



## **Lech Lecha**

October 16, 2021

*Torah:* Genesis 12:1-17:27

*Haftarah:* Isaiah 40:27-41:16

*K'tuvim Shlichim:* Romans 4:1-25

*Shabbat Shalom Mishpacha.* In our *parasha*, this week, ADONAI spoke to *Avram* and said: לְךָ-לְךָ מֵאֶרֶץ וּמִמּוֹלַדְתְּךָ וּמִבֵּית אָבִיךָ, אֶל-הָאָרֶץ, אֲשֶׁר אֶרְאֶךָ; *lekh lekha me'artsecha umimoladetecha umibeit avicha el-ha'aretz asher ar'eka. 1* ..... “Get going out from your land, and from your relatives, and from your father’s house, to the land that I will show you.” (Genesis 12:1b TLV). Just last week we had *Parasha Noach* and the week before that *Parasha Bereshit*. All of the time of *Bereshit* and *Noach* up until the flood covered 1,656 years. Time in that era was much different than it is today. Just 352 years after the flood, *Avram* was born, 2,008 years after *Adam*. Much different than today, the people of that era’s lives were intertwined throughout multiple generations. To read of *Avram*’s birth, we have to go back to *Parasha Noach: 27 These are Terah’s genealogies: Terah fathered Abram, Nahor and Haran.* (Genesis 11:27 TLV). Noah was Abram’s great-great grandfather. Interestingly, Noah’s 950 year life, a life which began 600 years before the flood, ended just 2 years before Abram was born. Abram almost knew his great-great grandfather. But, he did know his great grandfather Shem and Shem was alive during 150 years of Abram’s life. Amazing! After leaving Ur, Abram probably never saw his great grandfather again, but he would have known him during the 70 years of his life in Ur. Abram left Ur of the Chaldees at age 70. But, Abram’s grandfather Eber outlived him by 4 years although he was not around him either after leaving Ur. In my generation, it is rare to even know a great grandparent, but it is becoming much more common today with people living longer.

The timelines are very interesting, but we have more important fish to fry today. A major theme of our *parasha* is Abram’s obedience. He obeyed ADONAI. It began with his being called out of the land of Ur of the Chaldees by ADONAI. We are not told that in Genesis, only that his father Terah left Ur of the Chaldees: *31 Terah took Abram his son and Lot, Haran’s son, his grandson, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, his son Abram’s wife, and he took them out of Ur of the Chaldeans to go to the land of Canaan. But when they came to Haran, they settled there.* (Genesis 11:31 TLV). We are also not told about Terah’s motivation for leaving Ur. It may very well have been that Abram encouraged him to leave because ADONAI had called him out of Ur. And, we know from other Scripture that Abram was first called when he was in Ur. Stephen explained this in his testimony to the Sanhedrin: *2 Stephen declared, “Brothers and fathers, listen. The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran. 3 He said to him, ‘Leave your country and your relatives, and come here to the land that I will show you.”* (Acts 7:2-3 TLV). This was also confirmed by Nehemiah in 9:7.

Abram and his family were pagans, worshippers of false gods. Scripture doesn’t tell us about Abram personally, but we do know that his father Terah worshipped other gods: *2 Then Joshua said to all the people: “Thus says Adonai, God of Israel: ‘From ancient times your fathers—Terah, the father of Abraham and the father of Nahor—lived beyond the River and worshipped other gods.”* (Joshua 24:2 TLV). “Fathers” is plural in this verse, so it could mean that Abraham and Nahor also worshipped other gods. We aren’t specifically told if Abram

worshipped other gods, but he most likely did. There are stories in rabbinic literature which purport to show Abram as not worshipping idols and even ridiculing those who did. But, we cannot put any stock in such stories. They are extra-biblical, from outside of Genesis through Revelation, and we must not be tempted to even consider them as truth. But, we do know that Abram came from a pagan culture, a culture which worshipped multiple gods.

