



5781 Divrei Torah on Jerusalem by Rabbi Yosef Bronstein Parashat Parashat Lech Licha/פרשת לך-לך

A Dual Journey to the Center

This week's parsha opens with God's epic command to Avraham: "Go forth (*Lech Lecha*) from your land and from your birthplace and from your father's house, to the land that I will show you."¹ The simple understanding of this command is that Avraham was commanded to "go," meaning to travel to the Land of Israel. There is, however, a more existential interpretation that is added by Chassidic texts. The words "*Lech Lecha*" can be literally translated to "go to yourself." Simultaneous to his physical traveling, Avraham was mandated to dive into his own psyche, access and eventually reveal the root of his soul.²

These two journeys – the physical and existential – go hand in hand. As a Jewish person, Avraham could only reach deep into himself when living in the destination of his physical journey – the Land of Israel. It is only when experiencing the spirituality and homeliness of the Land of Israel that a Jew can truly be in touch with himself. Therefore, the two journeys had to be part of the same command.

The command of "*Lech Lecha*" in this week's parsha represents only the beginning of Avraham's journeying. Years later, towards the end of his storied career and life, God once again repeats this phrase. In the introduction to the story of Akeidat Yitzhak, God tells Avraham: "Please take your son, your only one, whom you love, yea, Isaac, and go away (*Lech Lecha*) to the land of Moriah and bring him up there for a burnt offering on one of the mountains, of which I will tell you."³ Avraham had accomplished a great deal in his journey to the Land of Israel and in his inner work. Apparently, though, he had still not reached his peak. He would have to embark on one more journey – this time within the Land of Israel. His destination: Har HaMoriyah and the space of Yerushalayim.

¹ Bereishit 12:1. Translation adapted from Chabad.org.

² See, for example, Mei HaShilo'ach on the parsha. Also, see a compilation of Chassidic interpretations to the verse, available at <http://www.chabad.org.il/Magazines/Article.asp?ArticleID=7214&CategoryID=1441>.

³ Bereishit 22:2.



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It was only in Yerushalayim that Avraham was able to reach within himself and achieve the impossible. It was there that he passed the ultimate test and was declared to be truly God-fearing. And it is no coincidence that it was there that he discovered the location of Yerushalayim, the home of God and the Jewish people on this world. If the Land of Israel allowed Avraham to begin the journey of accessing the deep recesses of his own soul, Yerushalayim enabled him to complete his mission. The first *Lech Lecha* leads directly to the second *Lech Lecha*. A Jew's physical and existential journey must lead to Yerushalayim.