

Shabbat Parashat Lekh L'kha
Focus on the Positive; Eliminate the Negative

How many of you have ever participated in a professional training seminar or other group discussion that asked you to think about, recall, or remember the positive events or role models that helped you to arrive where you are or to become who you are today? If you have, do you remember what the feeling in that session was like? If you have not, try it and pay attention to the feelings that well up inside of you. The experience of focusing on the “blessings” that have guided and accompanied us through our lives lifts our spirits. It warms and lightens the heart and mind. I like to call this the “blessing circle” because at any point, the thought of the blessings that one has received immediately brings along with it the blessings of peace and happiness, allowing us, perhaps, to be able to share our blessings with others by focusing and being more positive in our actions. This blessing circle, however, is not a new idea; it is an ancient idea being called by a new name.

In this week's *parasha*, *parashat Lekh L'kha*, God sets a powerful example for our need to focus on the positive in our lives and the rewards of doing so. When God makes the first covenantal promise to Avram (not yet named Abraham), among other specific items, God tells him that God will bless those who bless Avram and curse those who curse him. In so doing, God emphasizes the need for humanity to make the effort to focus on the positive by being mindful of our blessings and sharing “positives” in word and in deed, for not only will it bring positive energy and emotions to the one who is being blessed, but (as God explains) also bring rewards and worthwhile outcomes (whether or not you believe they are given directly by God) to the one who has given the blessings.

This lesson has direct implications for our everyday lives in terms of the mindsets each of us has and how we, as parents and children, interact with others on a daily basis:

- Make the extra effort to compliment and/or reward children for positive behavior in conjunction with providing appropriate consequences for problematic behavior. This can serve as an incentive for children to “do good.” You may choose to formalize a system by which your children can earn blessings (privileges or rewards) for on-going positive behavior.
- Children should compliment their friends for the positive they find in them instead of allowing their competitive natures to drive them toward highlighting the negative.
- Focus on daily activities and accomplishments that will bring you pleasure, instead of dwelling on problems that bring you stress and frustration. To begin, for each thing that brings you “down,” think of a blessing that can bring you back “up.”
- Place objects that are reminders of good times around your home and office.
- Try to find the good, even in difficult situations.

As we learn in this week's *parasha*, there is a “blessing continuum.” If we are willing to be distributors of blessings and goodness, we open ourselves up to receiving them in return.

Shabbat Shalom!