Our *parasha* today begins after Abram and Sarai had been in Haran for 5 years. Abram is now 75 years old. This map proposes his route from Ur to Haran and then on into Canaan. It is possible that ADONAI gave this 5 years in Haran to Abram so that he could be with his father Terah until his death. But, now that Terah has died, ADONAI said: “*Get going out from your land, and from your relatives, and from your father’s house, to the land that I will show you.*” (Genesis 12:1b TLV). And, Abram obeyed. *5 Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his nephew, and all their possessions that they had acquired, and the people that they acquired in Haran, and they left to go to the land of Canaan, and they entered the land of Canaan.* (Genesis 12: 5 TLV). So far, there has been no mention of faith in these verses, but nevertheless, it was there. To have left Ur of the Chaldees and then left Haran, Abram’s obedience would have required faith in the G-d who called him, even though the word faith has not appeared. Some 24 years later when Abram was 99 years old, Scripture says this: *6 Then he believed in Adonai and He reckoned it to him as righteousness.* (Genesis 15:6 TLV). Following that declaration, ADONAI cut a covenant with him.

Is belief faith? They are intimately related. Easton’s Bible Dictionary says: “Faith is in general the persuasion of the mind that a certain statement is true (Phil 1:27; 2Thess 2:13). The primary idea is trust.” Nelson’s Bible Dictionary defines faith “as a belief in or confident attitude toward G-d, involving commitment to his will for one’s life and continues that belief is to place one’s trust in G-d’s truth.” Putting this together, we could say that “trust” is faith and a “confident attitude toward G-d” is also faith. So, even though the word faith has not been mentioned, we know that Abram had faith. But, guess what? The Hebrew *emunah*, usually translated as “faith,” is found in these 14 chapters in Genesis, at least a form of it. Genesis 15:6 says: וְהֶאֱמַן, בַּיהוָה; וַיִּחְשְׁבֶהָ לוֹ, צְדָקָה. *Vehe'emin b'Adonai vayachsheveha lo tzedakah.* 6 And he believed in ADONAI; and He counted it to him for righteousness. *Vehe'emin* is not *emunah*, but a form of it, and it tells us that Abraham did have faith.

Abraham as we know him today, is our spiritual father. In Judaism, we refer to him as *Avraham avinu*, our father Abraham, not only because he was a physical father, but because he is also our spiritual father. Our *parasha* continues: *2 “My heart’s desire is to make you into a great nation, to bless you, to make your name great so that you may be a blessing. 3 My desire is to bless those who bless you, but whoever curses you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.”* (Genesis 12:2-3 TLV). Both the physical and the spiritual are found in these verses. ADONAI has made Abraham’s physical descendants into a great nation, but also through Abraham all the nations of the earth will be both physically and spiritually blessed. The nations of the earth have been physically blessed in so many ways by the Jews themselves; in science, medicine, art, music, theater and many other ways, not the least of which is the writing down of ADONAI’s words, the Holy Scriptures. But, the greatest spiritual blessing is through Abraham’s seed, Yeshua. Abraham’s blessing of the nations through Yeshua is eternal life to those who believe, those who have faith or trust in Him.

ADONAI said “*Lech Lecha,*” “get up and go” to Abram and He has also said “*Lech Lecha,*” “get up and go to the spiritual land that I will show you,” to each of us. Yeshua said: *44 “No one can (lech lecha) come to Me unless My Father who sent Me draws him—.”* (John 6:44a TLV). The *Ruach ADONAI* says to Jew and Gentile: *lech lecha;* “get up from where you are

and come to Me.” He says it to every person that He created! *Shimon Kefa* said: 9 “*The Lord is not slow in keeping His promise, as some consider slowness. Rather, He is being patient toward you—not wanting anyone to perish, but for all to come to repentance.*” (2Peter 3:9 TLV). ADONAI doesn’t choose some and not others. Every person ADONAI created has been drawn by His Spirit. No one has an excuse. His still, small voice speaks and is speaking to each of our hearts. Before a person trusts Yeshua, he is a pagan, exactly as *Avram* was. Before Yeshua, we were idol worshippers; maybe not in the way that idols were worshipped in Abraham’s day, but an idol worshipper, nevertheless. A person who does not know Yeshua worships his own sense of righteousness and his own accomplishments, believing that he needs nothing else. But when he encounters and believes ADONAI in the person of Yeshua, it is credited to him as righteousness, just as it was for *Avram*. *Avram* obeyed, that is, trusted ADONAI, and ADONAI credited it to him as righteousness. The same is true today. Yeshua said: 28 “*Come to Me, all who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.*” (Matthew 11:28 TLV). When a person believes Yeshua, it is credited to him or her as righteousness and their name is written in the Lamb’s Book of Life. Our spiritual burdens are taken on by Yeshua and we have rest, *shalom*, in this life and eternal life in the hereafter.

