



LECH LECHA/GO FOR YOURSELF
Bereshith/Genesis 12:1-17:27

Abram enters into the **Torah without fanfare** as a part of the **genealogy** stemming from **Shem**. Our parasha begins with **אברהם's call to Abram**:

Bereshith 12:1 Now אברהם had said to Abram: "Get out (לך-לך) of your country, from your family and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you.

Legends and colorful stories about **Abraham** abound in **extra-biblical literature**, including chapters in the book of **Jasher**, the book of **Enoch**, **Talmud**, and other rabbinical sources. The following is a well known **midrash from Bereshith Rabbah** giving us a story of the **early years of Abraham**:

...Abraham's father, Terah as a god merchant – he had an idol factory where the family made statues. Sometimes he set up a stall in the market to peddle the divinities. One day, when it was young Abram's turn to mind the shop, a woman came in holding a dish of grains. Turning to Abram she said, "Take this food and serve it to the gods," and left. Instead, Abram took hold of a large stick and ran around the place smashing stones as he went. When he had finished, Abram put the stick in the hands of the largest idol and sat down to admire his work. Upon returning to his business, Terah was shocked to see his merchandise in shards.

"Who did this?!" he demanded. Said Abram, "Father, I must tell you what happened. A woman came to the store bearing a meal for the idols. Naturally, I brought the food over to them, but you know how these gods are – they started fighting amongst themselves, each one trying to get to the food first. Well, the scene turned ugly and this biggest idol took a stick and smashed all the other gods!"

Grabbing Abram by the shirt, Terah yelled "Who are you trying to kid? Idols can't shout and kill! They're only stone carvings!"

Abram answered him, "Does your ear hear what your mouth speaks? What are you worshipping? How can you worship that which doesn't see, or hear when you call them, or do you any good?"

But his father's only reply was, "**It is the way of our forefathers.**"

Hmmm...as I'm reading this story again, that **last line** really reminds me of verses in **Jeremiah**. It's so difficult for people to **disengage** from the **theologies** we have "**inherited**" from "**our forefathers.**" Yet, like this story of **Abram**, it was **prophesied** that **another group of people** would **recognize** that what they had **received** from their "**forefathers**" was "**lies**" and **turn** again towards the **truth**:

Jeremiah 16:19 O אלהים, my strength and my fortress, My refuge in the day of affliction, The **nations shall come to You** from the ends of the earth and say, "Surely **our fathers have inherited lies, Worthlessness and unprofitable things.**"²⁰ **Will a man make gods for himself, which are not gods?**

²¹ " Therefore behold, I will this once cause them to know, **I will cause them to know My hand and My might; And they shall know that My name is יהוה**."

So...did the story of **Abram and his god merchant father really happen?** It's impossible to say for sure. We enjoy reading these stories of **Abram's life before his calling**. They seem to impress upon us the **greatness of his character**. However, could these **additions** actually be **taking us away** from the message יהוה is trying to teach us about Abram? To answer this question, let's begin by examining **three strong personalities of Torah**.

1. **Noah – singled out for salvation in a wicked world.** This is what we know of Noah:
 - a. *Bereshith 6:9 This is the genealogy of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, perfect in his generations. Noah walked with Elohim.*
 - b. *Bereshith 6:18 "But I will establish My covenant with you; and you shall go into the ark -- you, your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives with you.*It is therefore no surprise that **Noah is chosen** since the man appears to possess **exemplary character**.
2. **Moshe displays compassion and courage as he defends the underdog.** Also, note the sense of responsibility he displays for fellow Hebrews:
 - a. *Shemot 2:11 Now it came to pass in those days, when Moshe was grown, that he went out to his brethren and looked at their burdens. And he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his brethren. ¹² So he looked this way and that way, and when he saw no one, he killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand.*
 - b. *Shemot 2:13 And when he went out the second day, behold, two Hebrew men were fighting, and he said to the one who did the wrong, "Why are you striking your companion?"*
 - c. *Shemot 2:16 Now the priest of Midian had seven daughters. And they came and drew water, and they filled the troughs to water their father's flock. ¹⁷ Then the shepherds came and drove them away; but Moshe stood up and helped them, and watered their flock.*
3. **Abram was chosen to be the father of a great nation; and yet before the choice was made, the Torah tells us nothing of Abram's character! How could he be deserving of such a great blessing?!!** The point is, **HE IS NOT!!** This is what is called "**unmerited favor**," or an example of a "**gift**" יהוה gives to us by "**grace, through faith**."
 - a. *Ephesians 2:8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of Yah, ⁹ not of works, lest anyone should boast.*

