

Sharing Shabbat Adult Study

November 5, 2022 | 11th of Cheshvan, 5783

Parashat Lech Lecha

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Genesis 11:31 (end of Noach) -12:5 (beginning of Lech Lecha)

Terah took his son Abram, his grandson Lot the son of Haran, and his daughter-in-law Sarai, the wife of his son Abram, and they set out together from Ur of the Chaldeans for the land of Canaan; but when they had come as far as Haran, they settled there.

וַיִּקַּח תֵּרַח אֶת־אַבְרָם בְּנוֹ וְאֶת־לוֹט בְּנוֹ־הָרַן בְּנוֹ־בְנוֹ וְאֶת־שָׂרַי כְּלֵתוֹ אֵשֶׁת אַבְרָם בְּנוֹ וַיֵּצְאוּ אֹתָם מֵאוּר כַּשְׁדִּים לְלֶכֶת אֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן וַיָּבֹאוּ עַד־חָרָן וַיֵּשְׁבוּ שָׁם:

The days of Terah came to 205 years; and Terah died in Haran.

וַיְהִי יְמֵי־תֵרַח חֲמִשׁ וָשָׁנִים וּמֵאֵתַיִם שָׁנָה וַיָּמָת תֵּרַח בְּחָרָן:

Adonai said to Abram, “Go forth from your native land and from your father’s house to the land that I will show you.

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־אַבְרָם לְךָ־לֵךְ מֵאֶרֶץ־כְּנָעַן וּמִמּוֹלַדְתְּךָ וּמִבֵּית אָבִיךָ אֶל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אֲרָאָךְ:

I will make of you a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, And you shall be a blessing.

וְאֶעֱשֶׂה לְךָ גֹּדֹל וְאַבְרָכְךָ וְאֶגְדָּלְךָ וְשִׁמְךָ וְהָיָה בְרָכָה:

I will bless those who bless you And curse the one who curses you; And all the families of the earth Shall bless themselves by you.”

וְאַבְרָכָה מְבָרְכֶיךָ וּמְקַלְלֶיךָ אָאָר וּנְבָרְכוּ בְּךָ כָּל מְשֻׁפָּחֹת הָאֲדָמָה:

Abram went forth as Adonai had commanded him, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he left Haran.

וַיֵּלֶךְ אַבְרָם כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר אֱלֹהֵי יְהוָה וַיֵּלֶךְ אִתּוֹ לוֹט וְאַבְרָם בְּן־חֲמִשׁ וָשָׁנִים וּשְׁבַע־עִים שָׁנָה בָּצֵאתוֹ מִחָרָן:

Abram took his wife Sarai and his brother’s son, Lot, and all the wealth that they had amassed, and the persons that they had acquired in Haran; and they set out for the land of Canaan...

וַיִּקַּח אַבְרָם אֶת־שָׂרַי אִשְׁתּוֹ וְאֶת־לוֹט בְּנוֹ־אִחִיו וְאֶת־כָּל־רְכוּשָׁם אֲשֶׁר רָכְשׂוּ וְאֶת־הַנַּפְשׁ אֲשֶׁר־עָשׂוּ בְּחָרָן וַיֵּצְאוּ לְלֶכֶת אֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן וַיָּבֹאוּ אֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן:

Rashi on Genesis 12:1:1 (11th c. Medieval French rabbi, famous commentator)

לך לך GET THEE OUT (literally, go for thyself) — for your own benefit, for your own good: there I will make of you a great nation whilst here you will not merit the privilege of having children (Rosh Hashanah 16b). Furthermore, I shall make known your character throughout the world (Midrash Tanchuma, Lech Lecha 3)

Or HaChaim on Genesis 12:1:6 (18th c. Moroccan rabbi, commentator, Talmudist, Kabbalist)

An additional meaning of the instruction to Abraham to "go for yourself," is not so much that he was to be alone but that he was to benefit spiritually by this migration.

Batya Ellinoy, "Go Forth" — Go to Yourself, for Yourself, and Beyond Yourself!

(Rabbinical student, Hebrew College)

The opening words of God's call, "Lech Lecha," can actually be translated as "Go forth," "Go to yourself," or "Go for yourself..." However one chooses to translate these words, Lech Lecha is all about movement: going inwards or outwards, moving beyond the familiar and comfortable, crossing boundaries and moving into spaces where we can (re)discover our best selves. It is a journey that begins by first pausing to listen and then moving in step with what one hears, thinks, and feels.

This "going forth" into the unknown can be frightening. There are habits, dreams, and connections that may be left behind. It takes courage and support to move away from what is familiar. Fortunately, we are "hard-wired" for movement. After all, we come into this world by traveling through a dark passage after growing for months in the womb. Once outside, we naturally begin to reach, to crawl, to walk, and then to run. We are designed to "go forth!" As our brains develop we also seek meaning and purpose. Lech Lecha is a call that reconnects us to the natural impulse to develop and grow, implanted in us by God...

Lech Lecha serves as an annual call: It is time. Go out, to yourself, for yourself, and beyond yourself. You know how to do this. When you are scared or unsure, reconnect with your breath, with God, with those who care about you, and put one foot in front of the other...

Susan Werner, "[May I Suggest](#)" (American folk singer-songwriter, b. 1965)

May I suggest, may I suggest to you
May I suggest this is the best part of your life
May I suggest this time is blessed for you
This time is blessed and shining almost blinding bright
Just turn your head, and you'll begin to see
The thousand reasons that were just beyond your sight
The reasons why, why I suggest to you
Why I suggest this is the best part of your life

There is a world that's been addressed to you
Addressed to you, intended only for your eyes
A secret world, like a treasure chest to you
Of private scenes and brilliant dreams that mesmerize
A lover's trusting smile, a tiny baby's hands
The million stars that fill the turning sky at night
And I suggest, yes I suggest to you
Yes I suggest this is the best part of your life

There is a hope that's been expressed in you
The hope of seven generations, maybe more
And this is the faith that they invest in you
It's that you'll do one better than was done before
Inside you know, inside you understand
Inside you know what's yours to finally set right
And I suggest, yes I suggest to you
Yes I suggest this is the best part of your life

This is a song, comes from the west to you
Comes from the west, comes from the slowly setting sun
This is a song with a request of you
To see how very short the endless days will run
And when they're gone, and when the dark descends
And we'd give anything for one more hour of light
May I suggest this is the best part of your life