



Lech Lecha - לך לך

# Ashreinu אשרינו

Enhancing your Study of the Weekly Torah Portion



## Discovering One's True Self

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Our parsha opens with an interesting command given to Avraham Avinu:

לך-לך מארצך,  
 וממולדתך ומבית  
 אביך, אל-הארץ,  
 אשר אראך

*“Go forth from your land and from your birthplace and from your father’s house, to the land that I will show you”*  
 (12:1)

Usually when telling someone to go somewhere, the destination is emphasized. For example, if you are asked to buy groceries, your parent does not say, “go from your room, from the house, from Montoya Circle, to a store that I will tell you.” Rather, they ask: “can you pick up some more lemon-lime Syfo seltzer from the end of the drink aisle in Winn Dixie?”

Whenever such a peculiar pasuk occurs in the Torah, it alerts us to the existence of deeper meanings. The Lubavitcher Rebbe explains (Torat Menachem v.12 pg. 121; 13 Tammuz 5714) that since the yetzer hara is with us from the moment we are born, we are in need of special strength to prevail over it. By means of this strength, our soul can leave:

- ארצך (your land), an idiom of רצה (will/desire): relating to the mundane desires of the animal soul.
- מולדתך (your birthplace): a person’s natural assumptions deriving from his intellectual and emotional worldview.
- בית אביך (your father’s house): the improper notions that derive from one’s upbringing and habits in order to go “to the land that I will show you,” places of prayer and Torah study where the Godly desires of the Divine soul prevail.

While the Rebbe’s sicha continues onward to deeper Kabbalistic concepts, Rabbi Simon Jacobson (one of the Rebbe’s *chozrim* who worked on editing and publishing these types of Chassidic works) provides a course of

*avoda* based on the above *vort*.

Rabbi Jacobson expresses how subjectivity, the most blinding influence in our lives, further stems from the above-mentioned three categories: *artzicha* – social conformity and peer pressure, *moladicha* – inherent bias and self-love, and *bais avicha* – parental attitudes from our upbringing.

All of these subjective forces get in the way of fulfilling one's life goal, which first requires us to go "to the land that I will show you": discovering one's true self. When we approach the formidable challenge of refining our *middot* we must reflect on these influences in our lives. Making a daily *cheshbon* hanefesh becomes a much more fruitful endeavor with this knowledge, as it is our nature to attribute our faults to external influences.

Once we have spent considerable time reflecting and meditating on how these subjective forces impede our ability to unearth our fundamental identity, we can begin exploring the mystery of *birurim* (latent spiritual refinement within all things). By *hashgacha pratit*, a person goes about his travels to the places where the spiritual sparks in need of purification await their redemption (HaYom-Yom, 1 Cheshvan). With this, our true life's mission can begin.

## Avraham, the Guide for ba'alei teshuva

Sara Deichman ('19)

יֵאמֶר ה' אֶל-אַבְרָם לֵךְ מֵאֶרֶץ וּמְוֹלָדְתְּךָ וּמִבֵּית  
אָבִיךָ אֶל-הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אֲרָאָה

*“And Hashem said to Avram, ‘Go forth from your land and from your birthplace and from your father’s house, to the land that I will show you’*  
(12:1)

The above statement, which begins this week's parsha, is a command from God, directed towards the Jewish people's original patriarch, Avraham Avinu. God comes to Avraham and tells him to leave his home. However, the order of His instruction stands

out. Why should he first leave his land, then birthplace, then his father's house? This order seems to be reversed!

However, for one on their path to God, this is the epitome of the perfect formula for spiritual elevation. The process of becoming a *ba'al teshuva* is defined as, “the return of a secular Jew to religious Judaism.” A *ba'al teshuva* has many challenges to overcome through spiritual rebirth.

The way God directed Avraham is a direct guide for *ba'alei teshuva* for how to close one chapter of their lives and open another. First, one leaves their land, the purely secular lifestyle they have led, a life filled with customs and norms that Judaism does not necessarily promote or accept.

Next is the birthplace, the starting place of one's life, which represents what a person has always known. A birthplace is the place one begins. In order to connect fully with God and accept His ways above their own, *ba'alei teshuva* must be willing to leave their old lives behind, the place they were at birth, and every day since up until now.

Everyone eventually leaves their birthplace behind, blossoming beyond the garden of security and into the larger world. Upon leaving one's parents' home, a person must question their upbringing and move towards God, their King.

