



#3 Lech Lecha Genesis 12:1-17:27 2020
by Moshe Schwab
Torah Study

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Lech Lecha means, "go forth yourself." The portion Lech Lecha begins with God telling Abram to leave Haran when he was 75 years old to go to the land that He would show Him; God would give the land of Canaan to his descendants. In the last portion, Abram leaves Ur with his family and father. The Jewish writings tell us that Abraham resisted idolatry and believed in the one true God. Perhaps he was raised for awhile with his believing relatives from the house of Noah as the Jewish writings suggest. Noah died just before Abraham was born. His father stays in Haran perhaps because he is too old to move on. It doesn't say why he didn't continue on.

God's protection would be with him Abram and God would bless the whole earth through Abram. Through Israel and God's believers, God has blessed the earth. The world has received evident witness of this blessing. The most prestigious award for contributions to the world is known as the Nobel Prize. Of the some 900 Nobel Prizes awarded since 1901, about 261 of those were given to Jews.¹ At present, the approximate Jewish population is about . 2% of the world population. So, some 29% of significant contributions to the world were given by a people group who represent a very small percentage of the world population. This is proof that the blessing given to Abraham has blessed the world. But let's not forget about the greatest Jew of all time, Yeshua Messiah.

The entire world has witnessed the blessing given by God to Abraham

Yeshua backed up who He is and did amazing things. Yochanan said, "And there are also many other things that Jesus did, which if they were written one by one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written;" John 21:25 NKJV.² Matthew 8:16 NKJV says, "When evening had come, they brought to Him many who were demon-possessed. And He cast out the spirits with a word, and **healed all** who were sick." Yeshua demonstrated who He is. Yeshua also gave Himself for our sins. The Bible says no one could do that without Yeshua allowing that (John 19:11).

God planned that the Messiah would give Himself. "All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all;"

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Jewish_Nobel_laureates

² The Messiah is also God, Yud-Hey-Vav-Hey. "Behold, the days are coming," says the LORD, "That I will raise to David a Branch of righteousness; A King shall reign and prosper, And execute judgment and righteousness in the earth. In His days Judah will be saved, And Israel will dwell safely; Now this is His name by which He will be called: THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS;" Jeremiah 23:5-6 NKJV. The word LORD is the exclusive name for God. The Messiah is God.

Isaiah 53:6 NKJV. Yeshua did not stay dead, but rose from the dead (Psalm 16:8-11). Yeshua is that Faithful One who rose from the dead. Some 500 people saw Him at the same time after He rose from the dead (1 Corinthians 15:3-6).

We are to repent, accept Yeshua as the Messiah and receive the helper, the Holy Spirit. Acts 2:38 says, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." Abraham also blessed the world with the Messiah!

After Abram gets to Canaan he goes to Egypt during a famine and tells Sarai to pretend to be his sister. Pharaoh gives gifts to Abram for Sarai to be his wife, but after some plagues in Pharaoh's house, Pharaoh finds out that Sarai is Abram's wife and he sends him away with gifts. After they get back to Canaan, Abram becomes wealthy and there was some quarreling between Abram's and Lot's herdsmen. Lot goes off to the east to live, but he finds out that the men of Sodom are very evil. Lot went off to the east instead of staying with Abram, the person that God chose to bless the earth. There is a lesson in this. We should try to work things out with others. Also, Abram was chosen by God and we should honor and respect those that God chose to lead us. Abram's name is not yet changed to Abraham.

God instructs Abram to walk through the land that God was giving him. Then, Lot and his family get taken away as war booty. Abram rescues Lot and as Abram returns, Melchizedek meets Abram, and Abram gives him 10% of the war booty and they have bread and wine together. According to the Jewish writings, Melchizedek is Shem – Abram's 7th great grandfather. Melchizedek means King of Righteousness; he was king of Salem which later became Jerusalem where Melchizedek worshiped El Elyon, God most high. He had a prophetic school there. Shem blesses Abram. Perhaps this helps us to understand why God sent Abram to Canaan; to learn from the righteous man Melchizedek.

Melchizedek means King of Righteousness

After this, God again promises Abram that he would have many descendants, tells him about their enslavement in Egypt, and tells him that that his descendants will inherit Canaan. After sunset God makes a covenant with Abram and gives him the specific territory boundaries of the land He was giving Him. Abram still doesn't have offspring so he has a child by Hagar when he was 86.

