חסידות

From the Chassidic Courts

IZBICA · LECH LECHA, MEI HASHILOACH

Avraham's real test was staying balanced about money

Mei HaShiloach

Avraham's first test of "lech l'cha" was really a test of poverty and constriction, teaching him to accept whatever God decrees with love rather than coveting excess, and his calling "in the name of Hashem" expressed his prayer that neither poverty nor wealth divert him from God's path. This is why, upon returning wealthy from Egypt, he is described as "heavy" (fearful and sober about his riches) rather than simply joyful like Lot, showing that Avraham remained equally wary of the dangers of wealth as he had been of poverty. AI SUMMARY

"... and there he built an altar to Hashem, and he called in the name of Hashem." (Bereshit, 12:8) The first test Avraham Avinu encountered was "lech l'cha," "get thee away." This represents poverty and constriction (that the journey would cause), for it must be first clarified in man that he will not hold grudges against God. Rather he should ask of God that He not bring him into dire straits, God forbid, which would cause a man to go against the His ways. Poverty means one who is not happy with his portion but rather seeks excessive luxury, and for this he must ask from God that he not covet luxury. As it is said of Yaakov (Bereshit, 25:27), "Yaakov was a simple man," meaning that he was complete in his soul without any desire for excesses, just accepting everything with love according to the will of the blessed Creator. This was the prayer of Avraham Avinu at his first test, that he be happy with his portion and not experience any dire poverty, and this is the meaning of "and he called in the name of God," that poverty not divert him from the God's path.

Therefore when he returned from Egypt it was said, "and Avram was very heavy [with cattle and silver and gold]" (Bereshit, 13:2). After he was completely clarified concerning poverty through his first test, it is said, "very heavy," an expression related to seriousness. In his soul he feared wealth, like the prayer of King Shlomo (Mishlei, 30:8), "give me neither poverty or riches." And with Lot the expression kaved, "heavy," is not used. Rather it says, "and Lot, who went with Avraham, had sheep," etc., and "had" (haya) always signifies rejoicing, for he had no fear whatsoever. This was not so with Avraham where it is written "heavy," because of his fear.

Therefore it follows immediately with, "and he went on his journeys ... and there he called in the name of Hashem" (Bereshit, 8:3–4), for here too his soul feared wealth, as mentioned above. Thus he was clarified in all these matters.

