

PARSHAT LECH LECHA  
11 CHESHVAN 5781/29 OCTOBER 2020



*The Burning of the Houses of Parliament*  
painting by JMW Turner

LANGUAGE AND RESPONSIBILITY

1. “I heard the sound of You in the garden...so I hid.” (Genesis 3:10)
2. “Am I my brother’s keeper?” (Genesis 4:9)
3. “....” (Genesis 6:9-24)
4. Everyone on earth had the same language and he same words....They said to one another, “Come, let us make bricks....Come, let is build us a city and a tower...to make a name for ourselves; else we shall be scattered all over the world.” (Genesis 11:1-4)
5. “God said to Abram, ‘Go forth from your native land....’” (Genesis 12:1). Rabbi Isaac said: This may be compared to one who was travelling from place to place when she saw a building in flames. She wondered: Is it possible that the building lacks a person to look after it? The owner of the building looked out and said, “I am the owner of the building.” Similarly, because Abraham said, “Is it possible that the world is without a guide?” the Holy Blessed One glanced out at him out and said, “I am the Guide, the Sovereign of the universe.” (Midrash Genesis Rabbah, 39.1)
6. Where there is total revelation, there is no room for language. Where meaning is uncertain, communications proliferate.
7. The sense of outraged questioning is itself the first confrontation with God. (Based on Peter Berger, *A Rumor of Angels*)

8. Religion, the end of isolation, begins with a consciousness that something is asked of us....Wonder is not a state of esthetic enjoyment. Endless wonder unlocks an innate sense of indebtedness. (Abraham Joshua Heschel, *Man Is Not Alone*)