חסידות

From the Chassidic Courts

LIZHENSK · LECH LECHA, NOAM ELIMELEKH

Why the Torah tells Avraham to leave three things behind

Noam Elimelekh

Three progressive levels of avodah (divine service) emerge from "Lech lecha": first, breaking the power of physical ta'avah (desire) embedded in one's nature, corresponding to "me'artzecha" (from your land); second, overcoming the inferior character traits one is born with, corresponding to "u'mimoladitecha" (from your birthplace), through which one attains love of the Borei (Creator); and third, transforming self-glorification—especially pride in one's ancestry—into a holy hispa'arus (glorification) pleasing to Hashem and man, corresponding to "u'mibeit avicha" (from your father's house), culminating in the supernal "land" Hashem will show. AI SUMMARY

Vayomer Hashem el Avram lech lecha, etc. It seems to me that a person must serve the Borei, blessed be He, through three levels, one after the other, namely: [1] At first, one must break the power of desire (ta'avah) that is naturally implanted in man, such as eating and drinking and the like, so that his eating should be in kedushah (holiness) and taharah (purity). Through this he breaks the power of "elohim acherim" (other gods/powers), for "Elokim" in gematria (numerical value) equals "hateva" (nature). And after he breaks the power of these "other gods," he merits to come to the level of yirah (fear/awe), which is Elokim Chaim (the Living God).

A person must break the lowly character traits that are inherent to him from birth, from the day he emerged from his mother's womb. There are people whose traits are worse than those of other people in a particular trait — for example, the trait of anger and the like — such that their other traits are worse than their fellow's by birth. After one breaks the power of these lowly and inferior traits, he merits to attain love of the Borei (Creator), blessed be He.

[3] And after all this, one must come to the third madreigah (level/rung), which is hispa'arus (glorification/beautification), as has been explained above in Parshas Noach — that all one's deeds should be beautiful and adorned, as the tanna (Mishnaic sage) said: "whatever brings tiferet (glory/beauty)... and beauty for him from mankind."

This is the hint of "Lech lecha me'artzecha" (Go forth from your land) — a hint to the first level, which is the earthly, physical desires that are embedded in the material substance, and one must go forth from it. "U'mimoladitecha" (and from your birthplace) is a hint to the second level, which are the inferior character traits that are born together with a person. "U'mibeit avicha" (and from your father's house) is a hint to the third level, for the main part of lowly self-glorification comes to a person through his boasting and priding himself on his ancestors, that he is the son of great people, and he must go forth from this inferior trait to another kind of glorification, one that is good in the eyes of Hashem and of man, as mentioned above.

"El ha'aretz asher ar'eka" (to the land that I will show you) hints to the higher, supernal land. And this is the meaning of "Hishtachavu l'Hashem

b'hadrat kodesh" (Bow down to Hashem in the splendor of holiness) — meaning, to adorn and glorify, through tiferet (glory/beauty), the kedushah (holiness) which is the level of tiferet.

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

