

# Neurology & Pain Management

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## Burning Up Inside (Bira Doleket)

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ויאמר ה' אל אברם לך מארצך וגו'  
ר' יצחק פתח :

(תהלים מה) שמעי בת וראי והטי אזנך ושכחי עמך ובית אביך  
אמר רבי יצחק:

משל לאחד, שהיה עובר ממקום למקום וראה בירה אחת דולקת.

אמר: תאמר שהבירה זו בלא מנהיג?

הציץ עליו בעל הבירה. אמר לו: אני הוא בעל הבירה.

כך, לפי שהיה אבינו אברהם אומר: תאמר שהעולם הזה בלא מנהיג?

הציץ עליו הקב"ה ואמר לו: אני הוא בעל העולם.

(שם) ויתאו המלך יפיד כי הוא אדוניך .

ויתאו המלך יפיד, ליפודיך בעולם.

והשתחוי לו, הוי, ויאמר ה' אל אברם:

*God spoke to Avraham: "Go you from your land ...."*

*R. Yitzchak began... This may be compared to one who was traveling from place to place, and he saw a burning mansion. He said: Is it possible that this mansion is without someone responsible? The owner of the mansion looked out at him and said: I am the master of the mansion.*

*So, was our father Avraham saying: Is it possible that the world is without someone responsible? God looked out at him and said: I am the master of the world.*

(Midrash Genesis Rabba 39,1)

***In This World, only intensive labor propels a person from one level to the next. This is the meaning of what is written (Bereishit Rabba 39), “burning courtyard (bira doleket)”: Avraham learned that everything must be in its resting place and at its root. However, the blessed God replied that His blessed will is that in This World there will be only effort and no rest.***

(Sefat Emet, Lekh Lekha, 634)

Absolutely baffled by its power  
Worse, my powerlessness  
Year after year, month after month  
Holding out as long as I can  
Then the fall.  
A pattern in time  
A pattern of the body itself  
The mansion has  
Its own rhythm  
A cycle of powerlessness.

What is this *bira doleket* within?  
This towering inferno of desire?  
Overcoming the entire field?

Abraham asks the same question when looking out into the world  
And seeing its conflagration  
Questioning an intelligent design  
Until God responds  
*Ani hu baal habira*  
“I am the owner of the village”  
I am the master of this house!  
But how does this help the old patriarch’s theological question  
Of theodicy?  
Who could possibly allow this to go on?

God does not reply with a reason for the inferno  
Merely establishing his authorship and ownership

So what is the perennial answer for the fire itself  
Why the world continues to rage in flames?  
Apparently that is left for us, Abraham’s descendents  
To dis-cover.

The reason for the fire?  
You want me to answer?  
After such a long exile!  
And crematoria!  
An answer?  
Are you Crazy!  
Any answer is an affront to their memory.  
Let us rather concentrate on my inflammation, character defects  
That way we have a playing field  
A field of discourse that is more manageable.

Burning mansions in my body

Sucking me into the fire  
Carnage of the soul in the aftermath  
The blackened timbered shell  
Next day  
In the cold light of day  
Where the insanity is made plain for all to see  
The wreckage of the rage  
The splattered fragments of the self  
Charred splinters of wood, blackened timber  
Strewn across the street  
Where visual acuity is 20/20  
In contrast to the blindness of the previous night.

Is the meaning of this mansion on fire inside  
That God is its master too?  
Master of His domain  
That even I  
In this lowly state  
In this body  
Must surrender even this  
The very obsession itself, the insanity,  
The defects of character, the lies, deceits and betrayals  
All of this baggage to Him!  
Could it be that buried in this Midrash is the reflection back onto His watch  
Of all my life even the bad?

*"Ani hu baal habira"*

He exclaims!

"I am master of the house, the mansion, the village, your body-self  
All of it! The good and the ugly."

And if the gaze was the trigger  
The lit match cast inadvertently into the dry brush  
The inappropriate stare  
The lingering look  
A spiritual visual dysfunction-mainly taking place in the darkness;  
Then maybe the rectification the fixing and refining of this defect  
Must also emerge from the visual, an imaginative restoration.  
The fixing must take place in the very images-but within rather out there.  
What does She look like?  
How do I relate to Her? To beauty, music, passion, to the very flames?

What immortal image did I behold as a fetus?  
Alongside my sister.  
The fateful vision that would transfix my imagination forever?  
Who did I recognize as "*ze eli*"  
Why do I continuously search the planet for that image that will finally give me rest?  
Peace of mind?  
That image so etched in my soul I search for it even in inappropriate places?

I feel the answer to Abraham's question lies right here  
In its midst  
In the flames  
In the carnage  
An image of Him/Her  
The master the *baal habira*.

And the answer lies beyond sacred texts  
Rather in the very image of that burning conflagration-  
But resist the golden calf that  
Has emerged until now  
One generation after another  
The false images and temporary relief.

The image behind the texts  
The Torah behind the Torah  
Which can only be accessed by those fallen souls  
Who know the other side  
Who felt the rage and fire within  
Who saw the dark side the dark night  
How else?

It is only by crowing Him master of even the flames of Auschwitz that we can  
Access the totality of Him  
His Unity  
And our own.  
Only this way can I inhabit this body and own this dark soul  
Only by owning His mastery can I own my own inflammation.  
You want to quote me philosophy? Theology? Theodicy?  
We will leave that for the scholars and Litvaks.  
We who have known inside  
The nightmares and dead souls who call in the night  
The souls wafting above us like a Chagall painting  
Europe's earth screaming from the blood still dripping within  
The children's cries do not diminish  
In that furnace  
He still yells  
*Ani hu baal habirah*

And I still need to acknowledge Him there and within.