

Introductory Study for Parsha #3: Lech Lecha¹

<i>Torah:</i>	Genesis 12:1 - 17:27
<i>Haftarah:</i>	Isaiah 40:27 - 41:16
<i>B'rit Chadasha:</i>	Romans 4:1 – 25



Go out for/unto yourself.
[Genesis 12:1]

Welcome to the week in which we draw our life lessons from the third parsha of Torah - parsha ***Lech Lecha***. It is through this parsha that the Torah transitions us from the *era of the ancients* to the *lifespan of Avram, his sons, his grandsons, and his great grandsons*. With the opening lines of parsha *Lech Lecha* the epic **Patriarchal Chronicles** of Torah begin to come alive. This is therefor the Holy One's appointed time for all lovers of Heaven's Bridegroom-King to reconnect with the rock from which we are hewn. It is time to renew our commitment to and reaffirm our participation in the covenant the Holy One cut with the very special man whose name means '*the Father of Multitudes*'.

It is our week to gloriously reconnect with the *Wandering Aramean in us all*. If we do not understand our connection to Avraham, you see, we cannot understand our connection with the Holy One. Are you ready to get started on the *great journey of patriarchal discovery*?

My prayer for you, Dear Reader, is that you emerge from this larger-than-life journey of rediscovery nestling comfortably alongside Lazarus in Avraham's bosom! **Luke 16:23.**

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What Does Avram Have to Do With You and Me?

According to the sages of Israel the man we will get to know this week and next, first as *Avram*, and later as *Avraham*, was tested by the Holy One ten (10) times. Each test was an ox-goad, making Avram move, grow, and get closer to the Divine Plan and to his Divine Destiny.

Through Avram's tremendous series of ever deepening encounters with the God of the Universe, in the midst of trials and tribulations, we learn not only *who our Father in the Faith was*, but also *Who the God of our Fathers is*. Moreover, if we have eyes to see and ears to hear I believe we will learn amazing things about *who we were created to be* and about *what we are being redeemed and empowered to do*.

We will learn beyond a shadow of a doubt that the Holy One is *patient with His people*. But we will also learn that the Holy One knows how to, and is not afraid to, *apply an ox-goad to our posterior* when it is in our best interest.

The Holy One does not want us – will not permit us – to ‘camp’ or stagnate. He does not want us to settle just for escaping Babylon² - i.e. for merely responding to the call to *‘come out of her, My People’*³. He wants *so much more* for us. He wants our story not to be primarily about *what horrible things and putrid systems and cultures we came out of*, but primarily about what gloriously kind, joyful, loving, merciful, slow-to-anger, instantly forgiving people He has recreating us to be and about the world-changing mission of redemption, hope, and restoration in which He is calling us to participate. What He wants is for us to come into – and He will be faithful to continually prod us in the direction of – the Divine Purpose and Destiny for which we were created and given the breath of life for such a time as this.

All Mankind is Called to Be Part of This Mishpachah [i.e. Family]

It should also be noted, lest you consider Avraham no physical relative of yours, that the benefits of the *b'rit olam* [everlasting covenant] the Holy One is going to cut with Avraham this week are not by any means going to be limited in scope to those physically descended from Avraham. The Holy One's covenant with Avraham is also going to be made expressly applicable to *foreigners* who were *servants* of

² Although many people speculate one thing or another, it is difficult if not impossible to know for certain if Avram's early years in the village Torah calls Ur – before Terach moved to Charan - were spent under the domination of the *Babylonian culture*, under the domination of the ancient *Chaldean culture*, or under some combination of the two.

³ See Jeremiah 51:41-50 and Revelation 18:4.

Avraham and of his descendants, and thus became engrafted into Avraham's 'household'.

By coming into the household of Avraham's seed with a servant's heart anyone, of any nation, ethnic background, or culture can participate/share in the *b'rit olam* [everlasting covenant] between the Holy One and Avraham's seed. Foreigners cannot forcefully take the children's place at the table, it is true – but they can eat to their fill of the crumbs the children leave behind.

