

## **And Hashem said to Avram, "Go for yourself from your land, and from your birthplace, and from your father's home." (12:1)**

One would expect the *Torah* to introduce Avraham *Avinu* in a more auspicious manner. The *Torah* should have mentioned the background of the first person who Hashem chose to be the progenitor of His people; the individual who on his own discovered the existence of Hashem; the man who rebelled against a world filled with pagans. Who was he? From where did he originate? What did he do in his youth and middle age? Our introduction to Avraham *Avinu* is Hashem's command to him, "*Lech Lecha!*"

The various commentators address this question, each offering his own response. Perhaps the most direct answer is that nothing which occurred until this point in time was inherently Jewish. His background did not specifically pertain to Avraham as a Jew. Avraham acknowledged the existence of a Supreme Creator and Ruler very early in his life. He believed in Hashem and became a proponent of this belief. He exemplified spirituality, while he reached out to help and sustain the world both physically and spiritually. It was not, however, until Hashem told him, "*Lech Lecha,*" that he received his mission in life. This mission is not Avraham's alone. To perfect the spiritual nature of all mankind is the "raison d'etre" of the entire Jewish people. The positive influence of our spiritual and moral life is to bring blessing to humanity - by bringing the world closer to Hashem. The Jew is to be the spiritual source of refinement and knowledge that illuminates a world of darkness.

Until this juncture in time, Avraham had lived as a single, virtuous man who believed in one G-d. He was nonetheless a human being. A new phase - a rebirth - in Avraham's life began with Hashem's calling. He now had a mandate, a mission to be carried out and transmitted to his descendants. The plan for creation of a world of equality, with everyone sharing equally in the Divine mandate, ended after two thousand years of failure. Now this mission was transferred to one person who would father a nation that was to be Hashem's Chosen People. In truth, the beginning of Avraham's life - as a Jew - began at this point in time. Everything else is just history.