חסידות

From the Chassidic Courts

RUZHIN · LECH LECHA, BEIT YISRAEL (RUZHIN)

Why holding back from excess brings inner peace

Beit Yisrael

A person must restrain himself from materiality and excess—not through total denial, but by channeling all his strength toward Torah, prayer, and mitzvot (commandments), thereby making peace between the yetzer tov (good inclination) and yetzer hara (evil inclination). This is the deeper meaning of "Lech lecha me'artzecha"—going forth from one's earthliness on the middle path toward the "land," the supernal chochmah (wisdom), ultimately drawing one's life-force not from material things but from the word of Hashem alone. AI SUMMARY

Lech lecha me'artzecha u'mimoladetecha el ha'aretz asher ar'eka ("Go for yourself from your land and from your birthplace to the land that I will show you," Genesis 12:1) — it is written. Concerning sur mera (turn away from evil) and aseh tov (do good), it is written, "Seek peace and pursue it" (Psalms 34:15); and it is written, "The heart of the wise man is at his right hand, and the heart of the fool at his left" (Ecclesiastes 10:2).

For from the side of the yetzer tov (good inclination), the heart is drawn to the root of holiness, to do with all one's ability only good, according to the will of Hashem. And from the side of the yetzer hara (evil inclination), the heart is drawn — rachmana litzlan (God forbid) — to all materiality.

In any event, a person should see, in every matter, to restrain himself from materiality with all his ability, as is written in the Shulchan Aruch — to do this only so that he will have strength for His service, blessed be He: to occupy himself with Torah, to pray, and to fulfill only the mitzvot (commandments) of Hashem. This is sur mera — from every material thing within him and from excess — and only aseh tov in this manner. And through this, "seek peace and pursue it" — peace can come to be between the two [inclinations].

And concerning this it is written: "Not by bread alone does man live, but by every utterance of the mouth of Hashem does man live" (Deuteronomy 8:3) — to bring forth before Hashem, through this strength, holy words, with wisdom and prayer; and this is "by every utterance of the mouth of Hashem."

And this is "Lech lecha me'artzecha" — that he should restrain himself in all things from artziyut (earthliness), and walk on the middle path, going as Hashem commanded, as above. And this is what Rashi, zal (of blessed memory), explained: "for your benefit and for your good" — for by doing this according to the will of the Borei Yitbarach (Creator, blessed be He), he can attain to the supernal chochmah (wisdom). And this is called "the land that I will show you" — the supernal chochmah.

Although there is a level even higher than this — namely, not to receive life-force from anything material at all, but to receive life-force from Hashem alone, as the verse states, "Not by bread alone... does man live, but by every utterance of the mouth of Hashem does man live" — in any case, a person should see to walk in the path described above.

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