The end of last week's Torah portion introduced us to Abram:

Bereshith 11:26 Now Terah lived seventy years, and begot Abram, Nahor, and Haran. ²⁷ This is the genealogy of Terah: Terah begot Abram, Nahor, and Haran. Haran begot Lot...²⁹ Then Abram and Nahor took wives: the name of Abram's wife was Sarai...³⁰ But Sarai was barren; she had no child. ³¹ And Terah took his son Abram and his grandson Lot, the son of Haran, and his daughter-in-law Sarai, his son Abram's wife, and they went out with them from Ur of the Chaldeans to go to the land of Canaan; and they came to Haran and dwelt there.

We know from **Stephen's testimony** in Acts that "**Ur**" is the **first place** where the **Almighty** made **contact with Abram**:

*Acts 7:2 And he said, "Brethren and fathers, listen: **The Elohim of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Haran.***

Bereshith 15 also confirms that יהוה made **connection** with **Abram in "Ur"**:

Bereshith 15:7 Then He said to him, "I am יהוה, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to inherit it."

In **Lech Lecha**, יהוה addresses **Abram from "Haran."** To our knowledge **Abram** was **not seeking the Almighty**, but the **Almighty** was **pursuing him!** Our parasha begins with the **extraordinary blessing** that **Abram** will receive:

Bereshith 12:1 Now יהוה had said to Abram: "Get out of your country, From your family And from your father's house, To a land that I will show you. ² I will make you a great nation; I will bless you And make your name great; And you shall be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." ⁴ So Abram departed as יהוה had spoken to him, and Lot went with him. And Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran.

He who "**began a good work**" in **Abram**, will certainly bring it to "**completion**"!

*Philippians 1:6 being confident of this very thing, that **He who has begun a good work in you** will complete it until the day of **Yeshua the Messiah**;*

Now although we know that it was יהוה who **took the initiative in Abram's life**, we know also that **Abram's response was immediate, thorough, and full of faith**:

Bereshith 12:4 So Abram departed as יהוה had spoken to him, and Lot went with him. And Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran.

Abraham would become the **paradigm** for those whose **faith is acceptable to יהוה** "**for righteousness.**"

Bereshith 15:6 And he believed in יהוה, and He accounted it to him for righteousness.

*Romans 4:3 For what does the Scripture say? "**Abraham believed Yah, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.**"*

*Galatians 3:6 just as Abraham "**believed Yah, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.**"*

James 2:23 *And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "Abraham believed Yah, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." And he was called the friend of Yah.*

Let's look again at the **events** that transpired in **Abraham's life**. **First**, the **Almighty** like the **Good Shepherd** "**called Abram by name**" and "**lead him out**" of Hur, and then Haran. **Second**, Abram "**knew the Shepherd's voice**" and "**followed Him**" with great faith, trust, and confidence. Sound familiar?

