

# TEMPLE BETH-EL SHABBAT AM TORAH STUDY 5782

## LECH L'CHA.... Genesis 12:1-6

**KOSHI** = What's the Question that calls us to inquire?

*How does "The Call" shape Abram's life journey? How does he respond? How might we?*

**PSHAT**....*The Simple Meaning...What is the straightforward story we are trying to understand?*

| Verse | JPS   | HEBREW   |
|-------|---|--|
| 1     | The LORD 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 לֵךְ־לְךָ מֵאֶרֶץ<br>וּמִמּוֹלַדְתְּךָ וּמִבֵּית אָבִיךָ אֶל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר<br>אֲרָאָךְ:  |
| 2     | I will make of you a great nation,<br>And I will bless you;<br>I will make your name great,<br>And you shall be a blessing.   | וְאֶעֱשֶׂךָ לְגוֹי גָּדוֹל וְאֲבָרְכְךָ וְאֶגְדְּלָה שְׁמִי<br>וְהָיָה בְרָכָה:  |
| 3     | I will bless those who bless you<br>And curse him that curses you;<br>And all the families of the earth<br>Shall bless themselves by you."  | וְאֲבָרְכָה מְבָרְכֶיךָ וּמְקַלְלֶיךָ אֶאֱרָ וְנִבְרָכוּ<br>בְךָ כָּל מִשְׁפְּחוֹת הָאָדָמָה:  |
| 4     | Abram went forth as the LORD 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<br>אִתּוֹ לוֹט וְאַבְרָם בֶּן־חֲמִשָּׁן שָׁנִים וְשִׁבְעִים<br>שָׁנָה בִּצְאוֹ מִחָרָן:   |
| 5     | 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. When they arrived in the land of Canaan, | וַיִּקַּח אַבְרָם אֶת־שָׂרַי אִשְׁתּוֹ וְאֶת־לוֹט בֶּן־<br>אָחִיו וְאֶת־כָּל־רְכוּשָׁם אֲשֶׁר רָכְשׁוּ וְאֶת־<br>הַנַּפְשׁ אֲשֶׁר־עָשׂוּ בְּחָרָן וַיֵּצְאוּ לְלַכְתּ<br>אֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן וַיָּבֹאוּ אֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן: |
| 6     | Abram passed through the land as far as the site of Shechem, at the terebinth of Moreh. The Canaanites were then in the land.   | וַיַּעֲבֹר אַבְרָם בְּאֶרֶץ עַד מְקוֹם שְׁכֵם עַד<br>אֵלֶּן מוֹרָה וְהַכְּנַעֲנִי אֵז בְּאֶרֶץ:  |

V. 1 *Then Adonai said to Avram: Lech Lecha*

**RAMBAN...**This passage does not clarify the issue...What sense was there in the Almighty commanding him to leave his birthplace and offering unprecedented reward without prefacing that he merited it...Why not start, "If you walk in My statutes..." How could Divine promise come simply by Abraham hearing- and heeding God's word of "Lech- go forth" ...?

**RASHI....***Lech Lecha....*For your own benefit and good....here you will not become what you will there.

**SEFAT EMET...**If God assured Abraham that this would be for his own benefit, then this is not such a difficult test to endure...But that is not why he went...And this makes the first trial perhaps among the most difficult, since Abram set out on this journey not for promise of a reward...Rather, "Abram went as God had told him" [12:4] which is to say, that he went because *and only because*-God had told him. After all the assurances...Abram set them aside and simply followed the call of God...

*to a land that I will show you.*

**HAK'TAV V'HAKABALLAH...**The verse should have been reversed: first from his home, then his native soil, then his country...But we are referring here not to a physical journey, but to a going forth of another kind- "Lech" starting with the periphery and ending with the core- "L'cha."

**TALMUD....**Rav Huna taught in the name of Rabbi Eliezer, "God's call first places the righteous in doubt, and only later reveals to them the meaning of the matter."

**RASHI....**God did not reveal to him the destination outright in order to make it more precious in his eyes....and to make every new word of direction a reward, just as in "Take your son, your only one- the one you love, Isaac..." [Gen 22:2]

**ZOHAR....**These words frame Abraham's life, and teach us how hard was the road he traveled...for these words appear again the command to bind his son Isaac, "Lech L'cha- get yourself to the land of Moriah..." But trials were equally difficult; both summoned him to the call...*Lech L'cha*. Not go forth, but rather, Go to yourself- know yourself- go towards your destiny.

V.2 *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.*

**RADAK...**That is, your responding to my call will change your name, adding the *heh* of MY name.

**RASHI....**The blessings are now placed in your hand. Hitherto they have been in My hand. I blessed Adam and I blessed Noah, but henceforth, *vehyeh b'racha*" you shall bless whoever you wish.

**LEIBOWITZ...**The opening three verses containing the first revelation of the founding father of the Jewish people begins with extreme particularism- "*Go forth, from your father's house,*" taking him out of his surroundings his family and his country and closes with precisely the opposite- that of a generous universalism, *all the families of the earth- in you shall be blessed.*"

**DAAT Z'KEYNIM...**read not "and you shall be a blessing" rather, "Be a blessing!" This is the command form. Thus, a part of Avram's covenantal promise he has commanded, "Wherever you go, inspire others to bless...then shall **you** be a blessing."

**DRASH ....** *The Interpretation...How do ancient truths impact our modern reality?*

V. 3 *And all the families of the earth shall bless themselves by/through you.*

**MIDRASH RABBAH**...Living at home, in Haran, his father's house, Abram was like a fragrant flask of perfume with the lid tightly closed. Only by leaving home, opening himself up to the world out there, could his unique fragrance be shared and bring sweetness to others.

**MENACHEM MENDEL SCHNEERSON**...*Lech* means proceed, start your journey and keep going. Real spiritual growth requires that a person leave his current state of being behind. Yet as long as an individual's progress relies on his own power alone, growth will be limited. Thus, "Go out of your house, your land...." – leave your territory and ordinary way of thinking; go to levels that stretch your limits...Then you will be traveling, with guidance that comes from God, to make real a potential in this world.

**SOD....** *The Secret .... What deeper knowing do we take away after spending time with the Torah text?*

**BUBER**...All the biblical calls that follow point back to the story of Abraham- to Abraham's call. And the establishment of humanity, the blessing of God, the decree of destruction, the preservation of a second civilization, man's failing and the decree of division, all that happens prior is a prelude to the election of Abraham. For this call is the pivotal moment which echoes eternally...his election is different from the first which took place before the flood. The first had chosen one man for deliverance, whereas this second is the election of a new people, a people which must yet be generation...And the one who fetched out of the world offers from the former two chosen....The blessing of Adam and the blessing of Noah were natural, bestowing natural gifts, promising fertility...whereas this third blessing is dialogic, promising *and* demanding at the same time: promising the formation of a people and demanding the obligation of a people; addressing the people in the person of its father, and demanding from it to "*become a blessing*" to the world of nations.

**JOEL LURIE GRISHAVER**...Change one vowel in *B'racha* and you get *B'reicha*, not "blessing" but "pool"...So the rabbis helped us understand a crucial lesson...One only *becomes* a blessing by looking at one's own reflection, not in a mirror, but in a pool of waters, seeing not only a face looking back- but an entire world all around which calls out for that reflection to find its place by giving back to that world a reflection of oneself...thus making it more blessed....