

The Rebbe's Discourses

Free Summaries of the Rebbe's Chassidic Discourses בלי אחריות כלל וכלל
ד"ה ויאמר ה' אל אברהם לך לך שבת פרשת לך לך תשכ"ה בלתי מוגה
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GO TO YOURSELF

THE DIVINE STATEMENT TO ABRAHAM, *LECH LECHA*², IS TRANSLATED AND EXPLAINED IN SEVERAL WAYS.

Rashi states that it means, in effect, 'go for yourself, for your own benefit and your own good'. But on this one can ask: why would Abraham have to be told that this is for his own good? Isn't it enough that G-d was giving him this command?

Another explanation is found in a discourse by the Tzemach Tzedek³. Quoting Rabbi Moshe Alsheich (16th cent. Tsfat) he states that *Lech Lecha* means 'go to yourself'. G-d was telling Abraham that he has to connect with the source of his own soul. For within any person, only part of the soul is within one's body. The root remains above, in higher realms, in the 'supernal Land'.

In order to connect with the root of his soul, Abraham had to travel to the physical Land of Israel, which links with the spiritual Land above. Then his soul could link with its root.

Now the root of the soul is in the world of unity, what the Kabbalists call the world of Emanation (Atzilut)⁴. As the Tzemach Tzedek points out, although the individual souls of the Jewish people are revealed at differing levels, such as Creation, Formation or Action, the source of all of them is in the highest realm,

¹ Maamar Vayomer Hashem El Avraham Lech Lecha 5725 (1964). Printed in Dvar Malchut for Sedra Lech Lecha 5779 and 5783. It was not edited by the Rebbe.

² Genesis 12:1, the beginning of Sedra Lech Lecha.

³ The third Lubavitcher Rebbe, mid-19th century. See his *B'or Hatorah* Bereishit vol.4 fol. 675a ff, 680b ff.

⁴ The kabbalah speaks of four spiritual worlds. From above to below: Atzilut (Emanation), Beriah (Creation); Yetzirah (Formation); Asiyah (Action).

Emanation. In order to reach the source of one's soul in the world of Emanation, one has to travel to the Land of Israel.

This process is about being in this mundane world, outside the Land of Israel, and yet wanting to connect with one's spiritual source in exalted realms. The Tzemach Tzedek compares this with what happens spiritually when we celebrate the second day of a Festival, which is only celebrated in the Diaspora. What is really an ordinary day is being transformed into something holy.

He explains that ordinary days, outside the Holy Land, are governed by the 'Seventy Princes'. These Seventy Princes are channels of flow of spiritual energy, relating to the seventy nations of the world. Usually they are empowered by an energy which comes only from the lower two worlds, Formation and Action. The upper worlds of Emanation and Creation are too spiritual to relate to the mundane realms. The energy from the lower worlds of Formation and Action is seen as going into exile in order to give life to the lower realms, in which evil predominates. Thus the Sages say that when the Jewish people went into exile, the Divine Presence also went into exile.

But when it comes to the festive second day of the festival, such as Simchat Torah, which only exists as a separate festive day in the Diaspora, there is a sudden unusual influx of spiritual energy from the highest realm, the world of Emanation, into the ordinary world outside the Land of Israel. The fact that a profane and mundane day in the Diaspora is transformed into a sacred day gives an extra level of joy, even higher than that which is generally felt on a festival in the Land of Israel.

The Tzemach Tzedek explains that this, in effect, is what was told to Abraham. The goal was to connect his soul in the mundane world with its source, so that the higher spiritual radiance of the world of Emanation could flow into the mundane world. But in order for him to achieve this, he had to go to the Land of Israel. In this way Abraham was connecting with his own self: *Lech lecha* - go to yourself.

This links with another way to understand the beginning of the Sedra. So far we have considered Abraham as moving from below to above, from a place remote from holiness to the sacred Land of Israel. But there is also another way to see it, as explained by Rabbi Shneur Zalman⁵. Abraham's name was originally Avram, which means *av ram*, exalted father, meaning that he was on a very high spiritual level, beyond ordinary life. His journey of *Lech lecha* was a journey from above to below, that instead of being exalted beyond the world he should come down into the world.

⁵ Founder of Chabad, d.1812. See his *Torah Or*, beginning of Lech Lecha, 11a.

This is another form of going to his own self: fulfilling his purpose in revealing the Oneness of G-d to the world. Then, as Rabbi Shneur Zalman explains, Abraham's true qualities would be revealed.

This is also the force of the words in which G-d tells him 'go to the Land.. I will show you.'⁶ The last words, I will show you, can be understood as referring to Abraham himself: go to the Land in which I will reveal your true nature.

Thus, one connects with one's own self by ascending to a more spiritual realm, and then one is able to reach downwards into a more profane realm⁷. In each mode one connects one's soul with its source, and thus one brings the intensity of the most exalted levels of the Divine into the world.

[Torah teachings are holy – please treat these pages with care](#)

⁶ Gen.12:1.

⁷ This is the editors' interpretation of the thrust of the discourse.