Avraham's life is *your life*. His identity is *your identity*. His mission is *your mission*. His destiny is *your destiny*. He is truly **Avraham Avinu** - our father Avraham – to all people in Covenant with the Creator of the Universe. And if you doubt the relevance of knowing Avram on this side of the atoning death of Messiah, turn to and read Luke 16:19 - 34. Did you think "St. Peter" or some angel would meet you at the gates of heaven? Think again! The first person you will see in the World to Come will be none other than **Avraham avinu** [*our father Avraham*].

Focusing In On The Rock From Which We Have Been Hewn

In the six chapters that make up the very special parsha called **Lech Lecha** we will cover 24 years of Avram's life, from age 75 to age 99. During those 24 years Avram is going to have five different life-changing *encounters* with the Holy One, as well as numerous God-ordained and God-directed *life experiences*. It is through the combination of these God-encounters and Divinely ordained life experiences that the Holy One is going to prepare Avram to become not only His **friend** but His **partner in a covenant that will change the world**.

Take note this week how patiently the Holy One nurtures His relationship with Avram and Sarai. Take note how carefully the Holy One goes about the process of *investing the resources of Heaven into their lives*. Take note how He purposely *delays the gratification of their temporal, earthy desires* in order to *cultivate in them eternal, Heavenly desires*. Note how He indeed gives them the desires of their hearts – but first *changes their hearts to give them the capacity to want only what He desires to give them*. And note how through this nurturing process the Holy One gradually transforms Avram and Sarai into a couple who will, whatever the cost, **sh'ma** the Voice that spoke Creation into existence, will *walk in His ways*, and will *teach their children and the members of their household* - including the Syrian-born servant Elazar and the Egyptian-born handmaid Hagar - *to do the same*.

Avram's encounters with the Creator of the Universe will prove to be spectacular,

but we will find out quickly that Avram himself is quite ordinary. He is a man like us, with whom we can readily identify. Indeed if this man who doubted, who pouted, who argued, and who tried to do in his own flesh what God was doing in the Spirit could become a "friend of God" . . . well then, *so can we!*⁴

May becoming a 'friend of God' like unto our father Avraham become our quest this week!

Changing Paradigms – and Deepening Relationship

One thing that we should all try to constantly keep in mind as we read and study Torah together is that the primary thing that the Holy One our God really wants us to draw from the process is not for us to become scholars, historians, or 'experts in the law' – but is simply for us to develop an *ever-deepening relationship with Him*⁵.

How does the Holy One bring about the *ever-deepening relationship* He desires to have with us? First of all, He has designed into our DNA an *insatiable hunger for communion with Him*. He has made it so that – unless we allow our consciences to be seared - we never become satisfied with either *the level of revelation we have of Him* or *the quality of communion we are experiencing with Him*.

Beyond that the Holy One goes about the process of building relationship with us the same way human beings go about building ever-deepening relationships with each other. By that I mean that He ***continues to reveal Himself, His Will, and His Ways to us PROGRESSIVELY over time.***

The Holy One is a pursuer of man. He is a relationship builder. He chooses the timing, the nature, and the substance – of all the interactions that lead to deepening relationship. He causes both revelation about Him and communion with Him to ebb and flow. He always knows 'just the right time' to introduce a new characteristic or aspect of His Divine personality into the relationship AND He knows just the right time to withdraw strategically in such a way as to make the

⁴ I am aware that Hebrew folk legends depict Avram as exceptional from age 3 onward, and portray him as a righteous crusader against idolatry from an early age. However even if such legends are true the fact that the Holy One purposely chose to have them omitted from the written Torah makes them irrelevant to the present discussion.

⁵ The Creator of Heaven and Earth is not, you will find, particularly impressed with – or particularly close to - scholars, with historians or 'experts in the law'. If you want Biblical proof of that see **I Corinthians 1:19-20, 26-31**. Unfortunately, you see, by and large scholars, historians and 'experts in the law' do not generally tend to do very well at maintaining such things as *purity of heart, contrition of spirit, a childlike approach, or the tenderness of soul that causes one to 'tremble at His Word'*. See **Isaiah 66:2**. Nor unfortunately do such people generally tend to do very well at *acting justly, at loving mercy, and at walking humbly with Him*. See **Micah 5:8**. There are exceptions of course – but they are relatively rare.

hunger build within us.

