

Get out of the Way Rabbi Zev-Hayyim Feyer

ב"ה

Parshat Lech L'cha

At the end of last week's Torah portion, we were told the name of Abram's birthplace – אור כשדים (*Ur Kasdim*, traditionally rendered in English as *Ur of the Chaldees*, *Ur of the Chaldeans*, or *Chaldean Ur*). As we know so well, however, the Torah's text is written without vowels, and we frequently find additional levels of meaning in a Torah text by making slight changes in the vowels.

By a change in the vowels, we find that אור כשדים can be understood as *or k'shedim*. *Or*, of course, means *light*, and *shedim* are *demons*, so *or k'shedim* means *light like that of demons*, or *demonic light*. And we then understand G*d's instruction to Abram – **Get thyself out!** – as the Divine injunction to Abram to get himself out of this demonic light.

Go, G*d tells Abram, **to a land that I shall show thee**. And we have traditionally understood this instruction as meaning, "Get going. Do not worry about where thou art going; have faith in Me; when thou reachest thy destination, I shall let thee know." Understanding *Ur Kasdim* as *or k'shedim*, however, it seems that the import of G*d's instruction to Abram is that Ur is so negative a place (it is, after all, illuminated by a demonic light) that any place will be an improvement! **Get thyself out!**

And then we can take our interpretation one step further. Rather than *shedim* (Hebrew for *demons*), we may read *shedim* (Hebrew plural form of the Aramaic *shed*, *breast*). G*d is known (albeit not until later in the Torah) as *E*I Shaddai*, a Name Which we traditionally render as *G*d Almighty*. But, understanding *shaddai* as the (correct) Aramaic for *breasts*, we may understand *E*I Shaddai* as *G*d of the Breasts*, that is, *G*d Who Nurtures*.

Now we have yet another level of meaning in G*d's instruction to Abram. *Or k'shedim* is not the *demonic light*, but the very opposite – the *light of the breasts*, the *Divine nurturing Light*. "Get out of My Light," G*d tells Abram, "so that I can be about My business of nurturing! Get moving; wherever thou goest, I shall be with thee, and I shall let thee know when thou hast reached thy destination."

Finally, understanding the characters in the Biblical stories – regardless of their historicity or lack thereof – as aspects of our own personalities and as paradigms for humanity, we realize that G*d's instruction to Abram is an instruction to us all.

To the courage to step aside, to get out of G*d's Light, to allow G*d to be about G*d's business of nurturing, may we soon be led.

Shabbat Shalom.