When we think about Abraham, we usually think about his personal encounters with ADONAI. It seems to us that he was in contact and fellowship with ADONAI almost all the time, but actually, he was not. In the 14 chapters of Genesis 12 through 25 which deal with his life, 370 verses, Abram only had 6 personal encounters with ADONAI. In chapter 12, *Avram* was “called.” In chapter 13, he was given the “promise of the land of Canaan.” In chapter 15, “ADONAI cut the covenant of the promised land” with *Avram*. In chapter 17, ADONAI changed his name *Avram*, meaning “exalted father,” to *Avraham*, “father of a multitude” and then gave him the covenant of circumcision. In Chapter 18, the birth of the “son of promise,” Isaac, was announced. And finally, in chapter 22, *Avraham* was “tested by ADONAI” by commanding him to sacrifice his son Isaac, the son of promise. That was the final test of his faith in ADONAI. He had 6 brief encounters with ADONAI during all this time, 100 years. He left Haran at age 75 and died at age 175, 100 years of faithfulness to ADONAI. He had times of failing as we all do, but there was never any doubt that his goal was to faithfully serve ADONAI.

Each of us is very much like Abraham. We have an encounter with Yeshua just as *Avram* did with ADONAI, and then we must walk out the promise of salvation that we have received by faith. Abraham was saved by faith. *Sha’ul* said: 8 “*The Scriptures, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, proclaimed the Good News to Abraham in advance, saying, “All the nations shall be blessed through you.”* (Galatians 3:8 TLV). Abraham saw Yeshua and His “Good News” of salvation from afar; through the years supernaturally. While we seek to hear from ADONAI through His *Ruach HaKodesh*, and many times we do hear, we seldom have face to face meetings with ADONAI or Yeshua, spiritual mountaintop experiences. But because our initial encounter with Yeshua was so real to us, we are able to continue in faith, strengthened by G-d’s Word and the ongoing witness of His Holy Spirit.

In Genesis 12:3 ADONAI said to *Avram*: 3 “*My desire is to bless those who bless you, but whoever curses you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.*” (Genesis 12:3 TLV). ADONAI’s blessing on those who bless *Avram*’s descendants, the Jews, also means that ADONAI plans blessings for them, the Jews. And, He has tremendously blessed the Jewish people with many attributes which in turn have blessed the nations and now, in our time, He has blessed them with a return to their own land and sovereignty over its capital, Jerusalem. But, His greatest blessing for them is Abraham’s seed, his descendant, Yeshua. This is their greatest blessing, but the majority don’t understand it or receive it. But, they will! And, this same blessing of Messiah Yeshua and His salvation is also for the

families of the earth, the Nations. As we said a few minutes ago, ADONAI told Abraham about this in advance. Galatians 3:8 makes it clear that Abraham knew that his descendant Yeshua would bring salvation to the nations and through that knowledge, Abraham, himself, trusted in his descendant. Yeshua hinted at Abraham's salvation when He said to the Judean leaders: 56 *"Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day; he saw it and was thrilled."* (John 8:56 TLV).