John 10:3 "... the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.⁴ *"And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice."*

Abraham "obeyed by faith":

Hebrews 11:8 *By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going.*

Abraham's obedience was from the "**heart.**" The "**heart**" of the **Father** and the "**heart**" of the **one He chooses** must beat as one! When יהוה reveals what's on His "**heart,**" the one of "**faith**" receives it. "**Heart**" issues were why David was chosen as King and likewise, why Saul was rejected. David was "**faithful**" in his "**obedience**" (outward expressions of what's in the heart), while Saul was not:

1 Samuel 13:14 *"But now your kingdom shall not continue. יהוה has sought for Himself a man after His own heart, and יהוה has commanded him to be commander over His people, because you have not kept what יהוה commanded you."*

Faith, then, is a **quality of response to the Almighty** that is **expressed in trust, reliance, commitment, and obedience**. **Faith** turned toward יהוה begins with **one simple step of obedience** (like leaving Haran) **predicated on what the Father has revealed to us**. Then our **Abba helps us develop that faith**. It is all the **work of יהוה**, yet it **requires our obedience to each step of revelation**. **Nothing can proceed without the first step**. What if Abram had **never left Hur**? This was the **first step** that Abram took, and יהוה began to fulfill His eternal purposes from there. Sadly, many of us **fail to take the first step** when that **door of opportunity** opens before us.

Peter is another example of one who **obeyed when Yeshua asked him to leave everything** and "**follow Him.**" The **Father continued to mold Peter** and accomplished awesome things through him. The **first step** was taken the day **Peter encountered Yeshua** by his fishing boat:

Matthew 4:18 *And Yeshua, walking by the Sea of Galilee, saw two brothers, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen.¹⁹ Then He said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men."²⁰ They immediately left their nets and followed Him.*

I like how **Yeshua connected faith and "doing"** with being "**His friend.**" **Abraham** was the **only other person** called יהוה's friend:

John 15:14 "You are My friends if you do whatever I command you.

Isaiah 41:8 " But you, Israel, are My servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, The descendants of Abraham My friend.

Similar to יהוה's expectation of Abraham, obedience is what Yeshua expected of those who were His "friends." Continuing in John, we read that obedience results in further revelation and "fruit":

John 15:15 "No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you.¹⁶ "You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you.

When יהוה made the promise to Abram that He would "make him a great nation," Abram probably had no idea that the plan for this nation was to become a "special treasure....and a kingdom of priests and a holy nation":

Shemot 19:5 'Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure...kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel."

And from this "special nation" would come Yeshua the Messiah who would do the work of restoring this "special nation" back to the "light" after they became fragmented:

1 Peter 2:9 But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;¹⁰ who once were not a people but are now the people of Elohim, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.

Friends, we can do this. Not because **WE** are so faithful, but because **HE** is faithful. The key to Abraham's growth was not so much how "Abraham walked with יהוה" as it was how "יהוה walked with Abraham." Consider the Shepherd and His sheep. The sheep are the product of the faithfulness of the Shepherd. It's the Shepherd who makes them to "lie down in green pastures" in safety, rest, and peace. It's the Shepherd who "leads them beside the still waters," providing them with living waters (mayim chayim - מַיִם חַיִּים). It is the Shepherd who "leads them in the paths of righteousness for His Name's sake." He even "walks them through the valley of the shadow of death" so they may "fear no evil."

So...let's return to where we started. Why was it that the Almighty chose to bless Abraham with such special gifts? The Torah does not tell us that he was a righteous, deserving man. It was completely a gift of grace. If the Torah stated that יהוה's choice of Abraham was based on his righteousness, then that would imply that a future relationship with the chosen's descendants is dependent on their continued model behavior. Instead, the link between the Almighty and His people is stronger than

the **character of the nation at any given moment in time...the covenant withstands Israel's sins and strayings. Once the covenant was made, it remained eternal, independent of any conditions. We certainly see this in the covenant of the pieces:**

