

# Keep To The Right – Parshat Lech Lecha

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Our *parashah* begins by God commanding Abraham, “Go to you” (Genesis 12:1). This seems very strange. You can be told to go to a different place or to a different person, but what does it mean to go to oneself? Yet what if one’s own reality were skewed; if someone was totally removed from their true essence, would it not be necessary for them to find themselves?

Abraham’s journey to the Promised Land is the precursor to our own individual journeys to holiness and spiritual growth. Not only was Abraham not born on giant’s shoulders, he grew up in a toxic environment of idol worship and falsity. In order for him to reach his destination, he had to embark on a path of self-discovery by ridding himself of all the external evils

and influences that surrounded him.

The *parashah* therefore states, “Go from your land and from your birthplace and from your father’s house” (ibid.). Go from your land – and the many blinding false attitudes and beliefs prevalent in society. Go from your birthplace – and the spiritual deficiencies and bad nature you were created with as a result of your origins. Go from your father’s house – and your family’s pride and mistaken beliefs that nurtured you. Only by leaving everything behind and fully connecting with his true essence – his own holy *neshamah* (soul) – could Abraham reach the Promised Land.

As we embark on our own spiritual journeys and attempt to connect to God, we are also surrounded by many layers of darkness and confusion. We desperately seek change and want to experience more from life, but this often seems like an impossible task. This is expressed in the interplay between Abraham and Lot. As Abraham obeyed and left behind the many falsehoods that were holding him back, the Torah says, “And Lot went with him” (ibid. 12:4). The name *LoT* hints to *LiTusa* (cursed) (*Zohar, Lekh Lekha*, 78). Just as the conniving Serpent lied to Eve and was cursed, so too, Lot’s goal was to surround and confuse Abraham and prevent him from reaching his true destination.

How did Abraham react? “Let there not be a conflict between us or between our shepherds ... Depart from me. If you go left, I will go right. If you go right, I will go left” (ibid. 13:8-9). In other words, “You choose which part you would like, and I will take the other option.”

But the Midrash explains it this way: “Rabbi Chanina Bar Yitzchok explained that Abraham didn’t say ‘*v’esmola*’ (I will go left), but rather ‘*v’asmila*’ (I will ‘left him’) – in all events, I will make that man [Lot] go to the left” (*Bereishit Rabbah* 13). Whereas the left represents falsehood, the right represents truth. According to the Midrash, Abraham wanted to

make sure that he was always on the right side – the side of truth.

We each have our own version of “Lot” following us around. Society’s opinions and baggage from our past seek to hold us back. Nevertheless, we have the ability to stand firm by remaining focused on the truth with utter simplicity. If we always remind ourselves of God’s constant reality in our lives, “Lot” cannot dislodge us from our true place. At the same time, sometimes he appears to be on our right. He disguises himself and makes it seem as if it is a mitzvah to listen to him. For example, he may convince us to copy a righteous individual, but this person may have an entirely different mission! The Midrash teaches that in this case, too, Lot is a distraction. Although he appears to be on our right, he is really on our left.

We must always seek our true essence so that we may connect to God’s truth, no matter where we may seem to stand.

*(Based on Likutey Halakhot, Hilkhoh Geneivah 5)*