

## Bringing the Farbrengen Home

### WE DIDN'T START

by Tzipah Wertheimer

The Torah introduces us to Avraham Avinu with very little fanfare. The many stories that highlight his righteousness are from midrashim and simply hinted to in the text itself.

Avraham, the first Jew, is commanded *Lech Lecha* - Go from your country, your birth place and the house of your father. Avraham complies and is rewarded greatly - to become a *goy gadol* - a great nation.

Why is Avraham Avinu's reward tied exclusively into his move without any reference to his superior character, the smashing of idols, and his self sacrifice for G-d?

For some, their relationship to the One Above is through their understanding. They connect in a way that makes sense and can be explained.

When the Creator chose Avraham Avinu, He was bringing him close to the Infinite Being. This began with G-d and trickled down into the world. It was not based on a human achievement, namely, the recognition of Hashem. The Master of the Universe picked our father Avraham up and made him (and us) close to the Divine.

The Being of All Beings is unlimited. Man is limited. Mankind, on our own, will never be able to reach the infinite. No matter how much Torah we study or how many great Mitzvot we perform, there will always be an infinite distance between creation and Creator.




When the connection comes directly from Hashem and is independent of efforts and strides down below, it becomes unlimited. The relationship comes from Hashem himself. This is seen in the fact that a Jewish soul is called a *chelek of Hashem* (piece of G-d).

The seven Noahide laws – given to all of mankind – are logical and are meant to keep the world civilized. The 613 Mitzvahs are not based solely on logic. They are G-dly commands given from the Highest of all Highs down below to the material world. The 613 Mitzvot connect us to Hashem on His terms - not ours. The relationship becomes “perfect” despite our imperfections.

This is why the Torah tells us that Hashem spoke to Avraham Avinu, without any preliminary introduction. If we were told about all of his great achievements, we would think that a Jew's connection is based on their actions.

In fact, the primary connection is the simple fact that Hashem spoke to Avraham! Nothing more or less. G-d initiated and therefore the connection is from Above and is unlimited and not based on accomplishments.

Learning Torah & doing mitzvot adds to the link that a Jew has with the One Above, but the first point is the essential unlimited connection that was started by the Initiators of all Initiators. We are the chosen people; we didn't start this. 

### Just שׁוׁׁ Me A Question

Q: Why do Jews use מזל טוב as our expression of goodwill at a שמחה when we don't believe in מזל in the first place?

A: On a simple level, the word mazel has different meanings based on the context.


In the phrase mazel tov, most people would say it means good luck or congratulations.

In the phrase "there is no mazel to Israel," it is referring to the *mazalot*, i.e., the zodiac, indicating that we are not subject to the influences of the zodiac.

On a deeper level, the word Mazal means to drip (see Shir HaShirim 4:15), and is a reference to a higher level of our neshama which is beyond our body and "drips" down, influencing the part of our neshama which is invested within our body.

Thus, when we wish someone mazel tov, we are saying that we hope that the flow from their "mazel" (i.e., higher level of neshama) is good and powerful.

Alternatively, our sages teach us that אין מזל לישראל, as you write, we don't have a mazel.

Instead of reading אין as *ein* (there isn't), read it as *ayin*, that is, the Ayin / Supernal Nothingness is our mazel. 

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## You Are An Atomic Bomb

by Rabbi Shaul Wertheimer

Berlin, 1938.

Otto Hahn, Lise Meitner and Fritz Strassman discovered that when an atom splits, there is a powerful release of energy. This and other similar experiments eventually yielded the atomic bomb.

What made this discovery so unique was that people thought that in order to make a huge explosion, you needed a massive amount of material.

The reality became apparent to all: a catastrophic explosion can be generated from a tiny amount of matter. It doesn't take much to change the entire world.

This was a paradigm shift. It wasn't quantity that mattered so much, but quality.

The first use of this knowledge was for destruction.

But this concept has a parallel in holiness. In fact, it's the theme of this week's Torah portion, Lech Lecha.

Abraham was a single person. A lone Jew. He could have been intimidated by those around him. He may have thought that he was too small to cause a ripple effect across the world.

But that's not true.

Abraham was an atom bomb. You are an atom bomb!



Each and every one of us is capable of changing a congregation, a community, a country, the entire world (!) for the good.

This ability brings with it great responsibility. Like Abraham, we cannot sit on our laurels, waiting for others to come to us. This week's parsha calls out to us to emulate Abraham, bringing G-d consciousness to every corner of the globe.

Even when I'm feeling very small -- perhaps specifically when I'm feeling insignificant -- feeling like nothing I do will make an impact, I can think about the atom. My efforts in sharing Torah and Mitzvot can, and will, create a ripple effect across the world, changing the world for the good with the coming of Mashiach, may it be soon. ☯

## Hayom Yom

9 Cheshvan

When my father was four or five years old he went to his grandfather, the Tzemach Tzedek, on Shabbat Vayeira, and began to cry as he asked,

"Why did G-d show Himself to our father Avraham - but He does not show Himself to us?"

The Tzemach Tzedek answered him: "When a tzadik decides at the age of ninety-nine years that he should be circumcised, he deserves that G-d appear to him."

## Chassidic Story

The Neshama of the Baal Shem Tov was a *gilgul* of a simple Jew who lived in Tzfas in the year 5333. The man only knew how to pray.

One night, after *Tikun Chatzos*, Eliyahu Hanavi knocked at his door offering to reveal the secret of the coming of Moshiach. "But first you must tell me," Eliyahu commanded, "the tremendous mitzvah you did on the day of your Bar Mitzvah."

"What I did, I did only for the glory of Hashem, and I may not reveal it to others," the man simply replied. "If this means that you won't share the coming of Moshiach, so be it. It is a basic belief of mine that a man's deeds should be solely for the glory of Hashem." The man refused to be rewarded for his great act.

Eliyahu disappeared and an enormous commotion erupted in the upper worlds. The celestial beings were so impressed by the man's incredible loyalty to the One Above which led him to refuse hearing the most important secret of Heaven. It was decided that Eliyahu should return to teach him and reveal the hidden parts of Torah.

When the time came for him to pass away, his pure soul was brought before the heavenly court. They ruled that his reward was to descend again to earth and be reborn. This time he would be revealed to the world.

He would usher in a new way of serving the Creator and purify the world with his spirit. He would glorify the Holy Name, fill the earth with wisdom and hasten the Geulah with the coming of Moshiach.

This simple Jew of Tzfas was reborn as the Baal Shem Tov. ☯

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