

Parashah 3

Lekh L'kha

לך לך

“Get yourself out”

Genesis 12:1 – 17:27

Torah Together



In this *Torah* portion, we meet Abram, with whom we'll spend the next several lessons. Abram, who later becomes Abraham, was the man chosen by God to carry out His master plan for mankind. We can learn many important and powerful lessons from the life of Abraham. As you read, try to put yourself in Abraham's shoes. It can help you understand the kind of relationship God would like to have with you.

1. The call of Abram - 12:1-9

a) Where was Abram when God told him to leave his country?

b) Carefully analyze the promise that God made to Abram in verses 2 & 3. With the perspective of 3500 years of history, would you say this has come true?

“I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you;
I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.
I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse;
and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.”

Genesis 12:2-3

c) Can you put yourself in Abram's shoes and imagine what it must of have been like to move from his home to a place yet-to-be-named?

Scripture Link:

Acts 7:2-5 adds some details to this story. Jewish tradition holds that Abram's father, Terah, was a manufacturer and seller of idols. This may have been a point of contention between Abram and his father after Abram's encounter with the real God described in this passage.

The Bible's Key Theme

Many people believe that **Genesis 12:2-3** contains the theme of the entire Bible. In these two verses God states how He intends to use Abram and his descendants to impact the world in the future. There are many ways in which these promises have been realized throughout history. The most obvious, of course, is the coming of the Hebrew Messiah, enabling anyone who is willing to have a personal relationship with God.



Abram's gallantry?

It seems clear from this passage that Abram was concerned for his own safety while in Egypt. Because of Sarai's beauty, Abram was afraid that another man might find Sarai so attractive that he would kill Abram and take Sarai for himself. To avoid this possibility, Abram introduced Sarai as his sister rather than his wife. Presumably, the idea was that Abram would be better able to protect both himself and Sarai if others thought they were brother and sister. Clearly Abram did not foresee the events that would take place. God, however, rescued both Sarai and Abram from the situation and in the process increased Abram's wealth substantially. When they left Egypt, among other items, Sarai had acquired a handmaiden named Hagar. Do you think Abram acted foolishly in introducing Sarai as his sister?

d) Locate Ur, Haran, Shechem, Beth-el, Ai and the Negev on a map and trace Abram's travels. What did Abram do near Shechem and Bethel?

2. Abram in Egypt - 12:10-20

a) When the famine came upon the land, Abram went to Egypt. Do you think God instructed Abram to do this?

b) What ploy did Abram use to protect himself while in Egypt? How did this plan work for him? Do you think God instructed Abram to do this?

c) How did God act to protect Sarai and to reunite her with Abram?

d) What caused Abram to leave Egypt? How was his material wealth affected by his sojourn in Egypt?

3. Abram & Lot separate - 13:1-18

a) To where did Abram return when he left Egypt? What was his first act there?

b) What were the reasons that Lot and Abram chose to separate? Abram gave Lot his choice of land. What does this say about Abram's character? How does Lot's choice reflect his character? Are there any lessons for us here?

c) After Lot and Abram part, what does God do to encourage Abram? Where does Abram settle?

4. Abram rescues Lot - 14:1-24

a) Verses 1-9 relate the political situation in the area that led to the "War of the Kings." Can you find out any details about the names and places mentioned here?

b) What is Abram's response when he learns of Lot's capture? Who helped him rescue Lot and his family and how many men went with him?

c) Upon his return from the rescue of Lot, who does Abram encounter? Describe the interactions between the two men. Can you find any types and shadows? (See also "Digging Deeper" section)

d) How did Abram's dealings with the king of Sodom reveal his attitude toward him?

Why the Sacrifice?

After God had blessed him in some specific way, Abram would show his appreciation to God by offering an animal sacrifice. This was a common practice of the culture at that time. Even today, taking the time to make a heart-felt sacrificial offering to God for a received blessing is still an appropriate way to acknowledge God's role in our lives.

Scripture Link

The "Plains of Shinar" are located between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. According to **Genesis 10:6-12**, this area was settled by Nimrod and his descendants and may have been the site of the Tower of Babel. Also, it is believed that Sodom and Gomorrah were two cities located near each other at the south end of the Dead Sea. In addition, three smaller cities were thought to be in the same area: Admah, Zeboiim, and Zoar (**See Genesis 19:22**).

Scripture Link:

From God's perspective, faith is simply believing what He says. **Genesis 15:6** then teaches that when we have faith (that is, believe what God says to be true), He counts that as right conduct on our part, considering us as acting in a godly manner. This key concept is further explained in **Romans 4:1-5**, **Galatians 3:6-9**, and **Hebrews 11:11-12**.

Cutting a Covenant

The strange ceremony described in this passage was the common form of making a covenant between two parties in the ancient near east. The pieces of the sacrificed animals were laid out in pairs and the two parties would walk between the pieces and say, "May God do to me what has been done to these animals if I break the covenant promise that I make today."

The sin of the Amorites

The Amorites were one of the people groups that inhabited the land that God had promised to Abraham. Like the other cultures in this land, they were involved in pagan practices which God found detestable and would later judge. It appears, however, that God would allow the Amorites several hundred more years to repent of their sins, even though he knew that they would not.

