

Hashem appeared to him in the plains of Mamre, while he was sitting at the entrance of the tent in the heat of the day. (18:1)

It was three days after Avraham Avinu's *bris milah*, circumcision. The third day is the most painful. Yet, our Patriarch was sitting at the entrance of his tent during an unusually warm time of the day. *Chazal* teach that Hashem removed the sun from its protective casing in order to make it more powerful (and hotter), so that wayfarers would not travel. Thus, they would not inconvenience Avraham (by not creating an opportunity for him to serve them). When Hashem saw that Avraham was actually pained by not having the opportunity to fulfill the *mitzvah* of *hachnosas orchim*, welcoming guests, to his home, He sent three angels in the guise of men to visit him.

It is understandable that Avraham, the *amud ha'chesed*, pillar of lovingkindness, would want to reach out to people and offer his brand of material/spiritual kindness. Why, however, was he so anxious, so desperate, to perform the *mitzvah* that Hashem was compelled to send angels in the form of men in order to satisfy Avraham's need to perform *chesed*? It is not as if Avraham had nothing to do. He was in pain. He could have rested until his strength returned. There is also the *mitzvah* of *limud haTorah*, Torah study, that is available at all times, under all conditions, in all places, which takes precedence over all other *mitzvos*. Why did he not put *chesed* on hold for a few days?

We observe from the above that *chesed* meant the world to Avraham. He even interrupted Hashem's visit with him to tend to the wayfarers that came by his tent, individuals who were miraculously present only to assuage the *chesed*/guilt feelings of Avraham. *Horav Levi Dicker, zl*, explains this based upon the well-known axiom that the actions of our forefathers were not isolated activities performed in a vacuum. These actions were not performed for the personal spiritual benefit of the Patriarchs; rather, they were to set the tone and establish the spiritual, moral and ethical DNA of the Jewish people.

Indeed, when Bilaam sought to curse the Jews, with his words ending in blessing rather than curse, he said, *Ki meirosh tzurim areenu*; "For from its origins, I see rock-like" (*Bamidbar* 23:9). *Rashi* explains, "I gaze at their leaders and the beginning of their (*Klal Yisrael's*) roots, and I see that they are fortified and strong like rocks and hills through their Patriarchs and Matriarchs." Bilaam found it impossible to undermine – or locate a weakness in – the Jewish people's spiritual mettle. He had no choice but to praise them. The spiritual strength that we had/have is our inheritance bequeathed to us from our Patriarchs and Matriarchs. The actions of our forefathers did not merely set an example for us to emulate; rather, their actions became forever imprinted on the Jewish soul, embedded deeply within the Jewish psyche, endowing the Jewish DNA with these traits for generations to come.

The *Rosh Yeshivah* explains that Avraham Avinu, who achieved the epitome of *middas chesed*,

understood that it was his responsibility to implant this *middah*, attribute, into his future descendants. When he performed *chesed*, he was not performing only for himself – he was in the process of imbuing generations of Jews with the *middah* of *chesed*. Since this was his specific *middah*, he dedicated his life to bequeathing the Jewish nation with the attribute of *chesed*. He succeeded. Indeed, *Chazal* (*Yevamos 79a*) teach that when one does not manifest a predilection for performing acts of lovingkindness, his Jewish pedigree is suspect. The *Talmud* (*Beitzah 12:B*) goes as far as to posit that one who does not perform acts of *chesed* is not from the progeny of Avraham.

We now understand why Avraham yearned to perform *chesed* on that third day following his *bris*. Veritably, Avraham could have opened his “*Gemorah*” and learned Torah all day in the safety and comfort of his tent. Instead, he sought opportunities for *chesed*. Why? Because the future of *Klal Yisrael*, its internal character and mission in life, was at stake. He wanted to insure that his descendants would be imbued with an innate proclivity towards acts of *chesed*.

As Jews, we may not waste the opportunities for *chesed* that emerge at various intervals in our lives. Although *chesed* in and of itself certainly does not take center stage in place of Torah learning, it is an inherent component of our DNA. We are *chesed*. Hashem is *chesed*. Acting as His children is our mission in this world.