חסידות

From the Chassidic Courts

LUBLIN · PERI TZADIK, LECH LECHA

Hardship itself is where a person finds God

Peri Tzadik

Avraham's call to "lech lecha" was not merely to leave his birthplace but to rectify his own level precisely from within his lowly origins, just as Yisrael in exile is told to seek Hashem specifically through the hardship of galut (exile) rather than despite it; his two altars correspond to the two paths of avodah (divine service)—Torah (the revealed, "kol Vav") and tefillah (prayer, "kol Hey")—through which a person purifies his midot (character traits), guards against the yetzer hara's (evil inclination's) foreign desires, and rectifies the corruption of the nachash (serpent). This entire pattern is a remez (allusion) for every soul of Yisrael, and Shabbat itself is the appointed time to achieve teshuvah (repentance) and merit both Torah shebichtav and Torah shebe'al peh, hastening the ultimate redemption. AI SUMMARY

"And Hashem said to Avram, 'Lech lecha (go forth) from your land,' etc., 'to the land that I will show you.'" One needs to understand what is written, "lech lecha mei'artzecha" (go forth from your land), for it should have said "go out from your land," etc., "and go to the land," etc.

(And in the Zohar HaKadosh 78b) it notes precisely what is written: "Vayelech Avram ka'asher diber eilav Hashem" (And Avram went as Hashem had spoken to him) — that it is not written "vayeitzei Avram" (and Avram went out) but rather "vayelech" (and he went), corresponding to what was said, "lech lecha." And there it is understood, since it is written "ka'asher diber," etc., and the diber (speech) was "lech lecha" — but why does even the diber not say "tzei mei'artzecha" (go out from your land)? And what is said in the Zohar HaKadosh, that the yetziah (going out) he had already performed earlier, etc. — it seems this comes to resolve this difficulty.

In the Zohar HaKadosh afterward it notes precisely that at the end of the verse it is written "b'tzeito mei'Charan" (in his going out from Charan). And on this Rabbi Abba said: "mei'Charan" is written, and that yetziah from his birthplace had been the first one. If so, here in the command, where it is written "lech lecha mei'artzecha u'mimoladtecha" (go forth from your land and from your birthplace), it refers to that first yetziah, and if so it should have said "go out from your land," etc., "and go to the land."

But the matter is, according to what is said in the Zohar HaKadosh: "lech lecha" — to rectify yourself, to rectify your own level, etc. — meaning He told him that even though he was born from Terach, who was oveid avodah zarah (a worshipper of idols), and in a place where they were immersed in avodah zarah, he should not fear this; rather, precisely from this he would be able to go and attain his own level. This is like what is written, "u'vikashtem misham et Hashem Elokecha u'matzata" (and from there you shall seek Hashem your God and find Him), etc., which comes after it is said, "v'heifitz Hashem etchem ba'amim" (and Hashem will scatter you among the peoples), etc.

— let your heart not be faint to despair, lest, chalilah, you become utterly spoiled; for on the contrary, from there specifically, "u'vikashtem," etc. — that the galut (exile) itself will cause that you seek Him with all your heart and all your soul, and

through this, "u'vikashtem u'matzata" (you shall seek and find). So too did Hashem Yisbarach say to Avraham Avinu: "lech lecha" — to rectify your own level — "mei'artzecha u'mimoladtecha" — that you were born in a lowly and degraded place, and "u'mibeit avicha" — that Terach was oveid avodah zarah — precisely from this itself you will be able to rectify your own level.

And He said to him, "el ha'aretz asher ar'ekka" (to the land that I will show you). Rashi explains from the Midrash Bereishit Rabbah: and why did He not reveal it to him? In order to make it beloved in his eyes, etc., bringing proof from what is written at the Akeidah (binding of Yitzchak), "kach na" (take now), etc. But this still does not fully settle, for there, at least, He revealed it to him afterward, but here it is not mentioned at all that the land was told to him.

