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**A Parsha Weekly by the Friedman Kollel  
of Metropolitan Washington**

**Parshas Lech Lecha  
Volume 2 | Issue 5 | 7 Cheshvan 5774**

## **Jewish Journeys**

**By Rabbi Eliezer Lachman, Rosh HaKollel**

The theme of the Book of Bereishis is, as its name indicates, beginnings. Prior to this week, we read of creation, of how service of God and worship of idols started, and of the new beginning that man and the world had after the Flood. This week's portion tells of a different beginning, one that is arguably more relevant to all of us. It tells of the beginning of the Jewish people.

The story of the Jewish people starts with God giving Avraham a command to go on a journey. Now, this command has a rather unique form. Ordinarily, one giving a command to journey would say something like, "Go from place A to place B." God, however, did not follow this form: rather, He said, "Go from your land, from your birthplace and from your father's house to the land that I will show you" (Bereishis 12:1). God mentions explicitly neither the place of departure nor the place of arrival. He describes the place of departure; it is somewhat curious, though, that He uses three different terms (your land, your birthplace and your father's house) to identify it. The place of arrival is not described at all; God defers revealing its identity until a later date.

Why did the command take this unique form?

The answer is that God was not commanding Avraham simply to change his physical location; He was also commanding him to embark upon a deeper journey, a journey to transform himself into a different kind of a person. "Your land, your birthplace and your father's house" are not intended as geographical coordinates - they rather describe different kinds of influences upon a person. The land that a person lives in, with its society and culture, exerts an influence upon him, as does his birthplace (i.e. the land in which he grew and came of age) and his father's house. The first step in living as a Jew is to be a growing person, one who is interested in finding out the will of God and in changing his life to accord with it. In order to do so, one must be prepared to go beyond and leave the three aforementioned influences, which can hold a person back from growing. Thus, the story of the Jewish people starts when

Avraham is commanded to leave his land, birthplace and father's house and follow God, wherever that takes him, because this is what living as a Jew is all about.

Midrash Rabbah (39:9) addresses the issue of why God did not reveal the journey's destination to Avraham. "Why did He not reveal it to him? In order ... to give him a reward for each and every step he would take."

At first glance, this appears strange - how does withholding from Avraham the identity of the place of arrival give him a reward for every step he takes? But with the explanation that we have presented, we can appreciate the profound lesson of this Midrash. Had God said to go to a specific place, the import of that command would be that he has to reach that location. If so, Avraham would be rewarded just for reaching that place. God, however, did not say this - instead, he said go to whatever land I show you. The command was not about arriving at a specific location, but about journeying through life with God. If so, the reward he receives is for each and every step along the way, not just for the final attainment.

This is a model for all of us. We live as Jews when we commit, like Avraham, to leave behind other influences and to follow God, wherever that takes us. And like Avraham, we are rewarded not just for where we end up, but for every step we take along the way. For God desires the effort and struggles of a life devoted to growth, regardless of where and how far it takes us.

## About the Friedman Kollel

The Rabbi Samuel and Zehava Friedman Kollel, located in Olney, Maryland, offers learning opportunities for Jews of all backgrounds. These include one-on-one chavrusas, public lectures and classes for men and women, as well as after-school structured learning for public school teens. The Kollel operates under the leadership of Rabbi Eliezer Lachman and Rabbi Shaya Milikowsky. For more information or to sponsor an upcoming Capital Torah, please contact Rabbi Elyakim Milikowsky at [FriedmanKollel@BetterFamily.org](mailto:FriedmanKollel@BetterFamily.org).

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