

The last time I spoke to you, I talked about the glory (the shekinah) that belongs to God in our actions. I reminded you that it is the completion – not just the intention – that produces the glory for God.

Since then I have been to Israel for a series of meetings about the internationalisation of CMJ Israel. The Church’s Ministry Among the Jewish People is the oldest mission organisation in the Anglican Church. In **1809** a society known as the London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews (later called CMJ) was founded in England. It was an expression of the Evangelical revival which swept through the church at that time. It’s founders were people of the calibre of William Wilberforce (who led the fight against slavery in England), Lord Shaftesbury and Charles Simeon.

For 160 years this organisation has proclaimed the gospel to Jewish communities in Israel and other countries under difficult and constantly changing circumstances. It’s workers have often lived under threat, at least one, Richard Wurmbrand was tortured for his witness to Jesus the Messiah.

While in Jerusalem one of the things God spoke to us about was the command in Scripture, “*to go*”. I want to share this word with you today.

***Lech Lecha*** ,לך.לך

To do this I want to teach you a Hebrew phrase. *Lech Lecha* ,לך.לך

If you were Jewish this would be a very familiar phrase because it is the title of the second weekly Torah reading in the first section (Bereshit) of the Parashot. (the lectionary).

The phrase “***Lech Lecha*** ,לך.לך” only appears twice in the Hebrew Scriptures and both times it is addressed to the patriarch Abraham.

The philosopher, Martin Buber, suggests that the two occasions this phrase appears serve as important book ends for Abraham's life.

### The First *Lech Lecha* ,לך לך

The first time God speaks to Abraham, God commands " *Lech Lecha* ,לך לך " "Go out and leave your past." (**Genesis 12:1**) God's demand comes before any real relationship is established between God and Abraham. These are the words that begin their relationship. God says to Abraham in essence, "Pack up and leave your country, the community that you have known all your life, your family and 'Go.' Leave everything that has been in your past and that has made you who you are — your friends, your community, your family and go to a land that I will show you! What I offer you in return is a promise," God says. "A promise that I will give you children and make you into a great nation that will surpass in number even the stars! Abraham," God promises, "I will make your name great and the world shall experience blessings through you and your children."

### The second *Lech Lecha* ,לך לך

The second time God sends Abraham out with the command, " *Lech Lecha* ,לך לך ," occurs at the end of Abraham's life (**Genesis 22:2**). God demands that Abraham let go of his dreams and the hopes for the future that God had promised! This time Abraham hears the words " *Lech Lecha* ,לך לך " "Go out," God tells Abraham to take his beloved son Isaac — the son through whom God has promised Abraham such a nation and future — and kill him. This demand constitutes the cancellation of the promise. With the second " *Lech Lecha* ,לך לך " Abraham is asked to let go of his hopes for a future that have kept him focused during the struggle for settlement in Canaan.

There is an anomaly which rabbinic scholars point out. This is usually translated as “Go Forth” (Gen 12:1) ...from your country and your birthplace and your father’s house...” But it literally means, “Go to yourself.” “Going” has the

connotation in Torah of moving towards one's ultimate purpose — of service towards one's Creator. And this is strongly hinted at by the phrase, “Go to yourself”—meaning, towards your soul's essence and your ultimate purpose, the purpose for which you were created.

When we wander away from God's will in our lives we wander away from ourselves and our life's purpose. We alienate ourselves from God's plan for our lives and the eternal significance for which we have potential.

The New Testament equivalent of **Lech Lecha** ,לך לך is the commission which Jesus gives to his disciples. Like Abraham we receive the commission without signs and guarantees of success but with an awareness that like Abraham we are not true to ourselves when we fail to be a community that is committed to the communication of the gospel. When we, the Church, fail to be committed to the spreading of the gospel in word and deed we fail to be the Church. On this most Christian leaders are agreed.

In his 1975 apostolic exhortation, "Evangelii Nuntiandi," Pope Paul VI stated, "The Church exists in order to evangelize; evangelization is the essential mission of the Church."

C. S. Lewis said, "The Church exists for nothing else but to draw men into Christ, to make them “little Christs”. If we are not doing that, all the cathedrals, clergy, missions, sermons, even the Bible itself, are simply a waste of time. God became Man for no other purpose. --

“The Great Commission is not an option to be considered; it is a command to be obeyed”. -- Hudson Taylor

So my fellow Christians the world is waiting... **Lech Lecha** ,לך לך