

Shabbat 24 October 2015 – Lech Lecha

In this week's Sedrah we learn about the first person, Avraham, to bring monotheism into the world.

I will begin with a quote from the Medrash of Rav Tanchuma who says: "The actions of our forefathers are a sign to the children." The meaning is that this week we begin the trail blazing story of our ancestors Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov and the very early stages of the Jewish people. Not only are they stories that have an important historical impact on the life of our people, but to take it further, they are a message and a sign to us, their children and descendants for our everyday lives.

The very first call from God to Avraham is to be found at the outset of this week's Sedrah. "*Lech Lecha* - Go for yourself, from your land, from your birthplace, and from your father's house to the land which I will show you." Strange, when one analyses the order of the verse, it seems to be the wrong way around. Firstly one leaves home, then one's city and finally one's country. However, explains the Alschich that is not the case here because to leave his country was the easiest thing for Avraham, more difficult was to leave his immediate environment, but to leave one's own father's house, one's parents, brothers and sisters, this was the greatest the wrench for Avraham, and therefore, being the more difficult, it is mentioned last in the verse.

When Avraham was told this information to pack up and depart, to leave his whole way of life behind and start anew and proceed to an unknown destination, we do not encounter a person in turmoil or unease about this call from above, instead we are told "Avram went as God had told him" without questioning he fulfils the dictate of God.

Yet it is only a short time after their arrival in Canaan after their long hard slog all the way from Ur Kasdim, that there is a famine in the land. Our Sages say that this famine was one of the worst that Eretz Canaan had ever known, and immediately Avraham and his family are forced to leave the land and travel to Egypt. Yet Avraham does not flinch, he accepts his lot unquestioningly. He just accepts, unmoved and unfazed, knowing that this is what God wants. The Mishneh in Pirkei Avot says "Avraham our father was tested ten times, and he stood firm in all of them, in order to make known how great the love of Avraham Avinu was for God."

At the outset Avraham was told to *Lech lecha*-go for yourself, leave behind everything he had held dear and go to the land which I will show you. In next week's Sedrah Avraham is told to take his beloved son Yitzchak whom he loved and prayed, and *Lech lecha*-go for yourself ,and offer him up as an offering on Mount Moriah. This would be the ultimate test that would justify all the rest of them. Notice how the same word *Lech Lecha*-go for yourself is employed at the beginning of the tests and at the end. The lesson is clear, in our Sedrah we learn how committed Avraham was and the lengths that he would go to follow God. At the conclusion of next weeks Sedrah we learn not only about the commitment of Avraham Avinu but how he passed on those values to his son Yitzchak. Finally, the message had gone full circle.