



BE A MENTSCH

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Bringing Jews Close Together!

פְּרִישֵׁת לְךָ לְךָ

“Be a Mensch” means doing acts which help other people. This is especially true if our behavior makes a קדוּשׁ ה'. Many people, unfortunately, don't know about Hashem and his Torah. If such people begin to say, “I want to do more Mitzvos because of how this girl behaves. She is so kind and friendly! I would like to be like her!” This makes people respect Hashem & his Torah. This is an example of a קדוּשׁ ה'.

In this week's Parsha, when Avraham Avinu entered the country of אַרָם and lived in the city of הָרָן, he began to spread the importance of serving Hashem and thanking Hashem for all the good things which we enjoy. Many people began to follow in the footsteps of Avraham Avinu and they began to serve Hashem. The words of the pasuk in the beginning of this week's parsha teach this:” וְאֶת-הַנֶּפֶשׁ אֲשֶׁר-עָשׂוּ בְּהָרָן. Avraham brought the people which he had made in הָרָן with him to יִשְׂרָאֵל. They were so close with Avraham Avinu, they wanted to go wherever he went. In fact, Rashi tells us that Avraham Avinu's name אַבְרָם is made up of two Hebrew words, אָב אָרָם, the father of the country of אַרָם. Since Avraham Avinu started to bring Aram close to Hashem, he is considered like their father.

In fact, even when Hashem changed Avram's name to Avraham, אַבְרָהָם, he kept the אָב. He really didn't need the אָב because his name was taken from the words: כִּי אָב הָיָה לְךָ מֵרַבּוֹת, “I have made you the father of many nations”. There is no אָב in the phrase. This teaches us that אַבְרָהָם had a special connection with אַרָם forever; once a father always a father. Our behavior should also bring other Jews close to Hashem and to ourselves!
מֵעַשִׂיךָ יִקְרָבוּךָ!

Rabbi Avraham Nissanian relates the following moving story:

Around thirty years ago, a family with a father, mother and two twin boys lived in America. They lived in a comfortable house and enjoyed a nice lifestyle as the father was blessed to have a prosperous source of income. Nevertheless, they tried to live a modest life always appreciating what they had.

It was nearly two months before the bar mitzvah of the twin brothers when the father took them for a trip around the United States for two and a half weeks. It was at one of their stops that the father planned to meet one of his childhood friends who he had gone to school with. This friend had gone on to become a respectable rabbi in a community and was dearly loved. As he finally got around to meeting the rabbi, they embraced each other. But it was not long before the rabbi said, “I apologize, but I must leave rather quickly. I have a very important matter to attend to; it is a situation of *pikuach nefesh* (life and death). Perhaps we can reconvene sometime later.” “What happened? What is the problem” asked the father. “Well,” began the rabbi, “there is a couple from Russia who for the past ten years could not have children. Finally, Baruch Hashem, just recently they gave birth to a baby boy.

But unfortunately, the child contracted a debilitating disease. He is now in critical condition. His parents, of course, after hearing of this diagnosis went for a second opinion to a private doctor. But the situation still did not look too hopeful. The doctors finally concluded that there was one type of surgery which would cure him of his illness, but it would cost a hefty price of twenty-thousand dollars. This Russian family contacted me and asked if I could help to raise the money. And so far, I have been able to raise about ten-thousand dollars. But I am still short ten-thousand dollars. I am now on my way to meet with a few families who hopefully can assist me. So, once again, I am very sorry for needing to leave, but please excuse me. Let’s try to meet later.”

As the rabbi apologized and made his way out, one of the twin boys who had overheard the entire conversation approached his father. “Daddy, what if we would donate the extra money and save the baby?” he asked. The father replied, “We spent so much money during the past couple of months traveling around the country, and the celebration of your bar mitzvah is coming up which I also have to pay for. I do not think I will have any extra money to pay for such an operation for this young child.” “But,” retorted the young boy, “what if we would give up the money we planned to spend on our Bar Mitzvah party.” “It is very nice for you to think of doing that. You would need to ask your brother. Go and see what he says.” And so, quickly heading to his brother, the boy explains the situation. “Of course we can give up our bar mitzvah party and give the money to save this baby!” the brother answers. Running back to his father, the boy happily says, “Okay, he said yes! We can save the baby!”