However, the Ramban z"l writes: "Vayera Hashem el Avram vayomer, 'l'zar'acha etein et ha'aretz hazot'" (And Hashem appeared to Avram and said, "To your offspring I will give this land") — then "el ha'aretz asher ar'ekka" was fulfilled. See there. And the meaning of "asher ar'ekka" would be like "asher ar'eh lecha" (which I will show to you). And this is what is written, "vayiven sham mizbeiach laHashem hanireh eilav" (and he built there an altar to Hashem who had appeared to him) — that he gave thanks for having been appeared to, and afterward it is written, "vayiven sham mizbeiach laHashem," etc.

But in the Zohar HaKadosh it states (Parashah Alef): "u'vanah teren madbechan, chad l'darga d'itgalya v'chad l'darga d'itkasya," etc. (and he built two altars, one for the revealed level and one for the concealed level), etc. "U'kedein it'ater Avraham mi'darga l'darga ad d'salik l'dargei," etc. (and then Avraham was crowned from level to level until he rose to his level), etc.

Meaning that there are two levels: darga d'itgalya (the revealed level) is that which a person has grasp and understanding of, and this is through divrei Torah (words of Torah). And darga d'itkasya (the concealed level) is that which is hidden from a person's Hanhagah (Divine conduct), as it is written, "ki Hashem yihiyeh v'chislecha" (for Hashem will be your confidence), etc., and Rashi explains from the Yerushalmi: "in matters in which you are a kesil (fool)."

This is like Avraham Avinu who prayed concerning Yishmael, "lu Yishmael yichyeh lefanecha" (would that Yishmael might live before You); and likewise Yitzchak, who wished to bless Esav. And Hashem Yisbarach taught them, against their own knowledge, that for this there is no remedy except tefillah (prayer) to Hashem, and then, "v'shamar raglecha milakeid" (and He will guard your foot from being caught). And this is what is written afterward, "vayiven sham mizbeiach laHashem," without writing "hanireh eilav" — this being darga d'itkasya. And this is what is written, "vayikra b'shem Hashem" (and he called in the name of Hashem) — and Targum Onkelos renders, "v'tzali bishma d'Hashem" (and he prayed in the name of Hashem), for this requires tefillah.

And afterward it is written, "haloch v'naso'a hanegbah" (journeying on, still toward the south) — meaning that Avraham Avinu's level was ahavah (love), and his midah (character trait) was midat chesed (the attribute of kindness). And all his endeavor was to clarify that his ahavah be pure, directed solely to Hashem alone, without any chemdah (desire) for matters of this world entering his heart. This is what is meant by "haloch v'naso'a hanegbah," in line with what is darshened (Temurah 16a): "ki eretz hanegev natati" (for I have given a southern/dry land) — a land that is menugav (dried out) of all goodness. This is the level of Avraham: that he was clarifying his midah, which was chesed, that it be pure for Hashem, without any chemdah of worldly matters mixed in. And this is what is written of Yitzchak, whose midah was pachad Yitzchak (the fear/dread of Yitzchak) and tzimtzum (constriction/restraint); it is written of him, "v'hu yosheiv b'eretz hanegev" (and he dwelt in the south land) — that he had rest in this midah, being clarified in the midah of tzimtzum, fear, and yirah (awe).

And in the Midrash Rabbah, cited by Rashi, it says that he prayed at Ai concerning his descendants, that they not fall at Ai. One needs to understand why his tefillah is mentioned here, since it did not help

completely — for indeed thirty-six men fell there. Also, if the intent was that "vayikra b'shem Hashem" refers to this tefillah, it would not be understood why it is written, "b'shuvo mimitzrayim el mekom hamizbeiach," etc., "vayikra sham Avram b'shem Hashem" (and there Avram called in the name of Hashem) — why does it depict the altar by this sign, that he prayed there?

But the matter of the mizbechot (altars) is as we have said: that earlier it is written, "Vayera Hashem el Avram," meaning He illuminated for him there. And it is written, "l'zar'acha etein et ha'aretz hazot" — the word "hazot" (this) indicates that He illuminated for him the midah of the land, which signifies Torah shebe'al peh (the Oral Torah). And He illuminated it for him so greatly that it was explicit before his eyes, such that one could say the expression "hazot" — for the term "zeh" or "zot" always indicates something clarified in the heart to the point that it stands as if before one's eyes, as at Keri'at Yam Suf (the splitting of the Sea) when they said, "zeh Eli" (this is my God), and as in the future, when each person will point with his finger (as stated at the end of Taanit).

