hope to achieve by the charade with Sarah? His calculation was quite focused, yet concealed. Holy Seforim teach that when one gives a gift to a tzaddik, the tzaddik in turn has the power to repair the soul of that donor. That principle was fully operant here. Avrohom knew in advance that there were no traces of yiras shomayim in Mitzrayim. The purpose of the masquerade was to induce the pagan Egyptians to bestow gifts upon him, whereupon he would acquire the spiritual power to instill Fear of Heaven in them. Possessing that, they would surely not cause Avrohom and Sarah any harm. (תפוחי חיים - פאנעט) (קארלסבורג)

(תפוחי חיים - פאנעט קארלסבורג)

There was a small shtetl Horodek just outside Karlin, where most of the inhabitants were chasidim of Rav Aharon of Karlin, זצוק"ל, known as the Bais Aharon. But the town also had a misnagdish/anti-Chassidic element. When the local shochet, an elderly chassid, passed away, the misnagdim succeeded in having one of their own appointed in his stead. At that very juncture, the Beis Aharon came to spend time with his chassidim in Horedek. He directed that a new shochet who followed the chassidic path be installed in the town. *[In those days in Europe, there was typically centralized Rabbinical authority in towns, cities, and regions. But factionalism was not unknown. Designation of "klei kodesh"/religious functionaries -- extending to shochtim -- was sometimes fraught with "political" dissension, because the status and honour of this or that Rabbinical stream was seen to be at stake. [DPR]]* This sparked an uproar among the misnagdish circles in town, who fumed at having one of their own dismissed. A full-fledged machlokes/religious dispute broke out in all its fury. There was a wealthy misnaged in town who had fallen under the sway of the heretical "Haskala". This bigshot, who liked to throw his weight around, had scant regard for the honour of a chassidic rebbe. With chutzpah, he was bent on teaching the interloping Rebbe a lesson in humility. He barged into the Rebbe's tisch and, before everyone assembled, took to hurling ugly curses and provocative epithets at the Rebbe. Although the Rebbe maintained his silence, the chassidim took extreme umbrage at the intruder's insolence and began rumbling to avenge their Rebbe's honour. The Rebbe himself would have none of it. "I strictly forbid anyone to lay even a finger on that man!" were his fiery words, which no one dared disobey. The Rebbe recalled an interpretation he had heard from Rav Boruch miMezhibizh זצוק"ל upon a posuk from Tehillim (41:12), which had a direct bearing on what had just happened יָדַעְתִּי כִּי הִפְצַחְתָּ בִּי כִּי לֹא יָרִיעַ אֹיְבֵי עָלַי, *With this I shall know that You desired me, when my enemy does not shout joyfully over me.* The Rebbe paraphrased thusly: "How can I be sure that Hashem is pleased with my deeds? When I have no enemies: my enemies do not harm me because I have none." But Reb Boruch'l put a different spin on יָרִיעַ -- "no harm should occur" TO my enemies. If that prevails, then I am confident that Hashem is pleased with my activities and *avodas Hashem.*" The chassidim readily grasped their Rebbe's message of not retaliating against their opponents. Chasidim and misnagdim managed to forge a working relationship; the chassidic shochet kept his post, and peace reigned supreme in Horodek for twenty years after the incident. There was a village named Tureb not far from Horodek and it played a role in the Russo-Polish war. The chief Polish general, named Regonski, had holed up in Tureb with his staff, awaiting a lull in the fighting. The townspeople betrayed his position to

Czar Alexander II, who dispatched a band of Cossacks to capture the enemy general. The hidden Polish soldiers sought to destroy the village for betraying their leader, but Russian troops intervened before they could do anything, and many of the Poles were killed. But there were some Polish soldiers who were masterfully concealed, and they manage to burn down many of the village's houses. No one had a clue as to the arsonists' identity. But then the wooden shul in the village caught fire and two men were captured as they fled from inside. To everyone's surprise, they were Jews! They were taken forthwith to Horodek, to the Heads of the Kehilla there, two wealthy Karlin chassidim named Mordechai and Shlomo Leib. Under interrogation, the two confessed to burning the houses, but said that it was under extreme duress from the leader of the Poles, who threatened to kill them if they declined the arson job. They named names and revealed where the Polish leaders could be found. The poor men begged to be released so they could escape from the avenging Poles. The two Roshei Hakehilla went to the local Russian military outpost, who had sent their commander to capture the Polish leaders. The Poles strenuously denied all charges against them, and their arguments turned persuasive when they offered a large bribe to the Russian commander, on condition that he report that it was the two Roshei Kehilla from Horodek who dispatched the arsonists and falsely tried to deflect suspicion on to the two Polish men. The two wealthy Jews were arrested and sent to Mezire, where a harsh judgment awaited them from which it was well-nigh impossible to extricate them via the usual channels.

STORY OF THE WEEK:
Karliner Rebbe, the Bais Aharon, by not refuting an insult, saves chassidim decades later

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We recall the brazen maskil who insulted the Karliner Rebbe twenty years earlier. It was he who now stepped forward to save these two Jews. He knew full well that the Roshei Kehillah were fine upstanding men who were clearly caught up in an ugly, bribery-driven, trumped-up legal predicament. Lead by his conscience, he made the long trip to Petersburg, the Russian capital, and managed to secure an audience with Czar Alexander II. He was a learned man who spoke an eloquent Russian and succeeded in convincing the Czar of the Jews' innocence and advocated for all charges against them to be dismissed. The Czar found his arguments convincing and dispatched his official orders to the court in Mezire to release the two men. When the Holy Bais Aharon became aware of this turnabout, he proclaimed to his chassidim that because they had spared this maskil any retribution for his chutzpa twenty years earlier, he was left with feelings of mercy and pity for his chassidic fellow citizens. Woe to them if they had followed their baser instincts to punish him! This lesson in applied Jewish mussar/character refinement has come down to the present day in Karlin/Stolin circles.

(ספר המאורות הגדולים - ציילינגארד)

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