



Perceptions • Marcheshvan 10, 5786 • November 1, 2025 • Issue #2120

WHAT'S THE difference between “*Shlach Lecha*,” which God told the Jews in the desert in Moshe’s time, and “*Lech-Lecha*,” which God told Avraham in these weeks *parsha*? When you *send* something you stay where you are. When you deliver it yourself, you go to the destination as well.

It’s like when people tell you that they cannot attend your event, “but I’ll be there in spirit.” Ya, right. Unless they plan to die in the meantime, *God forbid*, they’re not going to be there in spirit. What they really mean is something like, “I’ll be thinking about you and hope all goes well even without me.”

It’s a nice idea, except when a person’s presence is actually required. This is what God was telling the spies with the words “*shlach lecha*,” that even though they were planning to spy the land in person, their real persons were going to remain back in the camp in the desert because that was where their hearts were. They weren’t going on their mission to embrace *aliyah*. They were going to find an excuse to reject it.

God, Who knows the deepest secrets or a person’s heart, knew theirs too even if they had yet to learn them. When he told the people “*shlach lecha*,” He was basically telling them that they

were doomed to fail before they even left, well, at least physically. In their case, they physically went to the “event,” but it was their spirit that they left back in the camp that didn’t make it.

That’s why God followed up His command to Avraham with, “*Go forth from your land and from your birthplace and from your father’s house*” (*Bereishis* 12:1). He was telling him, “For this to work, you have to sever all ties with where you came from. Otherwise, you won’t be going to your self, but away from it,” like the spies would eventually do hundreds of years later.

Lech lecha doesn’t only apply to going to *Eretz Yisroel*, which God did not even mention by name. No matter where a person is headed physically or spiritually, they are always on a journey to their self, *the* person they are meant to be. Just look how much we change from year to year without even trying, all of which is based on a person’s *mehus*—inner being.

Deeper yet, life is a journey to the soul. We start off as one in the womb, and then switch over to a body-led existence at birth. The rest of life is for returning back to a soul-led life, but this time with the body on board. We call someone who does that a *tzaddik*, and someone who goes in the opposite direction, a *rasha*—evil person.

The rest of us are *beinonim*, middle-of-the-road types who have good days and bad days, positive periods and negative ones. We might waver between inspired growth and dejected withdrawal. But at least we’re still in the game, struggle was we may to remain so.

The fact that so many people have gone off in search of themselves in one way or another shows knowing who we are in essence is essential for happiness. When people don’t, then they usually distract themselves material pleasures and call them-

selves happy when, deep down, they know they're not.

This helps to answer a question many psychologists have asked in recent years. They want to understand why so many people in a society that has so much can be farther from contentment than ever before. It's one of the most anxious generations since World War II.

But that itself is the answer. Material extremism is not the source of joy, but the measurement of how much it is lacking. Only one thing makes a person truly happy in life, complete self-knowledge, and when they have it, they find they need little else. Anything else they have in life is merely "icing on the cake."

That's what God was really promising Avraham Avinu with "lech lecha," and anyone else willing to follow in his spiritual footsteps.

Have a wonderful Shabbos,
Pinchas Winston
thirtysix.org / shaarnun.org