

Reflections of Redemption

Essays on the Weekly Torah Reading and Moshiach,
Based on the talks of the
Lubavitcher Rebbe,
Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson

Reprinted for Parshat Lech Lecha, 5782
(Vol. 3)



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IN LOVING MEMORY OF

Horav **Schneur Zalman Halevi** עי"ה
ben Horav **Yitzchok Elchonon Halevi** הי"ד
Shagalov

Passed away on 21 Tamuz, 5766

Reb **Dovid Asniel** ben Reb **Eliyahu** עי"ה
Ekman

Passed away on 5 Sivan - Erev Shavuot, 5765

Mrs. **Devora Rivka** bas Reb **Yosef Eliezer** עי"ה
Marenburg

Passed away on the second day
of Rosh Chodesh Adar, 5766

Reb **Yitzchok Moshe** (Ian)
ben Reb **Dovid Asniel** עי"ה

Ekman (Santiago, Chile)

Passed away on the 24th day of Shevat, 5769

ת. נ. צ. ג. ה.

AND IN HONOR OF

Mrs. **Esther Shaindel** bas **Fraidel Chedva** שתחיל
Shagalov

DEDICATED BY

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Shagalov

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by
Dovid Yisroel Ber Kaufmann

Lech Lecha

A JOURNEY BACK AND FORTH

In Lech Lecha, Abraham was told to leave his land and journey to Israel. This portion is always read in conjunction with the seventh of MarCheshvan, fifteen days after Sukkos, when the last Jew arrived at the Euphrates River, ready to leave Israel. This going forth and coming back, leaving and entering the material world, is not a contradiction. Both are part of transforming the world into a dwelling place for G-dliness.

This week's Torah reading, *Lech Lecha*, begins with G-d's command to Abraham to leave his home and his father's house and go to the land that G-d will show him. Our Sages tell us that the narratives about the patriarchs and matriarchs indicate the path their descendants – the Jewish people – should follow. Their actions paved the spiritual pathway for us, revealing the how and why of our Divine Service.

The Torah reading starts with the words, "Go out from your land, your birthplace and the house of your father and go to the land that I will show you." Abraham is commanded to ascend to the land of Israel, to leave all else behind and go on a journey of self-elevation.

To truly understand the meaning of this concept – and its importance for us – we must first take note of a significant fact about the calendar: the seventh day of the month of MarCheshvan always occurs during the week of *Lech Lecha*.

On the seventh of MarCheshvan, the Jewish people started praying for rain for the land of Israel. The prayer for rain began fifteen days after Sukkos, so that the last traveler from Jerusalem

would reach the Euphrates river. Sukkos, of course, was one of the three pilgrimage festivals in which Jews were required to bring an offering to Jerusalem from wherever they lived. It was a two-week journey – fourteen days – from Jerusalem to the Euphrates River, the Biblically ordained eastern border of the land of Israel. Thus, by the seventh of MarCheshvan, everyone who had gone to Jerusalem for the festival of Sukkos and was now returning home had reached the border of Israel. The rain in Israel would not trouble their journey home.

However, the significance of the seventh of MarCheshvan is not simply negative, the day until which the rains of Israel are delayed. Rather, that very negative – the delay of the rains until the travelers reach the border – indicates that the seventh of MarCheshvan has a deeper connection with the holiday itself. After all, it's a two-way journey to Jerusalem. Celebrating the holiday of Sukkos included both going to and coming from Jerusalem. In other words, as long as the Jewish people had not reached the border, the river Euphrates, it seemed to them as if they were still rejoicing in and observing the holiday.

Thus, the fourteen days after Sukkos were seen as an extension of the festival. The seventh of MarCheshvan, then, marked the final completion of every activity associated with the holiday. It was a day of descent from the heights of holiness the people experienced in the Temple in Jerusalem.

