חסידות

From the Chassidic Courts

GER · CHIDDUSHEI HARIM ON TORAH, VAYERA

Why Avraham feared his circumcision would separate him from people

Chiddushei HaRim

Drawing on the Ran, as cited in Rashi, the word "elav" ("to him") conveys a deeper yichud (unification) than "lo," and after his circumcision Avraham experiences a unity of divine appearance that had never existed before, in which the concealed and the revealed are joined. Drawing on the midrash, the teaching reads Mamre's counsel, that God would save Avraham from the act that seemed to contradict nature, as showing that one nation must live above nature so that holiness can spread from it into the whole world. AI SUMMARY

"And He appeared to him." It seems to me, as the Ran wrote, and it is cited in Rashi on Parashat Vayikra ("to him," to exclude etc.), that one senses the yichud (unification) of the speech more in the word "elav" (to him) than in the word "lo" (to him). See there.

So too here, after he was circumcised, and the covenant is the binding together of all the limbs and sinews, the 248 and the 365, equal in gematria (numerical value) to "brit" with the kollel, and all the powers and feelings were directed to God, may He be blessed. He is called "tamim" (whole) because nothing remained outside. So God, may He be blessed, appeared to him like "water, face to face," etc. This brought about a great and holy yichud such as had never yet existed.

And this is what the holy Zohar writes on "The blossoms have appeared in the land": that all creation, from all the worlds, was so that man would see them and acknowledge Hashem. Now that the intention was completed, all the visions were completed, so that "Hashem appeared" is "to him."

Earlier, where it is written "to Hashem who appeared to him," it was in the aspect of revelation. Here God appeared in the aspect of the concealed and the revealed, which is the secret meant by "The secret of Hashem is for those who fear Him, and His covenant," etc. And this is the yichud of Yod-Heh with Vav-Heh.

"By the terebinths of Mamre." That is, that he gave counsel, etc. The explanations are many, but it seems to me simply as follows. So it is written in the midrash (rabbinic interpretation): "Perhaps guests will not come," etc. This was the pillar of gemilut chasadim (acts of lovingkindness), to incline the whole world toward God. It was a mighty avodah (divine service) to descend from his level to speak with idol worshippers, but at least he was not separate in his body.

After the circumcision, when he had changed from the whole world, and his covenant displaced the covenant of Noach, he feared that he would be set apart from the people of the world. He feared that he would not be mingled with other people, so that he could teach them and do acts of lovingkindness, since through the circumcision he was above nature.

And he asked Aner, etc., how the matter of circumcision appeared to them. For it is written, "Plans are established through counsel": through the clarification of the opposing side, which is then pushed away, the matter is established forever. For

this reason he asked them to state their opinion, so that he would incline their hearts and they would remain attached to him even after the circumcision.

Two of them contradicted him, saying that according to nature one cannot circumcise, but Mamre said, "Hashem will save you," as already written in the midrash. That is, that according to reason every person is obligated to do something above nature, since the Holy One, blessed be He, deals with him above nature. And such is the order of the world: there must be one nation attached to Hashem and conducting itself above nature, and through this, life and holiness will spread into nature and the whole world. Through this Mamre merited that God was revealed in his portion, and that he felt holiness from the vision that Avraham had.

It is also written for the generations that whoever finds the conduct of the tzaddik (righteous one) and of Israel good in his eyes is blessed, as included in "I will bless those who bless you." So too within a person himself: if holiness is at least good in his eyes, then either way, even if he is far from God, there is a remedy, and he too is included in "I will bless those who bless you." And this is what is meant by "one who chooses their ways," and by "you shall choose life." This itself is a positive mitzvah (commandment): to choose life, that it be good in his eyes. From this will come "so that you may live," that he will have true life.

Translation: translated by AI (anthropic/claude-sonnet-5.5)