חסידות

From the Chassidic Courts

ROPSHITZ · LECH LECHA, ZERA KODESH

Your humble origins shouldn't limit your hopes for greatness

Zera Kodesh

Avraham Avinu's self-perceived lowliness, stemming from his idolatrous origins, was not meant to limit his aspirations but to be paired with a broadened heart that trusts in Hashem's boundless chessed (kindness) and selichah (forgiveness), so that one's humility coexists with confidence in Divine help. Hashem's command "Lech lecha" called Avraham to leave behind this limiting thought and instead become the vessel through whom the supernal chassadim of the Avot (Patriarchs) would be drawn down and revealed into the world, fulfilling his deepest longing to spread Hashem's kindness through Torah and his own deeds. AI SUMMARY

Lech lecha me'artzecha ("Go forth from your land") etc. For Avraham Avinu, peace be upon him, was constantly contemplating in his thought his own lowliness, and he reckoned in his mind: How can I become a truly complete tzaddik (righteous person), through whom His holiness, blessed be He, would become renowned as is His will and desire — when I come from my native land, from the city of the Kasdim (Chaldeans), people of wickedness, and my birthplace, my family, and my ancestors were idol-worshippers — how is it possible for such a man to become so righteous and holy?

In truth, although it is very good for a person to contemplate his own lowliness and to arrive at the attribute of hachna'ah (self-abasement) and anavah (humility), nevertheless his heart should be lifted up in the ways of Hashem, as it is written. For in order to serve Him, blessed be He, a person must broaden his mind and elevate himself, and through this comes the way to do so: to elevate his thinking even while his lowliness and self-abasement remain fixed in his heart.

This works as follows — since he knows that there is no measure, limit, or end to His kindness and mercy, blessed be He; whereas if he were to say, as above, "Because I come from a generation and family, and my father, who are wicked, or because I myself have already committed many transgressions, therefore it is impossible for me to become so righteous" — then by saying this he would, Heaven forbid, be breaching the boundary, limit, and end of His mercy, blessed be He. But in truth it is not so, as above, in the vein of "but with You there is selichah (forgiveness), that You may be feared." Through this his mind and thought become broadened, and his longing to do His will, blessed be He, grows great, and he trusts in Him, blessed be He, that in the abundance of His mercy and His will to do good to His creatures, He will help him in his service — even though he is at a very low rung — so as to do good to him in his end.

This is what He, blessed be He, taught Avraham: "Lech lecha me'artzecha, u'mimoladetecha, u'mibeit avicha" ("Go forth from your land, from your birthplace, and from your father's house"), as above — that you are occupied with this thought, that you are very lowly because your origin is from them, as mentioned — remove this thought from yourself,

and let your heart be lifted up in the ways of Hashem, and through you His holiness will become renowned as you desire.

For the entire longing and will of Avraham was to draw down His holiness, blessed be He, to the Olam Haba (World to Come) and to draw the supernal chassadim (kindnesses) down to this world. Therefore he was called Avram, for in the upper worlds there is a level of the first supernal qualities that are called av ("father"), for they are the level of supernal machshavah (thought); and "fathers" implies that there are "offspring," for thought is the father of action, since every utterance and every deed is preceded by a thought that gives birth to that utterance and deed.

These supernal attributes that are called av are the ones called the Three First [Sefirot], and this is also hinted in the word av, whose gematria (numerical value) is three, and which has two letters. The letter alef indicates a supernal level, the level of Keter Elyon (Supreme Crown), and this is hinted by the alef of the word av, whose numerical value is one, the alef being first among the letters, indicating this hidden, concealed, supernal level which is the beginning of all the supernal attributes.

Then comes the letter beit of the word av, whose numerical value is two, indicating the two attributes of Chochmah (Wisdom) and Binah (Understanding), tarein re'in de'lo mitparshin ("two companions that are never separated"), and therefore they are hinted in the letter beit. In truth, all these three are in a single oneness, and thus they are all hinted together in the word av, to hint that "we all have one Father" — that all three, hinted in the word av, are a single unity.

