חסידות

From the Chassidic Courts

POLNOYE · TOLDOT YAAKOV YOSEF, LECH LECHA

Why did Avram need to leave his father's house too?

Toldot Yaakov Yosef

Avram's journey from land, birthplace, and father's house mirrors the Rambam's graduated counsel in Hilchot De'ot: one who cannot conduct himself in the straight path among his surroundings must progressively distance himself—first from his land, then his birthplace, then even his father's house—until he can serve Hashem properly. The ultimate destination, "the land that I will show you," is not a physical place but wherever the Shechinah (Divine Presence) is revealed, as in "every place where I mention My Name." AI SUMMARY

Vayomer Hashem el Avram, lech lecha me'artzecha u'mimoladetcha u'mibeit avicha el ha'aretz asher ar'eka, ve'e'escha le'goy gadol, etc. (Bereishit 12:1-2). The questions will be explained afterward. For the Rambam wrote in chapter 6 of Hilchot De'ot (halachah 1), as follows: It is the way of man to be drawn, in his views and in his deeds, after his friends and the people of his land. Therefore one must attach himself to tzaddikim (righteous ones) and distance himself from resha'im (wicked ones). And if the people of his land are evil, he should go to a land whose people are tzaddikim; and if all the lands, etc., or if he is unable to go, etc., he should dwell alone; and if they do not allow him [even this], etc., he should go to the midbar (wilderness), as it is written, "Mi yitneni va'midbar melon orechim" ("Who would give me, in the wilderness, a lodging place for wayfarers") (Yirmiyahu 9:1).

Thus it will be understood: "Lech lecha" (go for yourself) "me'artzecha" (from your land) — from the state/country; and "to dwell in the house of your birthplace" — and when you see that they do not allow you to conduct yourself in the straight path, distance yourself further, also from your birthplace, and seclude yourself in your father's house; and if you cannot serve Hashem while being with them, distance yourself further, also from your father's house, "el ha'aretz asher ar'eka" (to the land that I will show you) — "b'chol hamakom asher azkir et shemi" (in every place where I mention My Name) (Shemot 20, 21), that there should be a revelation of the Shechinah (Divine Presence), which is "the land that I will show you." And this is easily understood (v'kal lehavin).

