חסידות

# From the Chassidic Courts

MEZHIBUZH · BA'AL SHEM TOV, CHAYEI SARA

## Why does every word of Torah have two sides?

Ba'al Shem Tov

Every word of Torah contains two aspects, rachamim (mercy/male) and din (judgment/female), and free choice lies in which aspect a person draws out; this is why even seemingly mundane statements, like "his wives turned away his heart," hint at this deeper structure. So too, ordinary speech and deeds of the Avot (Patriarchs) and their servants carry hidden yichudim (unifications) and the power to elevate nitzotzot (sparks), surpassing even the Torah study of later generations. AI SUMMARY

And Abraham was old, advanced in days, and the Lord blessed Abraham with everything (bakol). In the manner of what I heard from my master, my grandfather, of blessed memory: "his wives turned his heart away" (I Kings 11:4), but here, "and the Lord blessed Abraham with everything" (bakol) is equal in gematria (numerical value) to "a son" (ben), and the maskil (one who understands) will understand. (Degel Machaneh Ephraim, Parashat Chayei Sara).

I heard from my teacher, concerning the verse "his wives turned away his heart" (nashav hitu levavo), that there is no word in the Torah that does not bear two meanings, which is the aspect (bechinah) of dechar u'nukva (male and female), etc. — see there. If so, there is no created thing in the world that is not comprised of the whole, and the power of choice (bechirah) is given to it, to incline toward whichever aspect it wishes. For this reason, "his wives turned away his heart." (Ben Porat Yosef, folio 14, column 3).

I wrote elsewhere in the name of my teacher, his memory should be a blessing for the World to Come, an explanation of the verse, "For when Solomon was old, his wives turned away his heart" (I Kings 11:4). For in every word there are two interpretations: one is rachamim (mercy), the aspect of zachar (male); the other is din (judgment), which is called nekeivah (female). And this is the meaning of "his wives turned away his heart," etc. And these words are correct for one who understands. (Ben Porat Yosef, 23d.)

And he said, "Come, blessed of the Lord," etc. And in the Midrash Rabbati (Parashah 60, Siman 7): because that tzaddik (righteous man) served him faithfully, he went out from the category of "cursed" into the category of "blessed." The Ba'al Shem Tov, may his soul rest in the heavenly treasuries, said: for even a non-Jew who ate some food in which a holy nitzotz (spark) was clothed, and through the power of that eating performed a service for a Jew, an elevation of some kind was brought about for that nitzotz, even though it is not as great as when a Jew ate it, etc. (Me'or Einayim, Parashat Matot).

In the name of the Riva"sh, may his merit shield us: Regarding the verse "and I came today to the spring" — Rashi, of blessed memory, explained: "I left today and I arrived today, from which we learn that the earth leaped for him." Rabbi Elazar said: "The conversation of the servants of the Avot (Patriarchs) is more pleasing than the Torah of the children," and so on. Now, from this very verse itself emerges a name for the leaping of the earth, and this is the meaning of "I left today and I arrived today, from which it leaped" — meaning, from this very thing, from these words that are in this statement, understand this well.

And this is the meaning of "the conversation of the servants of the Avot is more pleasing" — for in their conversation they hint at wondrous secrets, together with yichudim (unifications) for the leaping of the earth, which is not within the power of the children to achieve, even through their Torah. (Avodat Yisrael, parashat Chayei Sara.)

The weekly portion of Chayei Sara concludes here.

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