And this is what is written, "vayiven sham mizbeiach laHashem hanireh eilav" — and this was in order that there remain there a fixed and holy place to attain there Torah shebe'al peh, for this was the essence of Avraham Avinu's Torah, that he attained everything from his own heart — that his kilyot (kidneys) became like two rabbis, teaching him Torah and wisdom, as stated in Bereishit Rabbah, Parashah 61. And wherever there is hashra'at haShechinah (resting of the Divine Presence), the kedushah (holiness) remains forever, such that the reshimu (imprint) remains — as we find (Yoma 39b): "Once I went to Shiloh and smelled the scent of ketoret (incense) from between its walls" — that even though Shiloh had already been destroyed for many days, the reshimu of kedushah remained, and he smelled the scent of ketoret. And this is the matter of the first altar: a place of Torah.

And afterward, the second altar was fixed as a place of tefillah, for he wished to pray concerning what is written, "haloch v'naso'a hanegbah" — he wished to perfect himself in his level and his midah of chesed, and he feared lest the yetzer hara (evil inclination) enter and bring into his heart strange chemdot and love of worldly matters. And this is what is stated, "vayikra b'shem Hashem" — that he prayed about this and established a place of tefillah.

But why did he build a new altar — should he not have gone to the first altar and prayed there about this? On this they said in Midrash Rabbah: because he was at Ai, he prayed there concerning his descendants, for he foresaw that they were destined to stumble there, and he prayed that they not be spoiled, chalilah. And one who seeks rachamim (mercy) for his fellow, while he himself is in need of that very same thing, is answered first (as stated in Bava Kamma 92a), and his tefillah helped for himself.

And afterward, when he entered Mitzrayim (Egypt) — "ervat ha'aretz" (the nakedness of the land) — and went out because of the matanot (gifts) given on account of the people, it is written, "vaya'al Avram miMitzrayim," etc., "hanegbah." And it is written, "v'Avram kaveid me'od b'mikneh," etc. — and the Ruach HaKodesh explained, zatzukalla"h, that the kinyanim (possessions) he had acquired were heavy upon him, a burden, because he feared lest chemdot of this world enter his heart. This is as we have said, that this is why "hanegbah" is written there. And it is written, "vayeilech," etc., "el mekom hamizbeiach," etc., "vayikra sham Avram b'shem Hashem" — meaning he went there to pray again that the yetzer hara not enter to seduce him.

And the two altars correspond to the "kol Yaakov" (voice of Yaakov) in the batei knesiot (synagogues) and batei midrashot (study halls), as it is written, "hakol kol Yaakov" — "kol Hey" (the voice of the letter heh) indicates tefillah, "kol Vav" (the voice of the letter vav) indicates kol Torah (the voice of Torah). And through this one can rectify every corruption of the nachash (serpent), which is Lot.

And as stated in Bereishit Rabbah: "v'ruach echat merachefet, zeh rucho shel Mashiach" (and one spirit hovers — this is the spirit of Mashiach), over the face of the waters, by the merit of teshuvah (repentance), which is compared to water — this being the midah of yirah (fear/awe), from which one comes to teshuvah. And likewise tefillah also derives

from the midah of malchut, which is yirah; and the term yirah is always darshened in connection with tefillah (as elaborated in Noach, section 'mem-alef'). And in Tikkunei Zohar it states (Tikkun 36), on the verse "al penei hamayim" — "v'leit mayim ela Oraita" (and there is no water other than Torah) — that through Torah and tefillah one can rectify every corruption of the nachash.

And the entire parashah contains remazim (allusions) for every soul of Yisrael, as is hinted in the Zohar HaKadosh: the entire parashah applies to every soul. And it is a lesson for each person. And Shabbat is a time set aside for teshuvah, and likewise to merit Torah shebichtav (the Written Torah) and Torah shebe'al peh — as has been explained several times. And may they merit to be immediately redeemed.

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