Bereshith 15:9** So He said to him, "Bring Me a three-year-old heifer, a three-year-old female goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtledove, and a young pigeon."¹⁰ Then he brought all these to Him and **cut them in two, down the middle, and placed each piece opposite the other**; but he did not cut the birds in two.¹¹ And when the vultures came down on the carcasses, Abram drove them away.¹² Now when the sun was going down, **a deep sleep fell upon Abram**; and behold, horror and great darkness fell upon him.¹³ Then He said to Abram: "Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years.¹⁴ "And also the nation whom they serve I will judge; afterward they shall come out with great possessions.¹⁵ "Now as for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried at a good old age.¹⁶ "But in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete."¹⁷ And it came to pass, when the sun went down and it was dark, that behold, there appeared a smoking oven and a burning torch that passed between those pieces.¹⁸ **On the same day יְהוָה made a covenant with Abram, saying: "To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates --

Richard Booker gives further insights into this covenant process:

“...the **parties would take an animal, cut it in half down the middle and split it in two. The two bloody halves would be separated and laid aside after which each party would walk through the two halves. This ceremony represents each party giving up his rights to his own life, dying to self and beginning a new walk with one's new covenant partner unto death. Each half of the animal represents one of the covenanting parties. And by walking through the middle each party was saying, "God do so to me and more if I ever try to break this covenant. Just split me right down the middle and feed me to the vultures because I tried to break the most sacred of all compacts."**

Natan Lawrence comments on this specific covenant in **Bereshith 15:**

“Did **יהוה** and **Abraham** go through such a **solemn, bloody ritual**? Yes, for we read about it in **Gen. 15:9-18**, but with **one very interesting change. Instead of both walking through the two animal halves, יהוה put Abraham into a deep sleep and יהוה walked through the middle for both of them. What is the point? Abraham could not enter into a covenantal agreement with יהוה Elohim and thereby be reconciled to יהוה through his own works or efforts. What this clearly shows us is that man can neither earn nor work out his salvation. Salvation occurs only when man totally surrenders to and rests completely in יהוה. Salvation is by grace through faith and not of works, lest any man should boast (Eph. 2:8-9). The Abrahamic Covenant is an unconditional covenant. יהוה did all the work for man. His love was unconditional."**

Let's take another look at **something specific that happened** in this covenant:

Bereshith 15:17 And it came to pass, when the sun went down and it was dark, that behold, there appeared a smoking oven and a burning **torch** (lappid - לָפִיד) that **passed between those pieces**.

According to **Natan**, that “**torch**” (lappid - לָפִיד) was the **essence of the Almighty** who **by Himself** **took on the covenantal agreement**. We can find **another witness** of who this “**torch**” (lappid - לָפִיד) was in **Isaiah**:

Isaiah 62:1 For Zion's sake I will not hold My peace, And for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, Until her righteousness goes forth as brightness, And her **salvation** (**Yeshua** - יְשׁוּעָה) as a **torch** (lappid - לָפִיד) that **burns**.

“**Yeshua**,” the **Name** that **means “salvation,”** the **Name above all Names**, is the **One** who **passed “between the pieces.”** Because **Yeshua** is **completely trustworthy**, the **covenant** is therefore made **eternal and sure!**

We will spend more time studying the **life of Abraham** over the next couple of weeks. He **spent many years walking with the Almighty** before he began to see the **fulfillment of some of the promises**. He makes a **few errors** along the way. It’s **not always easy** waiting on יהוה! Later in **Bereshith**, the Torah informs us that the **Father “knew”** that **Abraham would “command his children”** in **His ways**. Not only did **Abraham “believe”** and thus was **given “righteousness,”** but he also “**did righteousness**”...i.e., he was **obedient to every command** the **Almighty** gave him:

Bereshith 18:19 "For I have **known** him, in order that he may **command his children** and his household after him, that they keep the way of יהוה, to **do righteousness** and justice, that יהוה may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him."

Because of **Abraham’s heart for the Father**, he “**saw**” something even **beyond his day**. **Yeshua** tells us **Abraham “saw”** the “**day of the Messiah**”!

John 8:56 Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of **seeing my day**; he saw it and was glad."

Yes, it all starts with “**one step**.” Then it turns in to what Scripture calls a “**walk**.” Keep walking and He will provide the “**vision!**”

Baruch HaShem!

Shabbat Shalom!

Ardelle