Now these first [Sefirot] are pure supernal chassadim, and He, blessed be He, desired that chassadim should be drawn from these levels into this world; and so He, blessed be He, created Avraham, who took hold on the right side of the attribute of chessed (kindness), which is through hit'arutah dilta'ah (arousal from below) arousing hit'arutah dile'eila (arousal from Above), to draw down chassadim from these worlds called av. This is the meaning of Rashi's comment on "Vaera el Avraham, el Yitzchak, ve'el Yaakov" ("I appeared to Avraham, to Yitzchak, and to Yaakov") — "I appeared to the Avot (Patriarchs)" — that there are supernal levels called Avot, from which our forefathers Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov drew, and they opened the wellsprings to draw holiness and chassadim into the world.

Therefore Avraham's name was initially Avram, which is the letters of av ram ("exalted father"), for he drew from an exalted and very lofty world, the three uppermost great chassadim, for he was a man of great chessed and drew down so much chessed that he even sweetened the gevurot (severities) of Yitzchak, who embodied pachad Yitzchak ("the fear/dread of Yitzchak"), along the lines of "Avraham gave all that he had to Yitzchak."

This is as explained regarding the verse "Vayomer Yitzchak el Avraham aviv, vayomer avi" ("And Yitzchak said to Avraham his father, and he said, My father") — the roshei teivot (acronym) of avi is "Yitzchak ben Avraham," meaning: I pray that in you I too take hold of the attribute of chessed and be erased [into it]; but you — how will you be able to exert gevurah to slaughter your only son, the opposite of your own attribute? "Vayomer hineni beni" ("And he said, Here I am, my son") — meaning: that I too shall be included in your attribute, for this is the essence of chessed, that the chassadim should be strengthened, as it is written, "ki gavar chasdo" ("for His chessed has overpowered").

And when He, blessed be He, saw Avraham's great longing and his hit'arutah dilta'ah, to draw the supernal chassadim to come into revelation, He said to him, "Lech lecha me'artzecha" etc. And our Sages, of blessed memory, said that this means "that I shall make your nature known in the world." To understand this — is it indeed the way of a tzaddik to publicize himself in the world and pursue honor, Heaven forbid?

Rather, their intent, of blessed memory, on this matter is as we have said: "that I shall make known your attribute, and you shall draw the supernal chassadim so that they come into revelation." This is what they meant by the parable of the flask of perfume etc., poured from vessel to vessel so that its fragrance would spread — meaning that the attribute of chessed would become renowned,

revealed, and spread throughout the world, for such was the entire longing of Avraham. This is what He, blessed be He, said to him: "Lech lecha" etc., "el ha'aretz asher ar'eka" ("to the land that I will show you") — meaning: that I shall show and reveal, and through you the supernal chassadim shall be revealed and spread throughout the world through you.

And this is what He, blessed be He, said to him: "Va'agadlah shemecha" ("And I will make your name great") — and our Sages said, "Behold, I add a letter to your name, that your name shall be Avraham." This too is explained along the above lines — that He gave him the power to draw His mercy, blessed be He, into the world, for Avraham in gematria equals rechem ("womb/mercy"); also rechem, with the kollel, equals darom ("south"), for darom is the attribute of chessed, since darom is the right side, hinting at the attribute of chessed, that the chassadim should be drawn down. This is the meaning of "One who wishes to become wise should turn southward [yadrim]" — for the essence of wisdom is to draw from the level of Chochmah, which is machshavah (thought), to draw from there the chassadim, the level of darom, the right side, so that the hidden chassadim within Chochmah come into revelation.

And through this — how are the chassadim drawn down? Through the fulfillment of the Torah Hakedoshah (Holy Torah). This is the meaning of "Vaya'avor Avram ba'aretz ad" etc., "Elon Moreh" ("And Avram passed through the land as far as… Elon Moreh") — meaning the "tree" of Torah, as our Sages said, that He showed him Har Gerizim and Har Eival, where they would later receive the Torah Hakedoshah with oaths. And afterward it says, "Vayiven sham mizbeach laHashem hanir'eh eilav" ("And he built there an altar to Hashem who appeared to him") — meaning that His kindnesses, blessed be He, appear to him through Avraham's attributes, as mentioned above.

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