



Ohr Somayach Light Lines

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Light Insight

Being a Blessing

“And I will make of you a great nation; I will bless you, and make your name great, and you will be a blessing.” (Genesis 12:2)

The above sentence is part of the first recorded communication between G-d and Abraham — the beginning of their recorded relationship. As the first and beginning, these words must contain the essence

and definition of that relationship. For all beginnings contain the essence of what they begin. A seed is not just the beginning of an oak tree — it contains the essence of the oak itself.

When G-d spoke to Abraham, He promised him many things: that he would be a great nation, that he would be blessed, that his name would be made great. However, all of this was predicated on a single condition — that Abraham would be a reason

for people to bless G-d. This was to be the essence of the relationship between G-d and Man — that through his every action, Man would sanctify G-d’s name; he would bring a blessing to the lips of the world.

Every Jew is an ambassador. Our actions are scrutinized by the world. If we are held to a higher — and sometimes double — standard, whether as individuals or as a nation, it is because the world recognizes subconsciously that our job in this world is “to be a blessing,” to sanctify G-d’s name.

LOVE of the LAND

Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and the Land of Israel

Four Divine promises to Abraham are mentioned in this week’s Parsha regarding the “Promised Land,” and they form a fascinating pattern. As Abraham reaches a higher level in his relationship with G-d, there is a corresponding increase in the level of the promised reward.

“I shall give the land to your

posterity” (*Genesis 12:7*) is a limited promise which could mean only a small part of the land which Abraham had traveled until that point — the site of Shechem.

As Abraham’s merits increase, he is told to lift his eyes and look in all directions. All that he saw would be his, the gift would be an eternal one and his posterity would be as numerous as the dust of the earth. (*Genesis 13:14-16*)

In the historic covenant which

previewed the special relationship of Abraham and his posterity with G-d, the promise is expanded to include the “Greater Land of Israel,” and a guarantee that the sins of future generations would not forfeit the promise. (*Genesis 15:18-21*)

In the covenant of circumcision, Abraham’s bonding with his Creator is rewarded with a promise that his posterity will return to their promised land even after they are exiled from it, and throughout history they will have a special, intimate relationship with G-d. (*Genesis 17:8*)

The Other SIDE of the Story

GIVING PEOPLE THE BENEFIT OF THE DOUBT

Stole the Show and Saved the Day

Last summer, during the various terrorist attacks in Israel, a person standing at the bustling Dizengoff intersection in Tel Aviv during rush hour alerted those around him that the bag he had just brought there contained a live bomb.

After the bomb squad disconnected the explosive, the person was investigated by the Police regarding the bomb. He related that earlier that day he had been at the beach, and eyeing the contents of a good-looking bag, he had stolen the bag, opening it at the busy Dizengoff intersection.

To the man's dismay, instead of finding something of value, he found a bomb.

Apparently the bag had been planted at the beach by terrorists, and while intending to commit petty larceny, the bag-napper had

in fact prevented a likely tragedy from occurring.

Had the bag exploded a minute earlier in the midst of rush hour, what would the resultant world outcry have been? "Those Jews are fanatics — they commit terrorist acts amongst themselves." Who would have let his imagination drift and said, "Perhaps that guy stole the bag from the beach and happened to steal the wrong bag"? Even if someone would say such a thing, his friend would tell him, "Come on, be realistic!"

What seems like pure fantasy may prove to be reality. We must not forget the advice of the Torah — judge others favorably.

Response Line

Michael Gaon wrote:

*Dear Rabbi,
What on earth was the wisest of the wise thinking when he said, "There is nothing new under the sun?" I wonder if King Solomon would have said the same thing if he had Internet access.*

Dear Michael,
In the Book of Koheles

(Ecclesiastes) King Solomon wrote: "There is absolutely nothing new under the sun." He meant that in the physical world nothing is created new. There is no creation *ex nihilo*, only the transfer of energy and reassembling of different parts into different structures. All of "modern technology" has existed since ancient times, in potential. When G-d created the physical universe, telephones, fax machines and "Internet access" came into exis-

tence, in their component parts. It was only up to us to figure out how to put them together.

Only in the spiritual world — "above the sun" — is there renewal. Through the power of free will a person can create a spiritual reality that was not pre-ordained and is not just a continuation of a process already started. Repentance, rising above one's baser instincts, acts of altruism — these are all acts of creation. This is what King Solomon meant when he said "There is nothing new under the sun."