חסידות

From the Chassidic Courts

ROPSHITZ · CHAYEI SARA, ZERA KODESH

Why healthy character traits must stay a bit broken

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A person must weigh every act and trait to ensure it serves Hashem, keeping his middot (character traits) "broken" like the Ark's fractional measurements rather than uniformly fixed, so that love and fear, chesed (kindness) and gevurah (severity), remain balanced and unified. Eliezer's prayer and mission embody this yichud (unification) of Avraham's chesed and Yitzchak's fear—hinted in his very name—through which even severity becomes illuminated into goodness. AI SUMMARY

And he said, "Hashem, God of my master Abraham, cause it, I pray, to happen before me today, and perform chesed (kindness) with my master Abraham" (Genesis 24:12) — to understand this: what is the urgency, that it should happen before him today specifically, Hashem causing it to occur? And if it were to happen the next day as well, that too would be good.

Rather, behold, it is written, "In all your ways, know Him" (Proverbs 3:6) — that a person must, in all his deeds, understand and weigh his deeds and ways, that they be for the sake of Heaven. And this is the meaning of "Hashem alone did lead him, and there was no foreign god with Him" (Deuteronomy 32:12): "alone" (badad) is an acronym for "in all your ways, know Him" (bechol derachecha da'eihu), as above; and "there was no foreign god with him" means that our intention should not be for pniyot (ulterior motives) or any other power, but for Hashem alone — that a person should settle with himself, in all his deeds, how it relates to his service, and come to realize that this is for His service and His fear, may His Name be blessed. And in every middah (character trait) with which one is engaged — whether in the love of something or the fear of something, and the like, in all seven middot — one should thereby cleave to His attributes, may He be blessed, to His love and His fear and the like, in all the attributes.

Now, we find regarding the Ark that all its dimensions were fractions (shevirot), not whole cubits — to teach us that one who wishes to be a dwelling-place for the Torah, that it should dwell within him after the pattern of the Ark, must have his traits be broken (shevurot) — not good toward everyone equally. For sometimes one must be angry for the sake of His service, may He be blessed, as it is written, "Tremble, and do not sin" (Psalms 4:5) — to be angry at those who transgress His will, may He be blessed, and the like. So too with the attribute of gevurah (severity), one must weigh his ways in this, that he not be excessively prone to anger. And so with all his traits — the attribute of brokenness — one should not have [only] a single trait [dominate], for even so he has no wholeness, since there is no peace among all his traits; rather, his traits must be broken, and then he can become a dwelling-place for the Torah. And this is hinted, may He be blessed, in the Ark, whose dimensions were broken.

Now it is written, "Kel Hashem vayar lanu" ("God is Hashem, and He has given us light") (Psalms 118:27) — for the essential point is to serve Him, may He be blessed, with love and fear, and these are

hinted at in the Names "Kel" and "Havayah." For "Kel" is a term related to "eilei ha-aretz" (the mighty ones of the land), a term of strength, and "Havayah" is the Name of mercy. For the Name "Kel" indicates gevurot (severities) that are sweetened from the attribute of gevurah, and "Havayah" is mercy and chesed.

And when a person serves with fear and love, he effects a yichud (unification) between these two Names, "Kel" and "Havayah" — and these are, in gematria (numerical value), equal to "yom" (day), on which verse there is great illumination from them. Therefore they are, in gematria, "yom," which gives light, as it is written, "And God called the light 'day'" (Genesis 1:5). And this is the meaning of "Kel Hashem" — the two Names mentioned — "vayar lanu," that He gives light to every aspect, and to all the severities as well, which likewise become acts of chesed. And this is the meaning of "vayar lanu," which, in gematria, equals "Elokim" — that even the Name "Elokim" performs chesed and gives light in its kindness through the illumination of the two Names mentioned, which are, in gematria, "yom." And this is also indicated by the letters of "yom," which are yud, vav, mem: yud indicates the Name "Elokim," for yud is the beginning; and so too the Name "Kel" is the beginning of the thirteen middot harachamim (attributes of mercy), from which it flows to the vav, which indicates din (judgment); and from there to the mem, which indicates the flow to olam hazeh (this world), to the four directions.

Now, Eliezer, who went on the mission of Avraham Avinu (Abraham our father), peace be upon him, understood that he needed to cleave to the aspect of Abraham and Isaac — love and fear — the matter of the two Names mentioned. And in truth, each one is also included within the other, as is known, that in the Akeidah (Binding of Isaac), Abraham too was included in the attribute of Isaac, and likewise Isaac in the attribute of Abraham; and Isaac was also included from chesed. Therefore "Yitzchak," in gematria, equals "Kel," "Elokim," "Havayah," "Adonai" — to say that he was included from all the attributes.

And when Eliezer went on this one's mission, he took as his helpers Abraham and Isaac, and therefore he was suited for this mission, for his name indicates the joining of the two Names and attributes mentioned, and the aforementioned flow (32) to all the attributes. And according to this: the letters of "Eliezer" [include] "Kel," as is known regarding the Name "Kel"; [the remaining letters,] "yzr," equal, in gematria, "Yitzchak" — on that verse, which is the gematria of the two Names mentioned, "Kel," "Havayah," "Elokim," "Adonai." And the flow came to all the ZYHH, each one included from all of them, equaling, in gematria, "tov" (good). And all of this is hinted in the word "Eliezer."

And this was the prayer of Eliezer: "Cause it, I pray, to happen before me today" — meaning: my request was that, since I am going on the mission of Abraham to arrange a wife for Isaac, there be a yichud between the two Names mentioned, which indicate Abraham and Isaac, love and fear, so that through this there be illumination for all, as above in the explanation of "Kel Hashem vayar lanu" — that even in the severities there be an illumination of the acts of chesed and the good flow. And Eliezer was included in the above, as hinted in his name, as above; and therefore he requested this prayer.

And this is what the midrash says on this verse: "Who among you fears Hashem, who hearkens to the voice of His servant" — this refers to Eliezer; and wherever he went, even in darkness, Hashem, may He be blessed, gave him light, as above — for since he was the emissary of Abraham, who was also included from fear, he unified the two Names mentioned, hinted in his name as above, and the light of the aforementioned "day" came and gave him light in every aspect, as above.

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