Hearing of his children’s willingness to sacrifice their own party for a fellow Jew, the father agrees. Making his way downstairs, the father and two boys are just in time to catch the rabbi who is about to drive away. “Rabbi,” the father calls, “Come back here. We will help you.” And so, the rabbi returns. “Listen,” the father says, “you don’t have to go anywhere. My children decided to give up their bar mitzvah party to save this child.” Returning inside, the father wrote out a check for ten-thousand dollars and gave it to the rabbi.

As the time for the bar mitzvah arrived, instead of having a lavish party, the boys enjoyed a small celebration in the backyard of their home. It was truly nice with everyone having a good time despite the downsized party. As they were all enjoying themselves, a familiar looking man walked in. It was the rabbi whom the father had given the money to. He had come from New York to join the bar mitzvah celebration. Turning to the father he said, “Would I be able to address the audience.” “Sure,” the father replied. And so he began:

“I want you to know why this bar mitzvah is being celebrated in a home and not in a fancy hall. These two young bar mitzvah boys decided that they would give up their party to save the life of a baby. But there is more.” Taking out an envelope from his pocket, the rabbi continued, “There is a certain organization which collects good stories of all the good deeds performed around the United States. And the committee of this organization chooses every year which good deed will be dubbed the “Best Good Deed of the Year.” Opening the envelope, the rabbi read a piece of paper. It was a certificate from the organization commending the boys for their noble deed and deciding to crown them as the ones who had done the greatest act of kindness that year. Hearing this, both of the brothers agreed that despite all of the wonderful gifts they received from people, nothing compared to this present. The presence of this rabbi and the present from this organization was the dearest gift of all.

Years passed by, and now it was the time for one of the boys who had so kindly given up his bar mitzvah party to celebrate the bar mitzvah of his own child. He had by now gotten married and had a child who was now thirteen years old. And so he decided to make a party for his son. Sitting there as well was the grandfather, the father of the boy who had so many years ago given up his own party to save a young Russian baby. As the grandfather and father were sitting down and talking, they began to reminisce about what had occurred years ago. They thought back to the trip they had taken around the country and the father’s childhood friend who had become a rabbi.

As the grandfather and father considered their past, an older gentleman along with a young boy walked into the hall. Quickly glancing down the hall, it was hard to see who exactly it was. But as the old man neared them, it became apparent. It was the rabbi who had many years ago come to the twin’s bar mitzvah. He was now much older though and he required another person to assist him. The grandfather and father

assumed that it was the rabbi's grandson who was helping him along. As the rabbi finally approached them, words of love and appreciation were exchanged as everyone embraced each other. After an emotional conversation, the rabbi turned to the young boy who was now a father celebrating his own son's bar mitzvah and said, "I brought for you today an even bigger present than I brought for your own bar mitzvah." Unsure what the rabbi meant, the rabbi shortly thereafter asked if he could address the audience:

"Thirty years ago when you and your brother donated the money from your bar mitzvah to save a baby, I brought you a certificate which praised and awarded your good deed. But today I brought something even greater. I brought the very boy who you saved." And with that, the boy who was thought by the grandfather and father to be the rabbi's grandson stepped forward. He in truth was none other than the little baby boy in Russia whose life was saved. I wanted you to see who you gave life to. It is this young man who is with me. For many years he has been trying to thank you for your act of kindness. And I thought to myself that the best time for him to come and thank you would be on the bar mitzvah of your own son. And so now, here he is."

We can never underestimate the life-changing impact our actions can have. While these little boys chose to forgo their own celebration, a much bigger celebration was taking place: the giving of life to another human being. One decision can change the future of not only one person, but an entire line of descendants as numerous as the stars in the heavens. With this, we can appreciate the saying of our Sages (Sanhedrin 37a), "One who saves the life of one person is as if he saved an entire world."

Have a Great Shabbos!