The Holy One is never bored. He is constantly engaged in a great *treasure hunt*. The treasure He seeks is the *deep affection of and intimate communion with* the hearts of ordinary men, women, and children like you and me. He is absolutely relentless in His pursuit. But He is strategic as well. His pursuit always unfolds in a Divinely designed, pre-ordered pattern of stages, phases, and paradigm shifts.

As we begin parsha *Lech Lecha* and wade off into the *Patriarchal Chronicles* section of Torah you should know that one of the most significant pre-ordered paradigm shifts that the Holy One employs to deepen our understanding of and relationship with Him is looming very large before us. As we shift our focus from the *unit of beginnings* [consisting of parshot *B'reshit* and *Noach*] to the *unit of the patriarchs* [parshot *Lech Lecha* through *Vayechi*] the Holy One is going to show us a totally new paradigm of Himself.

What is the totally new paradigm to which we are to be introduced? I call it the '*God of Avraham, of Yitzchak, and of Ya'akov paradigm*'. Others might choose to call it the '*God of the Patriarchs paradigm*'. Let me explain what I mean.

The Progression of Revelation

The first 11 chapters of Torah constituted the chronicles of the interactions between the Holy One our God and the first 20 generations of man – a group of people I refer to collectively as '*the Ancients*'. The era of the Ancients officially covers the period from the formation of Adam to *Terach* (Terah).

The ancients knew the Holy One as *the Elohim* – the Creator of Heaven and Earth. That was because that was the primary paradigm through which the Holy One chose to reveal Himself to them. This week however God-man interactions are going to take a giant leap forward. We will build upon the foundation laid by the Holy One's dealings with the 'ancients' by studying the next phase of progressive revelation – the dealings of the Holy One with the *Avot* [fathers].

Keep in mind that the Holy One caused the things we have been reading about in Genesis to be recorded in the Torah as a preface to the 'life instructions' He is going to give us *en masse* on Sinai.

The Holy One did not just want to give us a bunch of instructions to live by. He wants us to understand His Divine principles of relationship thoroughly before we embark on a lifestyle of divinely directed conduct. Hence everything we have studied thus far, and everything we will study through Exodus 19, will be designed

to teach us ‘*relationship with the Holy One*’.

The dealings of the Holy One with the ancients – Adam through *Terach* (Avram’s father) – can be considered ‘**Relationship with the Creator 101**’ – the basic, introductory course material on man’s relationship to God. We learn from that the basic principle of *b’tzelem Elohim* [man created ‘in the image of God’] and the basic principle that **while sinful conduct estranges us from God and therefore must be dealt with it does not sever the relationship or change the Holy One’s plan for us, either as a species or individually.**

Adam and *Chava* [Eve] learned this through a *forbidden fruit, animal skins, and a promise of a ‘seed of woman’* to come and rectify the ‘sin problem’. *Kayin* [Cain] learned it through a *murder, the outcry of innocent blood, and a ‘mark’*. *Noach* [Noah] and his sons learned about it through an *ark, a flood and a bow in the cloud*. Nimrod and the rest of Noach’s descendants learned about it through a *tower and a Divine Decree of dispersion and confusion of language*. And more recently, *Terach’s* time on earth has also come and gone. To everything there is a season. Now, however, there is a **new wind** blowing.

Hold onto your seats - it is time for God-man interactions to get *really interesting!*

The Joyous Nature of Parsha Lech Lecha

It is said in the *Tanya*⁶ concerning the inter-relationship of the first three parshot of Torah:

*B’reshit is a cheerful Sedra,
even though its ending is not all that pleasant.*

*Noach has the Flood, but the week ends on a happy note
with the birth of our father Avraham [i.e. Abraham].*

*The really joyous week is that of parsha **Lech Lecha**.*

Welcome to the ‘*really joyous*’ week! Are you curious what is so ‘*really joyous*’ about **Lech Lecha**? Let’s explore the idea a little bit.

The dealings of the Holy One with **Avraham** [Abraham], **Yitzchak** [Isaac], **Ya’akov** [Jacob], **Y’hudah** [Judah], **Yosef** [Joseph], and family [the *Avot*] will constitute an *intermediate level course on what it means to know and walk with the Holy One.*

⁶ Published in 1796, the *Tanya* is a rabbinic sourcebook that still forms a part of the canon of Jewish texts studied in yeshivas. Written by Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi, founder of the Chabad-Lubavitch Chassidic Movement, the *Tanya* is crafted to motivate and inspire its readers to embrace a Chassidic way of life.

