

# THAT FIRE WITHIN

*by Rabbi Label Lam*

Rabbi Yitzchok said, "It is comparable to one who was going from place to place and he saw a castle brightly lighted. He said, "Is it possible that that this palace does not have a keeper?" The master of the building peaked at him through the window and said to him, "I am the master of this castle." (Midrash Rabba - Lech Lecha)

Writes Moshe Chaim Luzzato, "A person should stop for at least some time every day, free from all thoughts, and quest within his heart, "What did the early forefathers do that HASHEM desired them so much?" (Derech Etz Chaim) What did Avraham do that he and his children became the focal point of the entire Torah and of all subsequent human history?

In psychology class senior year in high school it was always my job to go the 9th grade to select a fresh specimen for an experiment. One of those trials involved testing the weight of peer pressure and perception. An orange colored object was held up in front of the class. Everyone was coached to declare its color "purple". The 9th grader would be the last one to be asked his opinion about of its color. It never failed. They always agreed with the rest of the class. Afterwards we reasoned that they did not just say it to avoid being harassed in the lunch room later but their actual perception had shifted gradually with each vote and in the end they were actually convinced that it was a shade of purple.

How was Avraham able to stand against the entire world and its most powerful ruler? Where does one get the courage and the conviction? Maybe when the whole world disagrees one should rightly question his perception and humbly yield his opinion. How and why did Avraham remain so fixed and loyal to his thesis that he was able to confidently convince many others as well?

When subjective matters of taste are being discussed one might still be open to being persuaded. These are perception issues and it might even be wise to consider whether or not the milk is sour after eight other noses tell you so. However, the subject of the oneness of G-d is too serious to be left to feelings alone and therefore Avraham from his earliest days conducted an exhaustive research project that left him absolutely convinced and convincing. (See Rambam: Laws of Idolatry)

The Rambam in Morah Nevuchim writes, "Truth does not become more-true by virtue that the whole world agrees with it nor less so even if the whole world disagrees with it! Galileo said something

similar, "In questions of science, the authority of a thousand is not worth that humble reasoning of a single individual."

In Sefer Yetzirah which is reputed to have been authored by Avraham, it is written, "Twenty-Two Foundation letters: He engraved them, He carved them, He permuted them, He weighed them, He transformed them, and with them, He depicted all that was formed and all that would be formed."

Imagine in place of a chart of the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew Aleph- Beis we are looking the periodic table of elements and with that we read the statement above. Even a rudimentary understanding of chemistry teaches that we and everything in our world are made from the ingredients of that chart and that every item listed there is not more than an admixture of the same stuff with varying valences, in different combinations and densities. When cracked open, we know all too well, that each element is actually a sublimely packaged particle capable of revealing profound amounts of raw energy.

Physicist Stephen Hawking penned these words, "Even if there is only one possible unified theory, it is just a set of rules and equations. What is it that breathes fire into the equations and makes a world for them to describe?" 3700 years ago, long before the Unified Field Theory, and prior to any notion of quantum physics, Avraham Avinu uncovered with his searching mind, and in spite of the world about him, came to know, the Source of that fire within. Text Copyright &copy 2004 by Rabbi Label Lam and **Torah.org**.