

A Jew's "Black Box"

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Parshas Lech Lecha begins with Hashem telling Avrohom Avinu, *Lech lecha mei'artzecha* - leave your native land and your father's home.

Hashem promises Avrohom:

וְאַתָּה תִּהְיֶה גִּדּוֹל

You will become a great nation.

וְאִבְרַכְךָ

And I will bless you.

וְאֶגְדַּלְךָ שְׁמִי

I will make your name great.

And He concludes:

וְהָיָה בְרָכָה:

And you shall be a blessing.

What does it mean, "you shall be a blessing"?

Rashi, quoting a Gemara in Maseches Pesachim, explains what the Ribbono Shel Olam is referring to when He says:

וְהָיָה בְרָכָה:

Rashi says this alludes to the fact that when we begin the first beracha of Shemoneh Esrei, we say *Elokei Avrohom, Elokei Yitzchok, v'Elokei Yaakov*.

יכול יהיו חותמין בכולן

One might think that we should conclude the beracha by again invoking the names of **all three Avos**. The Torah therefore states:

וְהָיָה בְרָכָה

YOU will be the blessing - meaning:

בך חותמין ולא בהם

With you - Avrohom, with your name only - will they conclude the beracha, and not with them.

The question remains: If the beracha begins by acknowledging all three of the Avos, why does it conclude specifically with Avrohom's name alone?

The Sfas Emes says something very profound.

He explains that when we say **Magen Avrohom** - that Hashem is the shield of Avrohom - what we are actually acknowledging is that Hashem preserves the “Avrohom” in each and every one of us.

Avrohom Avinu, the founder of monotheism, the person who symbolizes and personifies an unwavering belief in the Borei Olam - **THAT same commitment and passion exists in EVERY Yid.**

There is a *pintele Yid*, a “human black box” - a spiritually hungry, searching soul inside all of us that seeks a relationship with Hashem, a neshama that wants to grow and realize its ultimate potential. Magen Avrohom: Hashem protects and shields that Avrohom. That Divine existence embedded within the soul of every Yid - **THAT can never be destroyed.**

A story is told that in 1959, the Skulener Rebbe was imprisoned in Romania on charges of espionage. One day, the guards took away his tefillin and beat him severely. He lost his glasses and yarmulke. He was in a lot of pain, but they could not break his resolve. He placed his jacket over his head and began to daven. When he reached:

ברוך שׁאָמַר

*Blessed is the One Who spoke,
v'hayah ha'olam - and the world came into existence.*

ברוך גּוֹזֵר וּמְקַיֵּם

Blessed is He Who decrees and fulfills.

He thought: How is this a praise of Hashem?

We say:

ברוך מְרַחֵם עַל-הָאָרֶץ. בְּרוּךְ מְרַחֵם עַל-הַבְּרִיּוֹת. בְּרוּךְ מְשַׁלֵּם שָׂכָר טוֹב לִירְאָיו

These are all great attributes of Hashem.

But Hashem issues a harsh decree on a person and then fulfills that decree? Why is this placed here in Baruch She'amar?

He said, “I will not leave this prison cell, even if I’m freed, until I have an answer to this question.” He thought about it for a few days, and then he had an incredible epiphany.

ברוך גּוֹזֵר

Sometimes, for whatever reason, the Ribbono Shel Olam issues a harsh decree on a person.

However:

וּמְקַיֵּם

He sustains the person while that person is suffering and going through the hardship.

Hashem simultaneously gives that person the courage and strength to endure the difficult challenge.

Hashem is *gozer* - He might decree something difficult and harsh - but at the same time:

וּמְקַיֵּם

He makes sure the person does not break. He does not let them fall apart.

Oftentimes, we see people going through a difficult period in their lives, and **THEY** are more courageous and optimistic than the people around them. Sometimes, they are even the ones offering everyone else words of encouragement and keeping them strong.

Why is that?

Because when Hashem gives a person a daunting challenge, He simultaneously infuses them with a healthy dose of strength and courage. Therefore, **THAT person** is drawing on that special G-d-given energy.

However, the people around them, who did not receive that positive energy, may have a more difficult time dealing with the calamity.

We find this idea in the episode of the Akeidah.

When Sarah Imeinu was told that they had almost slaughtered her only son, Yitzchok, the shock and grief were so overwhelming that her soul left her body.

The question is: If Avrohom was able to survive the stress and trauma of the Akeidah, why wasn't Sarah - who was an even greater prophetess than Avrohom - able to withstand the sudden, shocking news?

Furthermore, what about Avrohom? How was he able to remain unaffected by this near tragedy? His exposure to adversity was far greater. He was the one who had to break the news to his beloved son and actually **raise the knife to perform the slaughter**. How was he able to emerge from this episode unscathed?

The answer is: because the nisayon of the Akeidah was decreed upon Avrohom, and along with a monumental challenge, Hashem gives a person exceptional strength and fortitude to overcome that challenge. Since the Akeidah was specifically Avrohom's nisayon, only **HE** received that Divine strength.

Sarah, on the other hand, since it wasn't her nisayon, did not receive this special strength from Above. So when she was told about her son's near-death experience, she was unable to withstand the news, and her soul departed from her body.

The Midrash says famously:

לא בא על האדם אלא לפי כחו

Hashem never gives a person a challenge they cannot handle. And when He gives us a challenge, He also gives us the strength to overcome and withstand it.