חסידות

From the Chassidic Courts

RUZHIN · TOLDOT, BEIT YISRAEL (RUZHIN)

Can fear of G-d lead a person to love Him?

Beit Yisrael

Drawing on Rashi's identification of Yaakov and Esav as the subject of the parashah, the author reads Yitzchak's "generations" as the work of gevurah and tzimtzum, which create the choice between good and evil that makes reward and punishment possible. He grounds the spiritual path in the balance of love and fear, with the left absorbed into the right, so that a person who turns from evil out of fear comes to love G-d, and who serves G-d in humility comes to peace. AI SUMMARY

"These are the generations of Yitzchak, son of Avraham. Avraham begot Yitzchak." Rashi comments: Yaakov and Esav, who are mentioned in the parashah. It is written, "Turn from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it." I say that this applies both to "turn from evil" and to "do good," that is, both to prohibitions and to positive mitzvot (commandments). In everything one must "seek peace and pursue it." As it is said, one who learns Torah with fear and love, the Torah flies upward. That is, a person who wishes to serve Hashem must see that love and yirah (awe) of G-d are present, as it is written, "The beginning of wisdom is the fear of Hashem."

For it is said, "Let a person always incite the yetzer hatov (the good inclination) against the yetzer hara." That is, when a person is about to do evil, he must overpower the inclination so as not to do it. But first, "nullify your will before His will." That is, he must nullify his will with regard to all desires and overpower the evil. Then he can do His will, may He be blessed.

When a person comes to love the desires of this world, he must fear the Creator, blessed be He, and distance himself from evil through this. Then he can come to love G-d. That is, by distancing himself from evil out of fear of G-d, even out of fear of punishment, at any rate this fear leads him to serve G-d with the attribute of love. This is how it works with "turn from evil." When a person is angry, or has other bad traits, and thinks to himself that through this he has become distant from holiness, and so separates himself from the evil, then from this fear he comes to love of G-d.

So too with "do good." From the love just described one must come to fear of G-d. For a person who serves G-d must then fear G-d and be humble in his own eyes. If a person thinks to himself that he is serving Him, then his avodah (divine service) is worth nothing. Rather, a person must be humble in his avodah and fear G-d. This is "seek peace and pursue it," for through love and awe, in which left is included in right, peace is made.

This is "Yaakov and Esav, who are mentioned in the parashah." For through the inclusion of left in right the attribute of Yaakov is made, who is called tam (wholesome). This is "These are the generations of Yitzchak, son of Avraham." For it is written, "For I said, the world is built with chesed (lovingkindness)," and it is written, "In the beginning G-d created."

The matter is that "a wise man's heart is at his right, and a fool's heart at his left." G-d made the din (judgment) and the tzimtzum (divine self-contraction) so that there would be choice between good and evil, and so that there would be reward and

punishment. This is the meaning of "These are the generations of Yitzchak": this is the work of gevurah (strength, severity) and the tzimtzum. "Yaakov and Esav, who are mentioned in the parashah" are there so that there would be a distinction between good and evil, and so that there would be reward and punishment.

"These are the generations of Yitzchak, son of Avraham. Avraham begot Yitzchak." For it is written, "I said, the world is built with chesed." G-d created the world in order to do good to His creatures. But through the attribute of chesed alone it is impossible to receive, only through the attribute of mercy, as it is written, "on the day that Hashem Elokim made earth and heaven." That is, through the inclusion of chesed and gevurah, left in right, mercy is made, as it is written, "The Almighty G-d, Hashem, spoke and called the earth." Through the tzimtzum there is then the ability to receive. This is "Avraham begot Yitzchak" and "Yitzchak, son of Avraham."

That is, when suffering comes upon a person at times, Heaven forbid, an aspect of din, this too is G-d's chesed, because through it the person will come to do teshuvah (repentance). "These are the generations of Yitzchak, son of Avraham" means that when suffering comes upon a person at times, it is truly a kind of mercy, so that he will do teshuvah. This is "Avraham begot Yitzchak," for through this the suffering becomes laughter (tzechok).

It is known that when a person does teshuvah, the din is sweetened and becomes Yitzchak. May Hashem grant that the dinim be sweetened away from all Israel. Amen, may it be His will.

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