5. God's Covenant with Abram - 15:1-21

a) At this key meeting between God and Abram, what doubt does Abram express? How does God respond? What is significant about verse 6?

b) Describe the covenant ceremony that God and Abram performed. What do you know about covenants in ancient times?

c) Analyze the details of God's promise to Abram. What do you think is meant by the phrase 'the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure'?

6. Hagar and Ishmael - 16:1-16

a) How do you think Sarai acquired Hagar? It was a practice in that culture for a woman to bear children “through her servants.” Whose idea was it to get an heir in this way?

b) What caused Sarai’s unhappiness after Hagar conceived? Who did she blame it on? What was Abram’s response? What caused Hagar to flee?

c) Analyze the prophecy that God gives Hagar concerning her son. What does his name mean? How old was Abram when Hagar gave birth?

Ishmael’s Descendants

Both Jewish and Christian traditions hold that Ishmael is the father of the Arab peoples. While there is no direct proof of this, **Genesis 25:12-18** records the descendants of Ishmael and it seems likely that his descendants remained in the area of eastern Egypt and northern Arabia. Moslem tradition, however, sees Ishmael as the son favored by both Abraham and God. Note that while both Jews and Christians accept the *Torah* as the Word of God, Moslems do not.

Ishmael’s descendants

If it is true that today’s Arabs are primarily descendants of Ishmael, do you think God’s prophecy is accurate? It’s important to keep in mind that while the Bible clearly teaches that God judges nations, He also knows the heart of each individual. If anyone, regardless of their heritage, chooses to believe the God of the Bible, then he can trust that God will create within him a new heart, a heart of flesh and not a heart of stone. **Ezekiel 36:26**

What is a Covenant?

A covenant is a legal agreement between two parties, usually to do or not do something specific. It is essentially a promise. A covenant often defines a sign or symbol to remind the signers of their promise.

We first encountered a covenant when Noah and his family left the ark after the flood (**Genesis 9**). This is known as the Noahic Covenant. Here we encounter the Abrahamic covenant, made between God and Abraham. Another common form of covenant is the marriage contract, in which each party promises “to have and to hold from this day forward...” the other. The sign of the marriage covenant is usually the wedding ring.

The concept of covenant is central to a good understanding of God.

7. The Covenant of Circumcision - 17:1-27

a) How old was Abram when God “confirmed” His covenant with him? What is significant about God revealing himself as El Shaddai? What was Abrams response?

b) Specifically what did God promise Abram? What was the significance of the name change from Abram to Abraham?

Two Covenants

The concept of covenant is as old as civilization itself and is still in use today. It is essentially a formal promise made between two parties. God uses this formal legal agreement in the Bible to record His agreements and promises to mankind.

The Book of **Genesis** records two **unconditional** covenants between God and man.

God’s covenant with Noah (Genesis 9:8-17)

- **Parties: God** as one party and **Noah, his descendants, and every living creature on Earth** as the second party
- **Unconditional promise:** God would never again destroy all life on earth with a flood
- **Sign:** Rainbow in the clouds

God’s covenant with Abram (Genesis 15 & 17)

- **Parties: God & Abram**
- **Unconditional promise:**
 - Abram’s offspring more numerous than the stars in the sky
 - God gives the land of Israel (Israel, “from the river of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates”) to Abram’s descendants
- **Sign:** Circumcision

God reconfirms his covenant with Abraham with his sons Isaac and Jacob as well.

c) What was Abraham's response when God told him Sarah would bear a child? What was the child to be named? What is significant about God's promises in verses 19 - 21a? How does this apply to us today?

d) What did Abraham do after this meeting with God? Based on **Galatians 5:1-6** and **Colossians 2:11-15**, how do you think this applies to us today?

Sign of Circumcision

The sign that God defined for the covenant he established with Abraham and his descendants was circumcision. It is an outward symbol of the agreement between God and Abraham and his family. Notice that it is the covenant (or promise) that is important – not the sign. God allowed for others, who wished to follow the God of Abraham, to be adopted into the family. But again, it's the commitment to God, to be in covenant with Him that is important, not the symbol of the covenant. After the coming of the Messiah *Yeshua*, the apostle Paul makes it clear in **Galatians 5:1-6, Romans 4:9-12**, and other places that circumcision, in and of itself, proves nothing. It is by our commitment to God demonstrated through our faith in Him that we become sons of Abraham.

Digging deeper

1. Research Melchizedek and find out what you can about him. (See **Psalm 110** and **Hebrews 5** and **7**) What does his name mean? Compare and contrast him to the King of Sodom. What significance do you see in the way Abram treated these two?

2. Read **Romans 4**. What additional insight does this give you into Abraham's interaction with God described in **Genesis 15**?

For further study, see

Haftarah : Isaiah 40:27-41:16

Brit Hadashah : Acts 7:1-8; Romans 3:19-5:6; Galatians 3:15-18;
5:1-6; Colossians 2:11-15; Hebrews 7:1-19; 11:8-12