One must accept their nature over their nurture and follow their own path of life, choosing to leave their family's ways and wishes, embracing their own relationship with God on a higher level. Perhaps God is portrayed as a fatherly figure to the Jews in order to remind each and every one of us that regardless of our parents, history, birthplace, and customs, our Father above is and will always be guiding us on our spiritual paths in life.



# The Ultimate Source

Ty Kay ('18)

Parshat Lech Lecha introduces us to our first forefather, Avraham Avinu. Avraham's triumphant and glorious life is described beginning in this parsha. In all of Avraham's grand endeavors, one minor interaction proves puzzling.

Avraham frequently pays and is paid by people for various things, as we all do, including his most famous purchase, Ma'arat Ha'machpela. In this week's parsha, after assisting Malkizedek, Malkizedek gives Avraham a tithe,

*"...And he gave him a tenth from all"*

(14:20)

However, in a similar situation with the king of Sodom, Avraham refuses to take even a shoelace from the king, instead insisting,

*"that I will not take a thread nor a shoe-lace nor anything that is yours..."*

(14:23)

So what was the reason for this different reaction between the two kings? Why did Avraham take money from one, but refuse the other?

Avraham knew that everything comes from Hashem. Whenever he purchased something, he recognized that it was ultimately God who had given him that money, and allowed him to buy it. Avraham tried to spread this recognition of God by asking all his visitors to thank God for the food they ate in his tent, so they would come to realize everything is really from Hashem. Avraham knew that Malkizedek believed in God and acknowledged that He was the reason for his wealth.

As such, Avraham felt comfortable taking money from him. However, Avraham knew that if he accepted the king of Sodom's money, the king would believe he, and not God, was the reason Avraham was becoming rich. As such, Avraham did not feel comfortable taking his money.

May we all remember that ultimately everything we have comes from Hashem and constantly thank him for all that he gives us.

# Making the Move

Jordan Landes ('18)

Relocating is not an easy thing. As someone who has moved twice, I can tell you it is difficult and hard to adjust. Doing it at a later stage of life is even more difficult. We often look at so many amazing feats in the life of Avraham Avinu but we forget about possibly the hardest one: his move to Eretz Yisrael. Leaving everything that was familiar to him and his wife Sarah to go to a new and strange environment.

Immediately when you move to a new place it can feel hard to find the right place to fit in. Avraham himself felt this after leaving his comfortable and well-respected home. He feels like a stranger, despite God promising the land to him.

Rabbi Berel Wein suggests an important reason for why this was such a significant event for Avraham. Avraham is the perfect example of the fact that it takes generations of Jews to realize they are finally home and no longer strangers in another country.

If Avraham had been born in Israel, our whole nation could have been entirely different. But the Torah describes Avraham as a wanderer. Hashem does not tell Avraham the exact place to go but He does tell Avraham that He will direct him to the right place.

Avraham travels to the land of Israel, and it is there that God tells him to make his home, not just for his family but for all of the future Jewish people.

There is an inner drive within Jews that brings us to Eretz Yisrael. Our inner drive of connection to our homeland has been the driving force of increased immigration of Jews to Israel. Avraham's greatness could only be realized in Israel, which makes it more believable that the greatness of the Jewish people will not be realized until we all make our way to the Holy Land.

# Avraham and Faith

Ashira Meyerowitz ('21)

Avraham was told to, “go away from your land, and from your birthplace, and from your father’s house” (12:1); however, this order seems as if it should be written differently. Although it may seem that the order should be, “go away from your father’s house, your birthplace, and your land”, the order goes deeper than the surface.

Hashem told Avraham to leave his land first, then birthplace, and then his father’s home, as he is not only leaving those places physically but, even more so, spiritually. It is written that he should leave his land first, as his land was filled with idol worshippers, and leaving would increase his spirituality. This order shows that he should distance himself from his land, his birthplace, and family in that particular order, to strengthen his spirituality.

When Avraham was told that he should leave everything he knew and trust his future in Hashem’s hands, he immediately agreed. Anyone on a lower level than Avraham would have hesitated when told to leave everything they knew. This shows that Avraham’s faith and trust in Hashem was incredible. We should strive to have as much faith and trust in Hashem as Avraham did.

We are so often tested in our everyday lives. It is important to realize that we are only given tests that we are able to overcome, like Avraham overcame his, and that Hashem has a plan for us. It is not easy to see the good that Hashem has in store for us, but it is important to remember to trust in Hashem and His ways, just like Avraham.



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