When Abram is ninety nine years old, God tells Abram to walk in His presence and have a pure heart. God changes Abram's name to Abraham and reaffirms an everlasting covenant with him. God tells him that circumcision was to be a sign to Abraham and his descendants of God's eternal covenant. We should note, Shaul teaches circumcision, "I still preach circumcision, why do I still suffer persecution? Galatians 5:11 NKJV. The Torah teaches us to save lives; Yeshua taught us we are to save lives, "Which of you, having a donkey or an ox that has fallen into a pit, will not immediately pull him out on the Sabbath day?" Luke 14:5 NKJV. Adult circumcision is dangerous and should not be done. Circumcising babies is still to

be done; it is a sign for believers. Also, the Holy Spirit is a sign for believers in the Messiah.

God changes Sarai's name to Sarah and God says he will bless her and make her the mother of nations. God tells Abraham that his son Yishma'el will have twelve sons, but Isaac will be heir to God's covenant. The portion ends with Abraham having all the men in his household circumcised.

The early believers in Yeshua lived in an idolatrous empire in the Diaspora (outside of Israel). We see references to this in Shaul's letters. Of particular note, God tells Abraham to walk in His presence – perhaps this is referring to the time in the Garden when Adam and Eve walked in the presence of God. Although believers in the true God no longer lived in the Garden, they could still acknowledge God's presence. Old Testament believers also could talk to God and God could speak to them as evidenced in the Tanakh.

Believers in Yeshua not only have the opportunity to walk in God's presence, but have His presence in them through the gift of the Holy Spirit. This is truly a coveted honor for us. The Holy Spirit is our helper to keep God's commandments and is with us to help us in life. "If you love Me, keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever." John 14:15-16 NKJV. Yeshua said that God's commandments help us, and the Holy Spirit is another helper.

We confess our pagan roots as an act of humility. We have so much to be thankful for. We could still be living in sin, but thanks be to our God who has delivered us from our pagan roots and made us His people through the Messiah Yeshua.

Abraham and his family are called "Hebrews." They weren't from around there so the people who lived there called them foreigners, or those who have crossed over the Jordan River; in other words, they came from the east. Some mistakenly think that the word Hebraic has a better meaning than the word Jew. The word "Jew" comes from Judah which means praise. What is better? Crossed over from the pagan land of the East or "praise." Shaul says we are to be God's people of praise, not pagans who crossed over from the East. Ephesians 1:14 NKJV says, "Thus bring him praise commensurate with his glory."

The Bible says in Deuteronomy 26:5 that after Passover, we are to declare our humble roots; we were Arameans who came from the east; in other words, we used to be pagans. It is an act of humility. We give thanks for the amazing opportunity to be God's people. When we give around the time of Passover, we should consider how good God has been to us; we could still be in sin, but God has delivered us through His commandments and the Messiah Yeshua.

Abraham endured many tests to his faith and remained faithful. Perhaps God's promises to Abraham came as a result of Abraham's faithfulness. We should understand that we too will face testing in life and we should remain strong and faithful towards God. Abraham left his

home land because God told him to go the land of Canaan. That required some risk.

He also believed that God would provide a son for him and Sarah even though he had doubts at times. This should remind us to get back on our feet when we fail. We don't stay on the ground and crawl around like a baby. We ask for forgiveness and get back up and stand strong in God's commandments. Deuteronomy 8:2 NKJV says, "And you shall remember that the LORD your God led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you and test you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not." Don't stay down; get up and walk.

The Haftarah for Lech Lecha is Isaiah 40:27-41:16. In Isaiah, just before this portion begins, it talks about how great God is compared to the nations. In Isaiah 40:15 it says, "The nations are like a drop in a bucket, they count like a grain of dust on the scales." CJB. In this portion God asks Israel why they complain; God does not grow weary and His ways cannot be understood. He strengthens the weak; those that hope in Him will be renewed. God is over all and is the victorious God of Israel. He will bring them from the ends of the earth and their enemies will be destroyed. God will help them and so Israel will have joy in the Lord.

Isaiah 40:28-29 NKJV says, "Have you not known? Have you not heard? The everlasting God, the LORD, The Creator of the ends of the earth, Neither faints nor is weary. His understanding is unsearchable. He gives power to the weak, And to those who have no might He increases strength."

Our God gave our father Abraham help, strength, and blessings; and God will help us too. God can do what He says he will do; after all, He is God. And God will fulfill all that He has promised.