



D'VAR TORAH: "LECH L'CHA" RABBI MENACHEM GOLDBERGER

In the beginning of the *Torah* portion, "*Lech L'cha*," G-d tells Abraham to go forth from his land, his birthplace, and his fathers' home to the land which G-d will show him. The next verse is a blessing for Abraham. G-d tells him that He will bless him, make his name great, and that he (Abraham) shall be a blessing.

Rashi comments on this verse that embarking on a journey can cause three things to happen. It can decrease the ability of a husband and a wife to be fruitful and multiply, it can decrease one's wealth, and it can diminish one's reputation. G-d was assuring Abraham that these three things would not happen and that he would be blessed with wealth, a fine reputation, and with children.

When a woman finds herself in an abusive relationship, she is often afraid to take the steps to receive help. She may be afraid that she'll lose her reputation (and her husband's), that she will have no means of support, and that her children will suffer. The first call for help is so hard to make because of these fears and others as well.

It is our responsibility to let our dear Jewish women who suffer from domestic violence know

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that although it may seem hopeless, there is hope and it will come slowly but surely. Her reputation will not be tarnished by those who understand this issue, her children will ultimately be strengthened not weakened by her seeking help, and if it does come to separation from her husband, it's not too late and there are things for her to do for financial support.

G-d's message to Abraham is more accurately translated as "Go to yourself." "*Lech L'cha*" means to take a journey and find your true self. G-d was conveying to Abraham that although it seemed that this journey might take him away from familiar surroundings, in truth, he would find himself, specifically through his willingness to go forth. "Go and become yourself."

When a woman turns to us for help, we cannot say to our dear Jewish sister that she should stay in the marriage or get out. That must be her choice. (Remember though, that she must be safe). What we can say is that she must go forth and go to find herself. She has gotten lost in the pain and the suffering. By stepping forward and seeking help, our dear Jewish woman is taking the journey to truly find herself and her relationship with G-d.

Rabbi Goldberger, a sixth generation rabbi, is the founding rabbi of Congregation Tiferes Yisroel in Baltimore, Maryland. Rabbi Goldberger has served on the boards of Jewish Big Brother Big Sister League, CHANA (helping victims of domestic violence), and the Council on Jewish Education. He serves as a rabbinic advisor to a number of Jewish educational institutions. Rabbi Goldberger, a long time student of the revered Rabbi Shloime Twerski, received his *smicha* from Rabbi Pinchas Hirczprung of Montreal in 1984. He also has a degree in psychology from the University of Denver.