We might call this intermediate course ‘*Relationship with the Creator 201*’. All the remainder of Torah – i.e. Exodus 20 through the end of Deuteronomy – and for that matter, the writings and the prophets, as well as the writings of the apostles of Y’shua of Natzret (Nazareth) - will do will simply be to build upon, amplify, and ‘fill in’ where these two courses leave us with open questions.

The principles of relationship learned in Courses 101 and 201 will *never change*. They are *eternal principles* set forth by the Will and the Word of the Creator and Sustainer of the Universe. They will however develop and mature, and become more and more meaningful. After all, they are principles of *relationship*, and relationship by its very nature matures with *time*, with *progressive interactions*, with *expanding revelations*, and with *more communication*.

But back to the question: *What is “joyous” about this?* The Creator of the Universe – the Omnipotent, Omnipresent, Omniscient, All-Powerful God – wants to have much more than an encounter with you. He wants to have a *vibrant, dynamic, interactive, lifelong give-and-take relationship* with the likes of you and me.

The Creator of Heaven and earth wants to *communicate* with us. The God of Avraham, of Yitzchak and of Ya’akov wants to *nurture* us. The God of Moshe wants to *spend time with us*, and *teach us His Ways*, and *show us His Glory*. The God of David wants to *devote angels to our defense*. The Holy One of Israel wants to *establish protocols for us to have continuous fellowship*. The God of *Eliyahu* [Elijah] wants to *do miracles on our behalf*. The Covenant God of Israel wants to make and perpetually renew with and in us an ancient *covenant of peace* – a covenant through which He intends to redeem mankind – and change the world into a place where the knowledge of the Glory of the Lord permeates and inundates all things – as the waters cover the sea.

And that, Dear Reader, is joyous indeed!

The Next Step in the Holy One’s Grand Plan of Redemption

Understand therefore that the events about which we will read this week *will not occur haphazardly*. They are events which were planned before the foundation of the world and which constitute an integral part of the Divine Plan of the Holy One for His Creation. The events and God-man interactions of parsha ***Lech Lecha*** are an outgrowth of, and build upon, all that has happened before in connection with Creator/Mankind relationship. And along with what has happened before these events and interactions form a critical part of the foundation upon which all subsequent Creator/Mankind interactions will proceed.

What we will read about will not just be the story of Avram and Sarai. The dealings of the Holy One with Avram and Sarai will merely be a sub-plot of the greater story of the redemptive plan of the Holy One for His Creation.

The Relationship of the Avram/Sarai Narratives to the Two Over-riding Themes of the Book of Genesis

Let us remember – and keep in mind as we read the details of the Avram/Sarai sub-plot – what we have previously identified in these studies as the *two over-riding themes of the Torah*. There is a *central theme* and there is a *secondary theme*. Do you remember what they are?

The *central theme* of the Torah and indeed all of Scripture is ***the rule and reign of God over all created things***. Torah wants us to view God as nothing less than the Sovereign Lord over the entire universe and to accept His will as the ultimate and most powerful as well as most beneficial force therein.

The *secondary theme* of the Torah is that *there is a special place of blessing - a garden of delight - ordained by God for occupancy by the descendants of the man Avraham, the 10th generation descendant (through the lineage of Shem) of Noach (Noah), who was the 10th generation descendant (through the lineage of Seth) of Adam. This special garden is going to be provided as a stage of sorts upon which a Divine Passion Play authored by the Creator is to be acted out according to a Script written before the foundation of the world. Through the acting out of this script the will of God – i.e. that through Avraham and his seed all the nations of the earth will be blessed - is going to be fulfilled.*

In parsha ***B'reshit*** we focused upon the Compassionate One's creation of the world, and upon the rebellion of mankind against his Creator. In parsha ***Noach*** we focused upon the Creator's redemptive judgment and renewal of the world. This week in parsha ***Lech Lecha*** we will focus upon the Holy One's calling forth from that renewed world unto Himself a people who become clearly distinguishable from others as every aspect of and event in their lives is penetrated by a clear and constant plan of divine government.

