חסידות

From the Chassidic Courts

BERDITCHEV · VAYERA, KEDUSHAT LEVI

Why does the Torah call Avraham merely 'him' here?

Kedushat Levi

Avraham's name, like every divine name, encodes the specific measure of G-d's infinite light that its bearer is able to absorb, since all revelation involves a tzimtzum (contraction/distillation) calibrated to the recipient's spiritual capacity. At this moment, newly circumcised and still in a transitional state of having shed his old bodily limitations through yirah (awe) without yet fully attaining the elevated capacity reflected in his complete name, Avraham is referred to only as "lo" (to him) rather than by name, signaling that he stood between his former and fully realized spiritual identity. AI SUMMARY

Genesis 18,1. "Hashem appeared to him (Avraham) in the groves of Mamre." Since we have been told that G'd had departed from Avraham in 17,23, we would have expected the verse here to mention the subject Avraham by name. Why does the Torah only write לו, "to him?" G'd, i.e.

aspects of the אין סוף, G'ds Essence, dispensed different amounts of שפע, "original light," eventually converted in the lower domains of the universe into matter of varying degrees of physical densities. Every such שפע, represents a distillation, צמצום, "shrinkage, of this original light. [If I understood the concept correctly, Ed.] This process is reflected already in the different names we have for G'd, the letters in these names reflecting varying degrees of G'd's having restricted His manifestations to His creatures in order to make it compatible with what His creature can tolerate. This principle applies not only to creatures in the lower part of the universe, i.e. our planet, but also to the different categories of "angels," disembodied servants of the Lord in the celestial spheres, according to the spiritual level attained by the creature, angel, or human being, as the case may be.

When such a human being has been given a "name" by its Creator, this "name" reflects the degree to which this person is able to absorb G'd's "light," without being harmed by it. When a human being serves his Creator out of awe, יראה, by totally negating the limitations imposed on a soul while it is constricted by the body it inhabits, it may be considered as having "disrobed," shed the restrictions his body imposed upon the free, upward, heavenward motion of his soul. When we express this concept in terms of the meaning of the letters in our G'd-given names, this means that we have divested ourselves of our "names."

Avraham, at the time of his life that the Torah speaks about here, had not yet freed himself from the limits imposed upon him (by dint of the letters in his name) prior to his having been circumcised. This state of flux, a temporary situation, in which Avraham found himself at the beginning of this portion, is reflected in the Torah referring to him only by a pronoun, instead of by his full name.

Translation: Kedushat Levi translated by Rb. Eliyahu Munk