We understand that ADONAI's plan for the salvation of the nations through His Son Yeshua was made before the foundation of the earth. Of course, we know that! But, did Abraham know it? I think he did. Consider the phrase, *"and in you all the families of the earth will be blessed."* The Hebrew word from which blessed is translated is *v'nivrechu*. But, it can also have another meaning. While we don't accept the *Talmud* as Scripture, we can learn from it. The Babylonian *Talmud*, Tractate *Sotah* 43, tells us that *"v'nivrechu* is derived from the Hebrew infinitive *mavrich*, which means "to graft." Understanding this, we can read this phrase this way: "and by or through you," that is, by Abraham and his descendants, "all of the other families of the earth will be "grafted in." Almost four thousand years ago ADONAI gave Abraham a promise that through him the nations would be blessed. And, Abraham most likely understood that this blessing to the nations was to be grafted into his family. This promise of blessing was to be later revealed as his descendant Yeshua who would bring the *besorah*, the Good News, "the Gospel," to not only Abraham's descendants, but also to the nations. Additional information about "grafting" can be found as Addendum A at the end of the written message on our website.

Why did all of this happen? It was because of ADONAI's great love for us, His creation. And because of that great love, He chose a righteous man, Abraham, and his descendants to be the means that He would use to bring the Good News to the world. Because of His great love for us, ADONAI gave His only begotten Son, a son from the seed of Abraham, for death on the stake. 16 *"For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life."* (John 3:16 TLV). John 3:16 testifies to the greatness of the love that ADONAI has for mankind, each and every one of us individually. Through Abraham He has blessed the Nations of the earth and made it possible for the people of these nations to be grafted into the righteous nation, Israel, the nation which ADONAI called to be His *kohenim*, His priests to the Nations.

Earlier we spoke of the six encounters which Abraham had with ADONAI. Each of those encounters is symbolic of a spiritual encounter which we as followers of Yeshua have had. In Genesis chapter 12, verses 1 through 3, *Avram* was "called" by ADONAI. We are also called by ADONAI. Yeshua said: 44 *"No one can come to Me unless My Father who sent Me draws him—..."* (John 6:44a TLV). This is our calling. The *Ruach HaKodesh*, the Holy Spirit, calls us and draws us to Yeshua. But we must listen and respond. We have free will to make our own decision. In Genesis chapter 13, verses 14 and 15, *Avram* was given the "promise of the land of Canaan." In a similar way, after we have been drawn and receive Yeshua, we are given the promise of salvation, but we don't receive it right away just as Abraham didn't immediately receive the promised land. The second part of verse 44 tells when we will receive it: 44 *"No one can come to Me unless My Father who sent Me draws him—and I will raise him up on the last day."* (John 6:44 TLV). That's the day we're waiting for, the day that we will receive the promise, and *Sha'ul* described it for us: 16 *"For the Lord Himself shall come down from heaven with a commanding shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the blast of God's shofar, and the dead in Messiah shall rise first. 17 Then we who are alive, who are left behind, will be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air—and so we shall always be with the Lord. 18 Therefore encourage one another with these words."* (1Thessalonians 4:16-18 TLV).

In Genesis chapter 15, verses 1 through 21, ADONAI cut a covenant with *Avram* confirming the promise of the land which would be given to his descendants. The promise of the land was made to Jews. The Land of Israel is the homeland of the Jewish people and eventually all will be there. The promise of the land was made to Jews, but those from the Nations who meet ADONAI's righteous requirements also have been given a promise. 6 *“Also the foreigners who join themselves to Adonai, to minister to Him, and to love the Name of Adonai, and to be His servants— all who keep from profaning Shabbat, and hold fast to My covenant— 7 these I will bring to My holy mountain, and let them rejoice in My House of Prayer. Their burnt offerings and sacrifices will be acceptable on My altar. For My House will be called a House of Prayer for all nations.”* (Isaiah 56:6-7 TLV). This is not a promise of ownership of the land or even *aliyah* to the land, the right to go and become a citizen of Israel in today's world. It is a promise of going to Israel in ADONAI's kingdom, the Kingdom of Yeshua when He returns as *Melekh Mashiach*, King Messiah. To be able to do this, ADONAI said: “we must hold fast to His covenant.”

