חסידות

From the Chassidic Courts

CHERNOBYL · ME'OR EINAYIM, LECH LECHA

Why the soul is sent down into an earthly body

Me'or Einayim

Hashem's call of "lech lecha" (go forth) teaches that the soul is sent down into a turbid, earthly body precisely so that, through its own free choice to serve Hashem, it can earn its reward as true benefit rather than as nahama d'kisufa (bread of shame) — for a tzaddik (righteous person) below must mirror his root above. By remembering his lowly origin and end, a person attains the humility needed for divine service, and by directing even mundane physical acts — eating, drinking, and earthly needs — toward Hashem, he transforms his very earthliness (artziut) into "lands of the living," where the Life of all life dwells within the material world. AI SUMMARY

"And Hashem said to Avram, 'Lech lecha' (go forth)" — Rashi explains: for your benefit and for your good. But this is difficult, for it is written, "Avraham My beloved" (Yeshayahu 41:8), [indicating] that he served Hashem out of his love for Him, and not for any ulterior motive.

One can say [as follows]: it is written "Avraham, Avraham," "Yaakov, Yaakov," "Moshe, Moshe" — this is because Hashem's portion is His people, and the tzaddik (righteous person) is, as he is here in this lowly world, so is his root above. And for this he was created here, so that even though he is clothed in a turbid body, nevertheless, through the goodness of his free choice, he serves Hashem and does not deny the pomp of the King — that is, the King's seal. And he is, in this world, a tzaddik just as he is a tzaddik in his root above. This is [the meaning of] "Avraham, Avraham" — that he, Avraham here, is a tzaddik just as he is a tzaddik in his root above. So too with the other tzaddikim, whose names here are as they are above — tzaddikim.

And it is known that souls above derive pleasure from the ziv haShechinah (radiance of the Divine Presence), except that it is nahama d'kisufa (bread of shame), for "one who eats what is not his own is ashamed to look at [the giver]." For this reason, Hashem, blessed be He, brought the soul down below, so that through the goodness of its free choice in serving Hashem, the reward for its deeds would be paid to it, and it would not have nahama d'kisufa. This is [the meaning of] "lech lecha" — for your benefit and your good — that as a reward for your deeds, they will give you benefit and good, and not nahama d'kisufa.

Now, although the soul is clothed in turbid matter and desires material and earthly (artzi) desires, from this very matter it can proceed in the service of Hashem. This is [the meaning of] "me'artzecha" (from your land) — from within your earthliness (artziut) you can proceed in the service of Hashem. And as long as a person is not in the category of lowliness, he cannot serve Hashem, for "there is no 'I' and 'He' together" [i.e., ego and Divine cannot coexist], etc.

And from where does lowliness come to a person? The tanna said: "Know from where you came," etc. When a person takes to heart that the beginning of his coming is from such a putrid matter, and his end is to come to dust — what is there for him to be proud of? If the beginning and the end are matters in which there is nothing to be proud of, then also that which is in the middle is not in the category of

importance. This is [the meaning of] "u'mimoladetecha" (and from your birthplace) — if you remember from where you were born, from a putrid drop, because of this you will see to lower yourself to the earth, etc.

For Dovid HaMelech, peace be upon him, said (Tehillim 116:9), "I shall walk before Hashem in the lands of the living." For material things, such as eating and drinking and other human needs, if one does them for the sake of desire, there is no vitality in them.

But this is not so if one eats to satisfy his soul, and elevates the eating and drinking and other human needs to Hashem with good intention, as it is written, "In all your ways, know Him" (Mishlei 3:6) — all your deeds should be for the sake of Heaven. Then they are called "lands of the living," for within his earthliness (artziut) dwells the Life of all life. This is [the meaning of] "el ha'aretz asher ar'eka" (to the land that I will show you) — that they should be called "lands of the living."

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