

## חסידות

## From the Chassidic Courts

## Ohr HaMeir

ZHITOMIR · OHR HAMEIR, BERESHIT

The Torah first existed as an undifferentiated "voice" that divided into the dibrot (utterances) at Sinai, paralleling how the souls of Israel were first contained within Adam and the Avot (Patriarchs) and later divided into 600,000 particular souls—so that each generation's tzaddikim (righteous ones), and indeed every Jew who grasps Torah according to the measure of his soul, continually draws forth new hints and combinations from that primordial "voice," which is why Avraham Avinu could fulfill the whole Torah before it was given. The true measure of a person's Torah attainment lies not in sheer depth of study but in whether what he grasps actually becomes his service of Hashem, as Adam's cry of "Your voice I heard... and I was afraid because I am naked" teaches that true understanding of Torah's hidden hints must be matched by genuine fulfillment, lest one remain "naked" despite great comprehension. AI SUMMARY

On the verse "And he said: Your voice I heard in the garden, and I was afraid because I am naked, and I hid" (Bereshit 3:10). It seems fitting to explain this in light of the saying of our Sages, of blessed memory: We find that Avraham Avinu (Abraham our Father) fulfilled the entire Torah before it was given, as it says, "Because Avraham listened to My voice" etc. One must understand how he could have understood the Torah before it actually existed in reality.

It seems fitting to explain this by prefacing with the verse of the Sweet Singer of Israel (King David): "And I will walk in the broad place, for I have sought out Your precepts" (Tehillim 119:45), which Rashi explains as referring to "the halachah (law) that spreads and is prevalent among Israel." At first glance his words are not readily understood.

But it appears thus: it is known that the whole Torah in its entirety was first in the aspect of "voice," and afterward, at the time of its giving at Mount Sinai, it was stated in the aspect of "utterances" (dibrot). We can understand this matter from the aspect of the souls of Israel, for "Yisrael and the Torah are one" — and in truth this is exactly so, equally. The totality of the souls of Israel were first included within the stature of Adam HaRishon (the first man), and when he sinned his stature was diminished, and it came through the mystery of

gilgul (reincarnation/transmigration) into Avraham, was refined further in Yitzchak, and purified in Yaakov, and all the souls that were first included in potential came forth from potential into actuality.

Similarly, we, the Children of Israel, were first included within Avraham Avinu, and afterward divided into many particulars. Each and every one of Israel who performs good and upright deeds to align his character traits in some measure with the service of Avraham Avinu acquires the perfection to have that aspect of Avraham Avinu, peace be upon him, rest within him. And all of Israel collectively, when they straighten their paths and improve their ways to act according to his good deeds, acquire wholeness collectively, so that the aspect of his soul in its entirety rests upon them, as if he had not died. All this will be explained elsewhere at length.

The verse alludes to this: "Every native-born (ezrach) in Israel" — and it is known from the saying of our Sages that "ezrach" refers to Avraham. I would offer a fitting reason why Avraham is called "ezrach": the letters spell "Aleph zarach" (the first one shone), for he was the first shining forth in the world to reveal and publicize His Divinity, blessed be He, and to accustom His Name, blessed be He, in the mouths of creatures.

The verse alludes: "Every ezech" — meaning, the entire stature of Avraham Avinu, called "ezech," the totality of his soul rests within the totality of the souls of all Israel when they adorn and perfect their good deeds to cleave to his character traits; then they draw upon themselves the extension of His Divinity, blessed be He, just as he merited to become a chariot (merkavah) for the attribute of chessed (kindness) through acting kindly with all who come into the world — he grasped the attributes of chessed, the whole fullness of his stature.

And so likewise, Yitzchak Avinu was divided into particular parts within the souls of all of Israel collectively, and his aspect also rests within their collectivity; and when they grasp his attribute to serve the Creator with the attribute of yirah (awe) of exaltedness — as it says in the Zohar on the verse "And Yitzchak went out... toward evening" (lifnot erev), which is explained as "to turn away the confusers and accusers of the world" — meaning, to teach the people of Israel inward awe, and not awe born of fear of punishment.

This is called zechut avot (the merit of the Fathers) — namely, that Israel possesses the clarity of intellect to serve the Creator, blessed be He, through refinement of character traits, as did the first Fathers, each of whom grasped his own aspect of attribute until they became a chariot, as is known from the saying of our Sages: "The Fathers, they are the Chariot." And if Israel has merit — that is, the clarity of their fathers — it is to love nothing in the world except what pertains to the love of the Creator, and to fear nothing in the world except what pertains to the fear of the Creator, and likewise to take pride in nothing except what pertains to the glorification of the Creator, blessed be He. This is called zechut avot — the clarity of the attributes of our holy Fathers.

