חסידות

From the Chassidic Courts

ROPSHITZ · VAYERA, ZERA KODESH

How Avraham tried to soften judgment with kindness

Zera Kodesh

Avraham saw that the visitors carried a stored-up din (judgment) aroused in gevurah (strength, severity), and he sought to sweeten it with chesed (lovingkindness). Drawing on the Midrash's account of Marah, where God showed Moshe a tree that sweetened the bitter waters, the author teaches that the letters of the Name Havayah, which equal etz (tree) in numerical value, are sweetened through fulfilling the Torah, and that Avraham's feeding of the angels with tongues, as the Sages recorded, draws down daat (knowledge) into the world. AI SUMMARY

"Let a little water be taken, and wash your feet, and rest under the tree." Avraham saw that when they came to his house, a stored-up din (judgment) was present and the bechinat (the aspect of) gevurah (strength, severity) was aroused. In truth, one of them was the angel who overturned Sodom and carried out din. When Avraham saw this, he wanted to sweeten the din with chesed (lovingkindness). He said, "Let a little water be taken," meaning from the waters of chesed, "and rest under the tree." This alludes to the sweetening of the gevurot, in the manner of what is explained about "And they came to Marah...": the waters were bitter (marim) because the bechinat gevurah then rested upon Israel. "And Hashem showed him a tree" means that they taught Moshe how to sweeten the din.

"And Hashem showed him" means they also taught him that the Name Havayah has the gematria (numerical value) of etz (tree), as is known (yod-peh-heh, heh-peh-yod, vav-peh-heh, heh-peh-vav). The matter of sweetening is this: each letter of the Name Havayah points to other aspects and attributes, and when they are mingled together the dinim are sweetened. The main sweetening mentioned above, making the Name Havayah into the number etz, is al yedei (through) fulfilling the holy Torah.

Therefore the initials of "ragleichem," "vehisha'anu," "tachat," "ha'etz" spell Torah. In this manner, each letter of the Name Havayah points to other aspects and attributes, and when they are mingled together, they blend and mix them and sweeten all the attributes. (The main sweetening mentioned above is accomplished by the Name Havayah, whose number is etz, and that is through fulfilling the Torah.)

"And refresh your hearts; afterward you shall pass on." "Refresh your hearts": you are holy angels. "Afterward" (achar) means the other side, which is the opposite of holiness, the sitra achra (the "other side"). "You shall pass on" (ta'avoru) means that the spirit of impurity will pass from the earth, and only holiness will spread through the world.

Razal (our Sages) said that he fed them three tongues with mustard. This too hints in the manner above, on the basis of "and rest under the tree," since he wanted to sweeten the dinim. Mustard sweetens meat to a good taste, which hints at hamtakat hadinim (sweetening of judgments). He fed them tongues because the tongue hints at the aspect that

tips the balance, as written in parashat Noach: like the tongue of the scales that tips the pan; "scales, covenant": the tongue is what tips the balance.

Avraham's avodah (divine service) was to draw daat (knowledge) into the world so that people would know God, as it says, "Know the God of your father." This is the meaning of "For I have known him, so that he may command his children..." That is, "I have known him" means that Avraham drew down the bechinat of supernal daat. "That he may command" (yetzaveh) is an expression of togetherness and connection: "his children and his household after him" means that Avraham connects his bechinat daat to them. The bechinat daat is the aspect that tips the balance, as is known, deciding between chochmah and binah (wisdom and understanding). Therefore he fed them tongues, because the tongue is the bechinat that tips the balance and hints at the bechinat daat that tips the balance. To draw down daat, in keeping with Avraham's longing, he fed them tongues, as above.

This is the meaning of "Shall I hide from Avraham what I am doing?" Since he draws down the bechinat daat, which in its plain sense means knowledge, it is not right to conceal anything from one who draws down knowledge. This is also the meaning of "for I have known him," in the transitive form: I made him the bechinat knowledge, because the knowledge of God's divinity began with him, as it says, "God of heaven and God of earth," according to Rashi's explanation.

This is the meaning of "and he was sitting at the entrance of the tent," for "entrance" (petach) means beginning, as it says, "and the Valley of Achor for a petach (door) of hope." Ohel (tent) is also the initials of "Atah har'eta lada'at" ("You were shown to know"), and he was the beginning of this. Therefore he was called Avram, a father who begets and begins, like Moshe Rabbeinu, peace be upon him, who is called the father of the sages, and like Yosef, "Avrech."

The initials of "vehu yoshev petach ha'ohel" have the gematria of Michael, the bechinat of the attribute of chesed, since Avraham drew down kindnesses in accordance with his attribute. Also, the initials of "petach ha'ohel kechom," together with the three words, have the gematria of Gehinnom. From this our Sages derived that Avraham Avinu, peace be upon him, sits opposite the entrance of Gehinnom and does not allow anyone who is circumcised to enter.

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