

## Going for God

Lech Lecha – Rav Benjy Myers

At the end of last week's Parasha we were introduced to Avraham, father of our nation. Unlike Noach, we really do not know anything about Avraham prior to God commanding him to leave his home and family. We know nothing about Avraham's character and why he was worthy of being the forefather of the Jewish people.

The Torah records a number of times when God spoke to Avraham. The first time was when God instructs Avraham to leave his homeland and father's house and go to "the land that I will show you" (Bereishit 12:1). The final time that God speaks directly with Avraham is when He instructs Avraham to take his son, Yitzchak to the land of Moriah, and offer him up "on one of the mountains that I will tell you" (Bereishit 22:2).

In both these instances the directive is given using a phrase that is unique to God's interaction with Avraham: "lech lecha," "go for yourself." The Torah could simply have said: "go!" What does the extra word "lecha," "for yourself," add to our understanding of this interaction? On the first occasion that this phrase is used, Rashi (1040-1105, France) comments: "Go for yourself - for your good and benefit." One could ask, however, that had there been no benefit from his trek from his homeland of Charan, would Avraham have gone to Canaan at all?

A similar phrase appears at the beginning of Bemidbar 13. Moshe is commanded to send a touring party to Canaan to reconnoiter Canaan. The command given is "shlach lecha," "send for yourself." The result of this tour is nothing short of disastrous. Ten members of the party return and present a negative report on the land which is believed by the people. As a result they no longer want to enter Canaan, and would rather return to Egypt. God punishes the people and declares that all those over the age of twenty will not enter the land, but rather the next generation "of whom you said will be taken captive" (Bemidbar 14:31) will come into the Promised Land and inherit it.



Schultz Rosenberg Campus, 12324 Merit Drive, Dallas TX, 75251

Phone: 214-295-3525

Fax: 214-295-3526

Email: [kollelofdallas@sbcglobal.net](mailto:kollelofdallas@sbcglobal.net)

Web site: [www.kollelofdallas.org](http://www.kollelofdallas.org)

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The same question could be asked of this phrase, "shlach lecha." If sending the touring party is "for yourself," what benefit is derived from this mission?

The answer I believe lies with two further commentaries. Rashi on Bemidbar 13:2 writes: "Send for yourself - I told them that it is good...I will give them the opportunity to err through the words of the spies."

The difference between Avraham and the spies is the desired result and their faith in God. To want to tour the land prior to inheriting it showed a potential lack of faith in God's promise that it is a good land, flowing with milk and honey. They indeed return from the tour and question God's ability to bring them into the land.

Avraham on the other hand is different. One opinion quoted in the book, Maayna Shel Torah, concludes that the test that Avraham faced wasn't so much in the actual departure, but in the reason for his leaving. If the reason Avraham went was for any potential personal gain, this would not have been appropriate. However, the Torah states clearly: "Avram went as God had spoken to him" (Bereishit 13:4). Avraham only went because God had commanded him to do so. The same is true of the second instance when the phrase "lech lecha" is used. Although God had promised that Yitzchak would succeed Avraham, Avraham had faith in God that His blessing of inheriting the land would somehow be fulfilled.

The spies had the opportunity to bring back a positive report, to excite the people about the Divine gift which they are about to receive. Instead they spread fear and discontent among the Israelites, leading to a delay in inheriting the land.

So long as we approach our inheritance of the Land of Israel and our establishing of the State of Israel as a gift from God, we will merit inhabiting it and flourishing within it. If, however, we begin questioning God's ability to provide us with the land and with the ability to live and thrive there, we run the risk of suffering like the generation of the spies.



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May we merit always understanding and appreciating the Divine blessing and miracle that is the Land and State of Israel, and support it in any and every way we can.



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