Noach vs. Avram – the Differences

For two weeks in a row the first few lines of the parsha of the week introduce us to someone from whom we are to learn important lessons regarding both *how to relate to* and *what to expect from* the Holy One. Last week parsha ***Noach*** began with Torah introducing us to *Noach* [Noah]; this week parsha ***Lech Lecha*** begins with Torah introducing us to Avram. There is a qualitative difference in the

introductions, which we will do well to heed.

We were specifically told by Torah what to think of Noah. We were introduced to him *as the Holy One saw him – righteous, blameless in his generation, one who walked with God.* **Genesis 6:9.** Torah does not tell us any similar thing about Avram [Abram].

Avram is not called righteous. Avram is not declared to be blameless in his generation. And rather than walk with the Holy One the way Noah did *it appears the Holy One had to prod Avram with an ox-goad to make him move.* I identify best with Avram – how about you!

But before we leave the subject of the differences between our introduction to Noah and our introduction to Avram there is one other thing that should be noted. Noah was introduced to us as fruitful, the father of three strapping sons who walked in his revelation. Avram is different. Avram's wife, Sarai, is barren. Avram is, therefore, the first depository of the promised seed we will encounter who is himself void of seed.

Avram is thus introduced to us in *a state of glaring incompleteness.* There is a *large vacuum* in his life. His will be a story crying out for supernatural intervention.

The Foundation Upon Which all God-Man Interaction Is Built – The B'rit

Last week in our study of parsha **Noach** we were introduced to something called a **b'rit**⁷ – almost universally translated into English as 'covenant'. The Holy One made a **b'rit** [covenant] with Noah and his descendants. Understanding **b'rit** is essential to understanding Torah – and absolutely critical to having a meaningful relationship with the Creator of the Universe⁸. A **b'rit**, you see, is what not only *binds the Holy One to us, and us to the Holy One, in this world,* but also *secures for us a place in the World-to-Come.*

⁷ **B'rit** is *beit, resh, yod, tav*, pronounced *buh-reet*'. In Hebraic pictographs it depicts the Holy One as a mighty king [*beit*] stepping off of His Throne to become as a man [*resh*], and in that capacity establishing with His own hand [*yod*] a covenant [*tav*] with other men.

⁸ Please note that I am not saying that one has to have an *intellectual* understanding of **b'rit** before one can be in relationship with the Holy One. The Holy One is the initiator of every relationship, and therefore begins relationship at whatever intellectual level we find ourselves when He apprehends us, arrests us, and stirs in us a desire to know and walk with Him. Understanding of **b'rit** is a gift of the Creator, and usually comes to us progressively, as the relationship develops. But for a full 'partnering-in-Creation' relationship, such as the Holy One intends for His people to have with Him, to exist, we must understand, and flow in, the **b'rit**.

Adam and *Chava* [Eve] had a close relationship with, and had many, and sometimes very, very high quality, interactions with the Holy One. *Kayin* [Cain] discovered the Holy One's judgment and His grace. *Hanoch* [Enoch] *walked with* God, and God 'took him'. But strangely enough, Torah does not describe the relationship any of those persons had with the Holy One as a *b'rit*. Those relationships, awesome in implication as they were, were merely preliminary and foundational. Those relationships all merely laid the groundwork, as it were, for the *b'rit*-based relationship the Holy One intended to establish with the crowning jewel of His Creation – the one lovingly formed by His Hand *b'tzelem Elohim* [in the image of God].

In Biblical times, you see, covenants were the building blocks of social interaction and social relations, between individuals, ethnic groups, nations, and kingdoms. The only Biblical relationships not based specifically on covenant were the relationships of father/son, mother/daughter, sibling/sibling - family relationships based upon biology and the animalistic concept of 'bonding'.

Think about it. Any time two people meet, or kingdoms face off against each other, or two sheikdoms or tribes interact, they must do so on one of two levels – they must choose either *warfare* or *diplomacy*. Sometimes, warfare is chosen. Sometimes, however, warfare is not in either side's best interest. In those situations, diplomacy is in the long-term interest of both kingdoms, sheikdoms, or tribes. What is the basis for diplomacy? In human terms, each probably has something the other wants or needs; hence, when Ya'akov and his sons came to Shechem in Genesis, the sons of Shechem invited them to intermarry and intermix – i.e. to make a *b'rit*.

