

The Power to Bless (Lech Lecha)

No man or woman can be strong, gentle, pure, and good, without the world being better for it and without someone being helped and comforted by the very existence of that goodness. -Phillips Brooks

Dry conventional theological wisdom might claim that only God is capable of affecting blessings upon us. There is a perhaps apocryphal joke of a Lithuanian (non-Hasidic) Rabbi who is approached by a simple Jew and asks the Rabbi to bless him. The Rabbi answers:

“Are you an apple that I should bless over you?”

The Hasidic and Sephardic traditions on the other hand are rife with blessings being bestowed at every opportunity.

When God commands Abraham to leave his homeland and head towards Canaan, He states:

“And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and be thou a blessing.” Genesis 12:2

Rabbi Shlomo Ephraim of Prague, the *Kli Yakar* (1550-1619) on the verse wonders as to the seeming repetition of ‘be thou a blessing’ and what is the difference from ‘I will bless thee’?

He explains that not only will Abraham be blessed for obeying God’s word, but that Abraham will also have the power to bless whoever he wants to and will indeed be the source of the blessings he bestows.

The *Kli Yakar* further explains the simple metaphysical mechanics of how one achieves the power to bless. God is the ultimate source of all blessing. The closer one is behaviorally or “physically” to God (the *Kli Yakar* also points to the Temple mount as a ‘source’), the more one will acquire His ability to bestow blessing.

May we acquire more and more the power to bless – and may we use it.

Shabbat Shalom and blessings on our hostages, our injured, our soldiers, all of Israel and all our brethren around the world.

Ben-Tzion

Dedication

To the countless selfless and heroic deeds of our people. The stories we’ve heard, the stories we are yet to hear and the stories we will likely never hear.