

"For I have loved him because he commands his children and his household after him that they keep the way of Hashem." (18:19)

This *pasuk* expresses the reason that Hashem "loved" Avraham, as well as suggesting the probable reason that Hashem chose Avraham to become the first Patriarch. Avraham did what a father is supposed to do. He taught his children, conveying to them the heritage as he received it -- without adding his personal agenda. One's real perspective on life is reflected in what he teaches his children. Avraham transmitted his monotheistic values, his belief in Hashem, exemplified by his unique *chesed*, kindness, to his children -- all to be handed down throughout the generations. Avraham *Avinu* was also the first *gadol*, great man. What is the meaning of *gadlus*, greatness, in the *Torah* perspective?

In the *Sefer V'zorach Ha'shemesh*, the author renders an appreciation of Avraham *Avinu* as he explains the concept of *gadlus*. He relates that during the tenure of **Horav Naftali Tropp, zl**, who served as *Rosh Ha'Yeshiva* in **Radin**, a *talmid chacham*, noted *Torah* scholar, passed away. *Horav* Tropp was asked to deliver a *hesped*, eulogy, in his behalf. For various reasons which the *Rosh Hayeshivah* would not disclose, he refused to deliver the eulogy. The people then complained to him, "But *Rebbe*, this man was a *gadol!* How can you refuse to speak?" Immediately he responded, "Do you understand the meaning of the word *gadol* as it relates to a *Torah* scholar? When we say about a person that he has big feet, we imply that both of his feet are large. If, however, one foot is large and the other is small, he is a *baal mum*, blemished." He continued with his analogy, "When we say that a person is large, we imply that every part of his body is larger than average. If, however, his head is excessively large, while the remainder of his body is midget-sized, then he is blemished. The same concept applies to *gadlus ba'Torah*. A *gadol* is one who is symmetrical in every aspect of his total demeanor. Everything the *gadol* does, every endeavor, every undertaking, every word that he speaks - literally everything - is *l'shem Shomayim*, for the sake of Heaven. Not everyone has a right to wrap himself in the mantle of '*gadol!*'"

When we take into account the life story of Avraham *Avinu*, as we follow the narrative of the *parshios*, we see how *Horav* Tropp's words are actualized. We see a symmetry of a total being subservient to the Almighty, whose every action is considered and performed *l'shem Shomayim*. On the one hand, we see an individual who is resolute in his commitment. The term, Avraham *ha'Ivri* is interpreted to mean, "*The whole world is b'eiver echad, on one side, and Avraham is b'eiver a'cher, on the other side.*" He stood alone against a pagan society. He fought an evil king. He left his aged father at a time when a son should provide for a parent. Why? Because Hashem told him to leave Charan. He came to Canaan with his orphaned nephew - Lot - and soon separated himself from him. Why? Because Hashem told him to! He fathered a son, Yishmael, whom he sent away without feeling, without food, without compassion. Why? Because this was Hashem's command. Avraham impresses us as an extremist, constantly in conflict, always in opposition.

Yet, if we look further, we note another person in the guise of Avraham *Avinu*. We see an individual who preached monotheistic belief to a world of pagans. He opened his home to everyone. His kindness to people of all walks of life is legendary. He actually suffered acute pain when he could not personally attend to the needs of wayfarers. He was concerned that the *Bris Milah* upon his body would so distinguish him from others that they might refrain from seeking his company. Does this represent an extreme position? Was Avraham an individual who thrived upon conflict? Is this not an enigma? How could these two opposing characteristics have existed within a single person?

This is what *gadlus* is all about. A true *gadol* is the essence of *shleimus*, perfection. He is symmetrical throughout his being. He does not vacillate from circumstance to circumstance, acting impulsively, based upon his emotions. He deliberates every action; he contemplates each response to a challenge. He does nothing in a haphazard manner. If the situation calls for forcefulness, he acts emphatically, dynamically, without fear, because he acts *l'shem Shomayim*. If the circumstances require a sensitive reaction, he acts with feeling and compassion. The *gadol* does not simply react, he acts!