A *b'rit* consists not just of promises but *solemn, irrevocable oaths*, confirmed by ceremonial acts and tokens designed to function as 'down payments' on the covenant undertakings of each party.

A *b'rit* also involves a formal acknowledging of one party as the 'stronger partner' [the *suzerein*] and the other party as the 'weaker partner' [the *vassal*]. The stronger partner agrees to provide the weaker partner with protection, with counsel, and with training in fulfillment of the covenant objectives; the weaker partner agrees to submit its agenda, its resources, and its undying loyalty to the will of the other, and to *sh'ma* everything the stronger partner says⁹. And the stronger partner [in our

⁹ Sometimes translated "he listens", sometimes "he hears", and sometimes "he obeys", the Hebrew verb *sh'ma* [*shin, mem, ayin*, Strong's #H8085] describes the proper response of man to the Voice of the Creator. To *sh'ma* means much more than either to listen or to hear. It means to *totally restructure one's life based solely upon what one has heard*, forsaking all other ways besides that way explicitly spoken by he who has spoken.

context, God] is recognized as the sole arbitrator of any dispute that might arise and the enforcer of any discipline that may be necessary between the covenant partners.

The Holy One intended His relationship with man to be based upon *b'rit*. His interactions with man were not intended to be haphazard, or 'as necessary'. They were to be based upon something much more substantive and abiding. Hence we are going to find that virtually every dealing recorded in Scripture between the Holy One and man from the Flood forward is going to *be built around*, is going to *occur in the context of*, and is going to *assume the existence and continuance of* the covenants the Holy One has made with men, starting with Noach and his sons, and extending, this week, to a descendant of theirs – a man named Avraham.

The Modern Idea of 'Treaty' or 'Contract' vs. the Hebrew B'rit

The word "covenant" [the closest English equivalent to *b'rit*] is seldom used in our Western Society. Lesser, watered down, terms such as "treaty", "contract", "partnership", "agreement" and "arrangement" have gradually replaced the covenant concept. Only in connection with traditional marriage does our society purport to require parties commence their bond with an oath or vow or 'down payment'. Only in that connection does our society consider God a party and partner to an agreement, such that supernatural consequences of infidelity a part of the "deal". Only in that connection does a relationship between two people involve a ceremonial exchange [usually, rings] of 'down payment' on covenant undertakings, and a designation/acknowledgement of one party as the 'stronger partner' to provide protection and training, and of the other party as the 'weaker vessel' to provide submissiveness.

Widespread ignorance in our society about the nature of covenant has led, of course, to the rapid erosion of the traditional marriage relationship in America and other Western nations. Parties who enter into marriage, and live marriage, as a 'contract', a 'partnership', or an 'arrangement' are likely to end up in divorce court, or in an "affair". Parties who enter into and live marriage as a "covenant", however, are not likely to end up in either.

A *b'rit* with God, you see, means we do not have to guess at or wonder about where our relationship with Him stands. A *b'rit* with the Holy One means that we do not have to speculate about what His thoughts toward us are, what He expects from us, or what His purpose is in giving us life and daily bread.

A *b'rit* with the Holy One means we have the strongest possible '*covenant partner*' – the Creator of the Universe Himself. A *b'rit* with the Holy One means

that the Almighty One has *bound Himself to protect and defend us against every opponent, to communicate His will and His counsel to us, and to teach/train us, even disciplining us as necessary*, in order that we might become flesh and blood representatives of His Kingdom on earth.

A *b'rit* with the Holy One means He gets a people who will merely *sh'ma* His voice, *sh'mar* and *asah* His words, and do only what they see Him doing, rather than a people who do great works they think will impress Him, earn His favor and curry His blessing. A *b'rit* with the Holy One means He Who is most qualified gets to be the 'stronger partner', and gets His Will accomplished '*on earth as it is in Heaven*', in such a way as to bring to Him - not to His agents - honor, glory, and praise from the peoples and nations of the earth.

All that being said, perhaps we should take a look at the man through whom this kind of *b'rit* is going to be most wonderfully introduced.

