

"I will remember My covenant with Yaakov and also My covenant with Yitzchak; and also My covenant with Avraham I will surely remember, and I will remember the Land." (26:42)

This *pasuk* presents an apparent change in the sequential order of the *Avos*, Patriarchs. *Rashi* interprets the *pasuk* to indicate that the merit of Yaakov should be sufficient to bring redemption to his children. If Yaakov's merit is not worthy of effecting redemption, Yitzchak *Avinu's zechusim*, merits, will add to the virtue on behalf of *Klal Yisrael*. If *Klal Yisrael* is still in need of support, the merits of Avraham *Avinu* will tip the scale in favor of *Klal Yisrael*. The commentators question this sequence. Yaakov *Avinu* is the *bchir ha'Avos*, the chosen of the Patriarchs, his name is engraved on the Holy Chariot. How is it that his merit is not sufficient, while that of his ancestors is able to effect redemption for *Klal Yisrael*?

Horav Moshe Shternbuch, Shlita, offers a novel explanation. The first covenant was originally established between Hashem and Avraham *Avinu*. When Hashem later ratified the covenant with Yitzchak, it strengthened and added a new dimension to the original *bris*, covenant. The *bris* with Yaakov was the ultimate bond by which Hashem melded together the various attributes symbolized by each individual Patriarch. This *bris* demands *Klal Yisrael's* complete participation in assuming the various attributes the three *Avos* bequeathed to us. As in any covenant, the complete and conscious devotion of each member assures a lasting bond.

This is the secret of Hashem's promise to remember the individual merits of the *Avos*. First and foremost, the covenant with Yaakov *Avinu* also embodies the virtues of Yitzchak and Avraham. If *Klal Yisrael* is not faithful to the covenant of Yaakov due to its demanding nature, then Hashem, in His great compassion, will spare us in the merit of Yitzchak *Avinu*. If we have distanced ourselves from Hashem to such a degree that we can not participate in the covenant, then Hashem will call up the original covenant made with Avraham *Avinu*, in whose merit we will be redeemed.

Horav Shternbuch analyzes the attributes which were unique to each Patriarch and applies it to contemporary times. Yaakov *Avinu* embodied the *middah* of *emes*, truth, which is personified by *Torah* study, encompassing the greatest truth. If we do not ascribe to and excel in *Torah* study, then Hashem must look to the merit of Yitzchak *Avinu* whose attribute of *mesiras nefesh*, self-sacrifice for Hashem, exemplifies devotion to the Almighty. If we are lacking in our devotion to Hashem, if we are complacent in *mitzvah* observance; if we are not inclined to "sacrifice" ourselves for Him, then Hashem looks to the *middah* of Avraham *Avinu* as the potential merit for our redemption.

Avraham epitomized the *middah* of *chesed*, kindness to others, be it in the physical or spiritual dimensions. By reaching out to our fellow Jew, we can offer him physical or moral support. By bringing him closer to religious observance, we are emulating the *chesed* of Avraham *Avinu*. This is why the closing for the first *bracha*, blessing, in *Shemoneh Esrai* is *magen Avraham*, the shield

of Avraham. We acknowledge that Hashem, in His boundless compassion, will shield us from evil and persecution if we just maintain the *middah* of Avraham by performing acts of loving-kindness with others. Indeed, prior to the Final Redemption our prayers and merits will be accepted in the merit of the *middah* of *chesed*.