

I'd like to just explore God's statement to Avram contained in this week's Parashah. "Go for your benefit from your land, from your birthplace, from the house of your father, to the land I will show you. I will make you a big people, I will bless you, I will increase your reputation so you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, those who attempt to use me against you will find that I have thwarted their efforts, and through you shall all the families of the earth be blessed."

When we are fortunate, the places we have been retain a positive emotional pull. We like being where we were, and often would like to stay there. God's message to Avram is that the past should neither be ignored nor given too much importance. When staying in place is not conducive to growth of any kind, then it is time to move on.

When you move on for growth related reasons, then there are positive results. Through hard work, we can be the people whose reputation will be a blessing, such that hearing about who we are can help others become better people.

Nowhere in all of this does God tell Avram, "Follow me and things will be easy for you. Listen to my voice and you will have no problems."

Life is not like that.

Surmounting our problems, sometimes merely enduring them, is sometimes part of what solidifies a reputation. God does not tell Avram that those who are engaged in cursing him [attempting to use God against Avram] will be unable to harm him; it is simply that God is not subject to magical control.

When we remember to act as partners with God in perfecting the world (or when we act in that way, even if it isn't because of our partnership, but for other reasons) then the families of the earth are blessed.

So, what does being blessed mean?

Our blessings begin "baruch ata adonai" and since there are a lot of blessings throughout any service, that means we spend much prayer time with a statement that one aspect of God's essence is this thing we call "blessed." Through our actions, the families of the earth become more godly - when there is nothing blocking them from doing so.

Let us act in such a way that this aspect of God's blessing to Avram is also fulfilled when people reflect upon our lives.