Eavesdropping on Avram's Conversations At Charan

At the close of parsha *Noach* (last week's parsha) near the end of the genealogy of Noach, we were briefly introduced to a man named *Avram* One of Shem's descendants, Avram's name means [*alef, beit/veit, resh, mem sofit*, pronounced *Aww-rawm*]. "*exalted father*", but he had no children nor prospect of having any. He was born a pagan among pagans, into a pagan family, in a pagan land - Ur of the Chaldees. His father, Terach, began a journey to Kena'an, but somehow never made it. Halfway there – out of Babylon, but still not home – he settled in Charan.

And so it is not in Ur of the Chaldees but in Charan that we find the subject of our study, Avram, as our *parsha ha-shavua* begins.

Keep in mind that God does not start out the relationship by making *b'rit* with Avram. Avram is not yet ready. The Holy One is going to lead Avram *gently* in the direction of *b'rit*.

In the aliyah we read on *Yom Sheni* [Monday], the Holy One will introduce Himself to Avram, and call him to leave behind aspects of his life that are inconsistent with, and from people who would counsel Avram against, the *b'rit* the Holy One has in mind.

In the aliyot we will study on *Yom Sh'lishi* [Tuesday] and *Yom Revi'i* [Wednesday] the Holy One will, by processing Avram through a series of potentially life-threatening experiences, more than prove Himself worthy of being acknowledged and served as the 'stronger partner' in a lifelong relationship.

Then in the aliyah we read on *Yom Chamishi* [Thursday] - Genesis 15 – the **b'rit** will finally be cut.

Torah does not introduce us to Avram – other than mentioning his name - until he is already 75 years old, married, and, to that point in his life at least, childless. How this ordinary man encountered the Most High God, was over many years humbled and transformed by Him, to the extent that he became not only the “*exalted father*” [in Hebrew, Avram] of the Hebrew peoples, but the “*Father of Many Nations*” [in Hebrew, Avra~~h~~am] is one of the most critical theological lessons anyone seeking to truly know the Holy One must understand.

We meet Avram just as everything in his life is about to change dramatically. In this, the third parsha of the Torah, the Holy One calls Avram and his wife, Sarai, to “*go out*” of everything they knew, in search of their destiny. In Hebrew, the words our English Bibles translate as ‘Go out’ are **Lech** [lamed, kaf] **Lecha** [lamed, kaf sofit]. Literally, they mean *go unto yourself*— find the person you really are!

The Hebraic word picture of the phrase **lech lecha** is fascinating. The first letter, the *lamed*, as we have previously discussed, is a Hebraic picture of an ox-goad – that which makes an ox move, or changes his direction. The second letter, the *kaf*, is a Hebraic picture of the cupped wings of a bird or angelic creature in descent. The words *lech lecha* thus form a Hebraic mural in which the Holy One *goads* Avram – and makes Avram *move and light*. Since this is repeated, it pictures a process – with a goal – namely the *kaf sofit* – the ultimate destination the Holy One has prepared for us.

This mural is descriptive of the events in Avram’s life about which we will read, but it is also much, much more. It is, I believe, prophetic of what will happen in the lives of Avram’s descendants forever. Yitzchak (Isaac) and Ya’akov (Jacob) and Yosef (Joseph) – and B’nei Yisrael under Moshe (Moses) and Y’hoshua (Joshua) - would each experience it. And I believe it is also what the Holy One is doing in YOUR life and MINE *this week* – at *this strategic point in time*.

It is Time for the Moving of Tents

This week – the week when the theme for our lives is ‘*lech lecha*’ – has the spiritual potential to be a week of *moving our tents* in response to the Holy One’s intervention in our lives. What does this mean? Does it mean we will all move to Israel? Perhaps. Perhaps not. But what it will involve for all us, as it involved for Avram and Sarai, is likely to be *saying goodbye to something familiar and comfortable*. It may well also mean *leaving relationships and associations we had*

assumed would always be a part of our lives, in order to make progress on a journey toward *our ultimate dwelling place [kaf sofit]* in the Holy One's Divine Will.

Be prepared to feel *restless* this week. Be prepared to sense something eternal and supercharged with destiny entering your life this week.

Destiny awaits. Mission calls. Everything that hinders or holds us back from following our Bridegroom-King wherever He leads will begin to feel heavy, oppressive, and intolerable. And some things – and perhaps some people and situations – the season for which has expired will soon be disappearing in our rear-view mirror.