In Genesis chapter 17, verses 1 through 22, Avraham and his household accepted ADONAI's covenant of the promise of the land by partaking in the covenant of circumcision, *b'rit milah*, which would become the sign of the that covenant. No longer called *Avram* because ADONAI changed his name to *Avraham* just before his *b'rit milah*, he and all the males in his household set the pattern for Jewish males for all time. Their circumcision of the flesh is a sign forever that ADONAI gave the Land of Israel to the Jews. In the *Torah*, there is only provision for physical Jews to enter into the covenant of the land, but there is a covenant of circumcision which applies to both Jew and non-Jew. Moses, speaking for ADONAI, said: 16 *“Circumcise the foreskin of your heart therefore, and do not be stiff-necked anymore.”* (Deuteronomy 10:16 TLV). We are commanded to have circumcised hearts, hearts that are right with ADONAI. And, this also implies “knowing Yeshua.” This word of *Torah* is to both Jew and to non-Jew who is sojourning with Israel.

In Genesis chapter 18, verses 1 through 33, Abraham was given the specific promise that he and Sara would have a physical son, the promised son, Isaac. Through the Prophet Isaiah, Jew and Gentile were also promised a son, “a son of redemption.” 14 *“Therefore Adonai Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin will conceive. When she is giving birth to a son, she will call his name Immanuel.”* (Isaiah 7:14 TLV). The angel Gabriel said to *Miryam*: 30 ..., *“Do not be afraid, Miriam, for you have found favor with God. 31 Behold, you will become pregnant and give birth to a son, and you shall call His name Yeshua. 32 He will be great and will be called Ben-Elyon. Adonai Elohim will give Him the throne of David, His father.” 33 He shall reign over the house of Jacob for all eternity, and His kingdom will be without end.”* (Luke 1:30-33 TLV). *Ben Elyon*, the Son of the Most High G-d is also *Immanu'el*, G-d with us, a gift given because G-d so loved the world (John 3:16).

In Genesis chapter 22, verses 1 through 18, Abraham was tested by ADONAI to see if he would be obedient. ADONAI said to *Avraham*: 2 ....., *“Take your son, your only son whom you love —Isaac—and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains about which I will tell you.”* (Genesis 22:2b TLV). Abraham had to choose ADONAI over the promised son, the one whom he had waited for so many years. We are tested in the same way. Yeshua said: 37 *“He who loves father or mother more than Me isn't worthy of Me, and he who loves son or daughter more than Me isn't worthy of Me. 38 And whoever does not take up his cross and follow after Me isn't worthy of Me. 39 He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it.”* (Matthew 10:37-39 TLV). We are facing the same test which Abraham faced. We are called to love Yeshua first. Will we?

The times we live in today are not the times we lived in, even two years ago. The body of Messiah is seriously ill. Within it, we find increasing homosexuality, gender change, fornication, love of self, love of pleasure, hatred of the Jewish people and many other things which sadden us. Nineteen years ago, this body of believers was called out to do a new work called *Beit Shalom* Messianic Synagogue. At the time that we officially began, our small group was all Gentile. But, ADONAI had given us a vision and a calling and we answered it. It is listed in our website as Vision and Purpose: "*Beit Shalom* means "house of peace," and this is exactly what ADONAI has called our congregation to be - a place where the suffering and hurting of the Jewish people and all other nations can come to receive the *shalom shalom* (perfect peace) of G-d through a personal relationship with His Messiah Yeshua. Our synagogue is committed to teaching the message of Messiah and the truth of G-d's *Torah* (Teaching or Instruction) as the means of living a holy life of obedience before the L-rd to Jew and Gentile. We understand and accept all believing Gentiles whom ADONAI calls into our congregation as grafted-in members and sojourners with the people of Israel, equal in every way with our Jewish congregants and accountable to the same *Torah*." We still have that vision for ourselves, but we do not prescribe it for anyone outside of our congregation.

Today, we are a very small minority in the greater body of Messiah. Maybe we haven't done those serious things which some have done, but we are not without sin. Speaking to the Congregation at Ephesus, Yeshua said: 3 "*You have perseverance and have endured for My name's sake, and you have not grown weary.*" (Revelation 2:3 TLV). That's the good news if we're like the congregants at Ephesus. We have persevered and we've done many good things. But, Yeshua continued: 4 "*But this I have against you, that you have forsaken your first love.*" (Revelation 2:4 TLV). That's the bad news, news which applies to many within the body of Messiah and also to us here at *Beit Shalom*. Can anyone say that he has not forsaken his first love? Where is the excitement regarding gathering together every *Shabbat*? It's the same in the Church: "I'll go if I don't have something else I want to do." Where is our commitment to faithfully follow *Torah*? If we wish to be a part of what ADONAI is doing in the world today, we must return to our first love. And, our first love is Yeshua and serving Him as He has directed in His Word. We can't just take Him and our salvation for granted. His grace which He freely gave to us is not cheap. It comes with a cost to us; we must die to self and live for Him.