That being the case, there seems to be a contradiction between the lesson of the seventh of MarCheshvan and the lesson of the Torah reading. The words *Lech Lecha* mean “go out.” That is the theme of the Torah reading. It teaches us to follow in Abraham's footsteps, to leave home – to leave our material concerns and comforts – and ascend to the land of Israel – to elevate ourselves spiritually. The seventh of MarCheshvan teaches us to follow in

the footsteps of those who observed Sukkos in Jerusalem, to return home – to go back to our involvement in the physical world – and descend from the land of Israel – to descend from the heights of spirituality.

Granted that there's a point to both concepts – elevating one's self spiritually and involving one's self in worldly concerns – still they seem to be diametrically opposed. Why is it that every single year they occur together? Since nothing happens by coincidence, but all is a result of Divine Providence, that the seventh of MarCheshvan always falls during the week of *Lech Lecha* emphasizes the connection and interrelationship between the two ideas. But, how does this relate to us now, specifically as we find ourselves in the days of Moshiach?

Actually, elevating one's self spiritually and involving one's self in worldly concerns are inter-related. The purpose of *Lech Lecha* – of going forth – is to create a dwelling place for G-dliness. This dwelling place can only be created through transforming material objects and mundane concerns into vehicles for holiness. And this transformation can occur only through the Torah and mitzvos of a Jew. So, when all of a Jew's activities are "for the sake of heaven" the common and everyday are filled with the spiritual. G-d's presence dwells and is revealed within the physical world.

The spiritual elevation – the ascent to the land of Israel – indicated by the journey of Abraham is not an end in and of itself. Rather, it provides the inspiration and direction, giving a Jew the ability to "go forth" into the world and transform it into a dwelling place for G-dliness. This return home, this descent to the material world outside the land of Israel, which completes and fulfills the purpose of the ascent, occurs on the seventh of MarCheshvan.

Still, we must look a little deeper into the question, since the journeys of Abraham in the Torah reading of *Lech Lecha* are from

outside Israel into the land of Israel, while the journey of the seventh of MarCheshvan is from inside Israel – from Jerusalem – outward to the lands outside of Israel. Since the journeys are superficially in the opposite direction, there must be something about the journeys themselves that connect the Torah reading of *Lech Lecha* and the seventh of MarCheshvan.

A true journey brings one to a completely new level. One reaches a stage unconnected with and incomparable to the place one stood before the journey. Thus, the journey of Abraham into Israel and the journey of the Jews away from Israel after Sukkos must bring each to the same new level. That is, the spiritual pathway paved by Abraham must be the same one traveled by the Jews and completed on the seventh of MarCheshvan. In this way the correspondence of the Torah reading of *Lech Lecha* and the seventh of MarCheshvan can be explained.

The words “*Lech Lecha*” – “go forth” – are a command from G-d. Prior to this command, Abraham acted based on his own understanding. As he came to recognize the existence of G-d, he taught others about the Creator. But his answers and understanding came from his reasoning and comprehension. As a result, the transformation he could achieve, the degree to which Abraham could teach others to recognize the G-dliness within the world, was limited to an intellectual level. However, after G-d commanded Abraham *Lech Lecha* – go forth – Abraham acted as G-d’s emissary. His actions were based not on his own understanding; rather, he acted simply to carry out the command and directive of the One who sent him. In this way Abraham could connect and unite creation with its Creator. The connection with, relationship to and perception of G-dliness was not limited by one’s intellect or logic. It penetrated the entire being.

And this is also the lesson of the seventh of MarCheshvan: one

must take the inspiration and the vision of G-dliness received at the Temple in Jerusalem during the festival and go forth with it as G-d's emissary, bringing a recognition of G-dliness – through Torah and mitzvos – to the whole world. In this way there will be a revelation of G-dliness and an actual seeing of the spiritual.

The task and yearly journey of *Lech Lecha*, as we experience it on the seventh of MarCheshvan, reaches its culmination and completion precisely now, in the days when the coming of Moshiach is imminent and we will complete the journey Abraham began, transforming the world into a dwelling place for G-dliness.

(Based on Likkutei Sichos 20, pp. 54-60)

IN LOVING MEMORY OF
Mrs. **Chana** (Carrie) bas Reb **Meir** ע"ה **Greenberg**
Passed away on 9 Sivan, 5781
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*
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