Are you feeling the Holy One's ox-goad yet?

The Haftarah for Lech Lecha

Isaiah 40:27 - 41:16

In the Haftarah for *Lech Lecha* **Yeshayahu** [Isaiah] speaks to the descendants of Avram at a time when they, like Avram and Sarai, were physically unable to do anything to obtain, and were about to give up on, the Holy One's promises. Yeshayahu speaks words of comfort and encouragement, but clearly declares that the promises of the Holy One are for *a remnant* who like Avram will **hear** and **heed**, and “*wait upon the Lord.*”

The haftarah will begin with the familiar likening of those who ‘wait upon the Lord’ to eagles who rise up on wings.

Veyi'afu ne'arim veyiga'u

Even youths faint and become weary,

uv'churim kashol yikashelu

and young men utterly fall:

V'kovei Adonai yachalifu choach

. . . but those who wait for the Holy One will renew their strength;

ya'alu ever kan'sharim

they will mount up with wings as eagles;

yarutzu v'lo yiga'u yelechu v'lo yi'afu

they will run, and not be weary; they will walk, and not faint.

[Isaiah 40:30-31]

May the ***Ruach HaChodesh*** [Holy Spirit] empower you both to wait upon the Holy

One and to rise up with wings as eagles! But there is more. Before the week is over we will glean from the writings of the prophet Yeshayahu a little more about what the Holy One's **b'rit** with Avraham is all about. For Yeshayahu will say on behalf of the Holy One:

*But you, Yisra'el, my servant; Ya`akov whom I have chosen,
the seed of Avraham my friend,*

*Don't you be afraid, for I am with you; don't be dismayed, for I am your God;
I will **strengthen you**; yes, I will **help you**;
yes, I will **uphold you** with the right hand of my righteousness.*

*Behold, I have made you
[to be] a new sharp **threshing instrument** having teeth;
you will **thresh the mountains**, and beat them small, and will **make the hills as chaff**.
You shall **winnow them**, and the wind shall carry them away,
and the whirlwind will scatter them;
and you will **rejoice in the Holy One**, you will **glory in the Holy One of Yisra'el**.*

Rejoice in these prophetic declarations, Dear Reader. They are your **heritage** . . . and your **destiny**. It is *the outworking of the B'RIT*.

This Week's Reading from the Apostolic Scriptures

Romans 4:1 – 25

In the text I have selected from the writings of Y'shua's talmidim to correspond with parsha *Lech Lecha*, Shaul [Saul of Tarsus] extracts object lessons from the life experiences of Avraham. Shaul declares Avraham to be "*the father of all who believe*," and of all who "*walk in the footsteps of the faith*" that Avraham had. Shaul will point out that:

*. . . Avraham . . . is the father of us all. As it is written,
"I have made you a father of many nations/peoples."*

[Romans 4:16]

And Shaul will conclude this aliyah by describing to us the secret of Avraham's relationship with God, reminding us that Avraham:

*. . . in hope believed against hope, to the end that he might become a father
of many nations/peoples, according to that which had been spoken, "So will your seed be."*

[Romans 4:18]

Tap into your spiritual 'roots' this week, Dear Reader.

Conclusion

Beloved, this week learn *the ways of the Holy One* by watching Him interact with our father Avram/Avraham. Let the words of the Holy One to Avram/Avraham transcend the centuries. Let them penetrate to your very souls. *The Holy One's*

call to Avraham is, you see, also His call to you and me. Much of walking with God is leaving things behind and allowing the Holy One to change our priorities, philosophies, and theologies as we go.

Do you have a *covenant with God*? Have you asked God to engraft you into the covenant the Holy One made with Avraham? If you have not done it before I encourage you to *do it now*.

Lech Lecha, Dear Reader!

[Go to who you really are – who you were really created to be!].

The Rabbi's son

Amidah Prayer Focus For Week #3

K'dosh - The Prayer of His Holiness

Atah K'dosh v'shemecha k'dosh

You are Holy and Your Name is Holy

u'k'doshim b'chol yom y'hal'lecha selah

Seekers and holy ones join in the worship of You this day and every day

Baruch Atah Adonai, ha-El ha-k'dosh

Blessed are You, O Holy One, for You are a holy God