

KINDNESS TO MAN OR PRAYING TO G-D

Kindness is a great virtue. We would all like to think of ourselves as kind. It is also a core virtue in describing the very nature of what is a Jew and it is one of the reasons why G-d chose Abraham to be the patriarch of his chosen people.

The word kind however is used very liberally in describing people. To be sure, most of us do many kind acts. The question however is, are we really kind people.

As always, profound insight can be derived from the historical narrative of our ancestors. For their story is our story and vice versa. This week's portion is no different.

We find Abraham is in the midst of recovering from extremely painful surgery at the age of one hundred. It is also an exceedingly hot day in the Middle East and as the Talmud tells us, he is being visited by none other than G-d himself. Yet, as the story is told, Abraham is not happy. Not because of his own uncomfortable circumstances, but because he cannot do that which he loves more than anything else, which is, to show kindness to others. Not just to family and friends, not just to people from similar backgrounds and faiths, but also to complete strangers, to people with whom he has very little in common.

This is how we know the difference between "genuine" kindness and "what's in it for me" kindness. As long as we think we can benefit from showing kindness to certain people, it is a strategic act, not kindness. It is only when we offer kindness to people from whom we can never expect to receive anything in return; that we know the kindness is genuine.

The truth is that only a great man like Abraham can show genuine kindness to strangers. Because to a great man, there are in fact no strangers for we are all the children of one father in heaven, which makes us all brothers and sisters.

We, however, as children of Abraham, although we might not be able to emulate him with regard to our integrity and feelings, we can certainly aspire to follow in his footsteps and do acts of kindness even to those people from whom we might never get something in return.

Warm Regards,
Yosef Vogel

18th October

VAYEIRA

Shabbat Begins: 5:46 pm

Shabbat Ends: 6:46 pm