Not very long after we began as a Messianic synagogue 19 years ago, we learned a new song which we took as our theme song and it always comes to my mind when I read *Parasha Lech Lecha*. *L'chi Lach*, written by Debbie Friedman and Savina Teubal, is the very embodiment of what our small group of Gentiles was called to do. The words of the song, *L'chi Lach*, recall Genesis 12:1, where ADONAI said to *Avram*, "Get going out to the land I will show you." (TLV). But, *L'chi Lach*, the words in the song, have a slightly different meaning. They can be understood as saying "go into yourself." In other words, find within yourself the journey which you are meant to have, your spiritual and also sometimes physical journey. On a natural level, the hundreds of thousands of refugees of our present time, those who have been forced to leave their homes, experience this type of change and undertake a journey to an unfamiliar new home. For us, it was and is, mostly spiritual. In the early years of *Beit Shalom*, this was ADONAI's spiritual message to a small group of Gentiles: "find within yourself, within your spirit, where you are meant to go." Each of us was already a part of Yeshua's body, the Church, but we were called to leave it and go to a place that we did not know. This vision and calling was accepted by us at that time and has been passed on to the succeeding generations who have come to *Beit Shalom*. But, these words mean nothing if you don't experience it for yourself; if it is not personal to you. As the years have gone by, we have been joined by Jews. This vision is also for them. They have also left home and

family for Yeshua, many times with angry words and separation from family. The words of the song, *L'chi lach, to a land that I will show you! Lech l'cha - to a place you do not know* are so very meaningful. Each of us has, both spiritually and physically, left home and family for Yeshua's call into Messianic Judaism. Each year, when we read *Parasha Lech Lecha*, we are reminded of our calling and if we choose, it can be renewed in our hearts.

*Avraham aveinu*, Abraham our father, is our example. How do we measure up against his witness? Many times we fall short. But, if our heart's desire is to serve Yeshua, our example will become more and more like *Avraham aveinu* and our likeness more and more like Yeshua. Take these thoughts home with you today and examine your heart. Return to your first love! *Shabbat shalom!*

#### **Addendum A:**

Additional proof for what was said about being “grafted in” is also found in the *Talmud*. In *Mishnah Kilayim 1, v'nivrechu* is a word related to “mixing, as in mixing plant stock,” or in other words, “grafting.” This is also verified in a book entitled, “Jewish Conversion, Its Meaning and Laws,” by Rabbi Yoel Schwartz and published in 1995 by Feldheim Publishers. The following is a quote from Rabbi Schwartz: “The phrase “*v'nivrechu b'cha kol mishpechos ha'adamah,*” “.....and in you shall be blessed all the families of the earth” (Ibid. 12:3). This further highlights the nature of Abraham's influence. According to *Baalei HaTosafos (Ba'alei HaTotafot* with Sephardic pronunciation), the word *nivrechu* is a derivative of the infinitive *mavrich*, which means “grafting.” Although grafting results in merging, *Baalei HaTosafos* is not implying that Abraham mingled his flesh with the nations. It is referring to the “grafting” of the Gentiles with the Jewish Nation, “through the process of conversion, and to the merging of the progeny of Esau and Ishmael with the remainder of humanity.” While there is no formal conversion for us as followers of Yeshua, we do understand the intent: We are a part of the Commonwealth of Israel as spoken of by *Sha'ul: 11 “Therefore, keep in mind that once you—Gentiles in the flesh—were called “uncircumcision” by those called “circumcision” (which is performed on flesh by hand). 12 At that time you were separate from Messiah, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. 13 But now in Messiah Yeshua, you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of the Messiah.”* (Ephesians 2:11-13 TLV).