

# Where to Look

By Rabbi David Wolpe

Where is the world's greatest mystery?

We might look down. There are sermons in stones, Wordsworth tells us, and one could choose the marvels of the earth or sea. The molten core, the shifting plates, the vast panoply of life on this spinning orb — here is a worthy mystery.

We might look above us. The light of a star which perished long before Moses still lingers for us. What wonders lurk in the unimaginable recesses of space?

Judaism teaches that after the nature of God the greatest mystery is oneself. And in many ways, to come closer to God demands that we examine ourselves. "Inward," wrote Novalis, "goes the way full of mystery." The more we explore ourselves the more baffling we become.

Despite the disciplines explaining human beings to ourselves — psychology, anthropology, history, sociology, biology, to name a few — we are still mysterious creatures.

Jewish history begins with a call to self-knowledge. God's first words to Abraham, *Lech lâcha*, which are usually translated "Go forth," can also mean "Go to you." That is, go inside yourself. Abraham's journey is also an interior voyage.

Reductive views insisting "human beings are just \_\_\_\_" (fill in the blank: chemicals, impulses, animals, accidents) are as sad as they are mistaken. Humanity is the great, unsolved mystery of the cosmos, glorious and sometimes horrifying, elevated and debased, but ever the paradoxical creation whose fate lies in its own hands. Where is the great mystery? Inside us; in each human heart.