Afterward came Yaakov Avinu, from whom the twelve tribes divided, and afterward into seventy souls, and afterward they divided into 600,000 on foot. Reason dictates that just as occurred with the lower Yaakov, so it must also be in the root of Yisrael above — Yisrael Sabba (the elder Yisrael) likewise divided into particular aspects corresponding to the

multitude of the bodies of Israel that divided from the lower Yisrael. And if you will use the eyes of intellect, you will understand that it is all one thing.

Just as this occurred with the souls of Israel, so too, in exactly the same way, with the matter of the giving of the Torah — for it is known that its letters correspond in number to the souls of Israel, as hinted in the word "Yisrael," an acronym: "Yesh Shishim Ribo Otiyot LaTorah" (there are 600,000 letters of the Torah). Reason also dictates that the aspect of the Torah was first in the aspect of "voice" in the days of the Fathers — the Fathers being the aspect of the general principle, as opposed to the particulars of the utterances (dibrot) that Moshe Rabbeinu, peace be upon him, drew forth corresponding to the particulars of the souls, the 600,000 souls of Israel.

And even now the matter has not ceased — the Torah is still, in every generation, in the aspect of "voice" to the true tzaddikim (righteous ones) who walk in the Torah of Hashem; they are able to make and innovate within it hints, boundaries, and fences for their service as seems proper in their eyes, then, for the need of the world — a service such that they did not serve Him, blessed be He, with such an aspect before, but rather, in the intensity of their recognition, they innovated combinations within the Torah corresponding to their attachment to the service of the Creator, blessed be He.

And as our eyes see, that in every generation books and intellectual insights are added in the service of the Creator — for truly, all depends on the measure of their souls and their grasp of the letters of the Torah; likewise they make combinations in the Torah and discover for themselves the counsel hinted at in the hints of the Torah, to arouse their hearts to the service of the Creator according to those hints and combinations that the Holy One, blessed be He, shows them through His Torah — then, in their times, the tzaddikim of each generation and its expounders.

And it emerges that these utterances which they now newly discovered and attained were first hidden within those particular utterances (dibrot) that were given at the standing at Mount Sinai. Nevertheless, those dibrot are in the aspect of "voice" relative to

the hints and words that the tzaddikim draw forth, in the intensity of their recognition, from generation to generation according to need, discovering a new reason. Therefore we bless "Who gives the Torah" (Noten HaTorah) — to indicate that the Holy One, blessed be He, still gives the Torah even now, just as from of old at the holy standing at Mount Sinai. See more on this in the coming introductions, and you will understand.

Now you will understand the verse "And I will walk in the broad place," and Rashi's comment "in the halachah that spreads and is prevalent among Israel," as alluding to what was said — namely, that just as the halachah that spreads and is prevalent among Israel comes about through its being divided and multiplied into the multitude of parts of their souls, so too the Torah was divided and multiplied into a multitude of combinations. And truly, all this Hashem did in wondrous wisdom, in order to receive additional delight from the particular details of each and every aspect on its own, which would not be the case were they in the aspect of generality; and also to receive additional delight from the multitude of combinations and hints that are added from the opinions of Israel, whose minds are not alike one to another, and from every combination a particular, individual delight is produced.

Therefore he concludes, saying, "For I have sought out Your precepts" (ki pikudeicha darashti) — meaning, in the sense of "pikadon" (a deposit): that is, those hints and secrets hidden in the Torah, which are only in the aspect of "voice," as explained above — "I have sought them out" — to serve You in truth with those combinations.

On this basis, the saying of our Sages that we prefaced — that we find that Avraham Avinu, peace be upon him, fulfilled the entire Torah before it was

given, which they derived from the verse "Because Avraham listened to My voice" — will also be explained: the intent is that even when the Torah was still in the aspect of "voice," before the cutting of the dibrot (utterances), as explained above, he nevertheless understood and grasped then, through his own power, even all the particular aspects destined to be revealed through the particular portions of the opinions of each and every one of Israel included within him — "and he kept My charge" etc. The general principle that emerges from this: every person in whose heart the fear of God has touched, whatever he grasps and innovates of some hint or secret in the Torah, according to the measure of his attainment in the Torah — that will be his service of the Creator, blessed be He. And if not — even if he increases greatly in depth and attainment in the Torah — his benefit is in vain.

According to these words of ours, the verse "And he said: Your voice I heard in the garden" can be understood: the intent is that even when the Torah is in the aspect of "voice," as discussed above, nevertheless "I heard" — meaning, "I understood" (shema being related to havin, "understanding") — that is, I understood all the particular hints, even the gematrias (numerical computations) and notarikon (acronyms) hinted at in the word "ba-gan" (in the garden). "And I was afraid because I am naked" — meaning, fear and trembling seized me, for in proportion to what I understood by the light of the Torah, I had still not fulfilled my obligation, and I am naked of everything. Therefore let a person set his soul and spirit to delve deeply into the Torah and its hints, to serve Him in truth and wholeness. Amen.

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Translation: translated by AI (anthropic/claude-sonnet-5)