

And all the nations of the earth shall bless themselves by him. (18:18)

All the nations shall bless themselves through Avraham *Avinu*, and, by extension, his descendants – *Klal Yisrael*. Avraham set the standard for the world population to emulate – so should we. Previously, in *Parashas Lech Lecha* (12.2), Hashem told Avraham, *V'heyey brachah*; “And you shall be a blessing.” You will have the power to bless whomever you wish (*Rashi*). *Ramban* interprets this to mean that Avraham will be the standard by which people will bless themselves. Indeed, this is a powerful and frightening mandate for us – as his descendants. We must live up to our responsibility to set the standard for people with whom we come in contact, to say, “I want to be like him/her.” Can one begin to imagine the *chillul Hashem*, desecration of Hashem’s Name, when we do not live up to this standard or, worse, profane it?”

V'heyey brachah (ibid 12:2): “Hashem told Avraham, “It is not proper *kavod*, dignity, for Me to bless My creations. Thus, I designate you as my agent to bless people. When someone approaches you for a blessing, I will bless whom you bless (if he/she is worthy of blessing, then he/she will have My blessing). The following story, which took place in September, 2001, is a classic example of the efficacy of a Jew’s blessing. The names have been changed; the story was not.

Mr. and Mrs. Green were remodeling their Boro Park apartment. Anyone who has gone through the turmoil of construction has an idea of the aggravation that accompanies such an undertaking. The schedule is always extended; the dust and soot are everywhere; the lack of privacy makes it into an emotionally-straining experience. Therefore, if something can be done to shorten the job, to ease some of the “pain,” even if it means spending more money than was previously agreed upon, people will agree to do it. In this case, the contractor told Mr. Green that, if he were to be paid a cash advance (not more money – just a timely cash payment), he might be able to “encourage” his workers to spend more time on this site and finish it sooner. Twenty-thousand was the agreed upon amount. Mr. Green asked his wife to please go to the bank and withdraw \$20,000 in cash – which she did. The money was sealed in an envelope, and Mrs. Green decided to “visit” a couple of the stores on the avenue, being that *Yom Tov* would soon be upon them and she needed a “few” things.

After a few hours of shopping, Mrs. Green came home and was immediately greeted by her husband, “Where is the money?” She looked in her purse, and, after practically taking it apart, conceded that the envelope with the money had disappeared. One need not describe Mr. Green’s reaction to his wife’s decision to stop to shop for a few hours with \$20,000 in her purse. She began to retrace her steps, store to store, and finally came to the realization that the envelope must have disappeared somewhere in the shopping center area – exactly where, she was clueless.

The family resorted to the only avenue left for them: *Tehillim*. They all sat down to pray to Hashem that He open their eyes to the envelope’s location. Suddenly, the phone rang and Mr. Green rose

up answer it. "Hello," he said. "Hi. Is this the Green household?" an accented voice on the other end of the line asked. "Yes, it is," was Mr. Green's response. "Are you Mr. Green?" the voice asked. "Yes, I am." "I wonder if you might have lost an envelope," the (male) voice asked. "Yes! Yes! I did!" was Mr. Green's excited reply. After hearing the details of its contents, the man who had called, who gave his name as William, said, "I will be over shortly."

An hour elapsed, and there was a knock at the door. Mr. Green hurriedly opened the door to greet the face behind the voice, the wonderful person who had put integrity and human decency over avarice and, in most instances, human nature. Before him stood a young, twenty-something, African American man (actually from Jamaica, which explains the accent), holding their envelope filled with cash.

"Come in! Come in!" Mr. Green said. William entered their home and gave Mr. Green the envelope. "Please, wait a moment," Mr. Green said, as went into his study to count the money. It was intact! All \$20,000 was there, untouched. He could not believe it. In today's day and age, to find an envelope filled with cash, and to return it, was in and of itself amazing, but to return all of the money was even more startling. "Please, let me give you a reward," Mr. Green said. "No, no, I could never take a gift for doing what is right," William replied. "Please, I insist," said Mr. Green. "You saved our day. We owe you."

"Fine," replied William. "I assume that you are Jewish. My mother always reiterated to me that the Jewish People have the power to confer blessings. I would like you to bless me. That will be my reward." Mr. Green immediately bestowed upon William every blessing that came to mind: joy; long life; health; and the works. He was only too happy to proffer blessings on this wonderful man. They bid each other good-day, and William left. End of the story? Not quite.

William came home, and, to his wife's chagrin, he was doubled over in pain. "What happened?" she asked. He described his experience, from finding the envelope, to returning it, and the special reward that he had received. Meanwhile, he was sweating profusely and in agony. "Some blessing the Jews gave you," his wife said, looking at her husband. "This must be the Jewish version of a blessing," she said, tauntingly. "I am going to call the doctor. You are not well."

"You are wrong," William cried, in bitter pain. "My mother told me that a Jew has the power of blessing. I do not believe that my pain is the result of that blessing." His wife called the doctor, who said he unfortunately could not make a house call that night. He prescribed pain meds and agreed to see William first thing in the morning. "But I must go to work," William said. "You are in no condition to go to work," the doctor said. "It appears that you have some form of stomach bug. Go to bed, and I will see you in the morning."

William was upset. He never missed work, but, obviously, in his present condition, he could not even climb the stairs to the subway, let alone put in a day's work. It was a long, painful night. William was in pain, sweating, and throwing up. He could hardly get out of bed in the morning. His

wife, meanwhile, had given his illness her own diagnosis: "Jew's blessing." Usually, William was at his job by 8:30 in the morning.

That day, his wife drove him to the doctor at 9:00 a.m. While they were driving and listening to the news, they heard the announcer shakingly break into the program with breaking news: "A large jet has crashed into the Twin Towers in what appears to be an act of terrorism against the United States!"

Hearing this terrible news, William and his wife were shocked, so shocked that his wife pulled over to the side of the road to collect her emotions. You see: William worked on the 89th floor of one of the towers. Had he been at work, she would now be a widow. She realized that the Jew's blessing had saved her husband. William immediately called Mr. Green and thanked him for the blessing. His mother had been right. The Jews have the power to bless.