

# LECH LECHA



G-d commands Abram to “travel birthplace and from your father’s And I shall make you into a great

away from your land, from your house, to the land that I will show you. nation...”

Abraham, seventy-five year old, undertakes the journey along with his wife, Sarai, and nephew, Lot. “The land” turns out to be Canaan, which G-d promises will one day belong to Abram’s descendants.

No sooner does Abram arrive in Canaan then he is forced to leave on account of a famine. Uncomplaining, Abram travels to Egypt to find sustenance. He warns his wife to say she is his sister; he reasons that if the craven Egyptians try to kidnap Sarai, at least they will spare Abram’s life. Sarai is indeed taken to Pharaoh, who is miraculously stricken and hastily releases Sarai, sending Abram out of Egypt with great wealth.

Abram and his nephew Lot, each wealthy livestock owners, find themselves unable to live together. [According to the Midrash, Lot’s shepherds are less reticent about grazing their animals on others’ land.] Abram asks Lot to part ways with him, promising to remain on good terms and assist him if necessary. Lot chooses the lush region of Sodom, attracted by its economic opportunity and disregarding the fact that the “men of Sodom were exceedingly evil and sinful before G-d.”

Sodom and its four neighboring cities lose a war with four more powerful kings, and all the inhabitants are taken captive. Abram marshals his forces and goes to battle against the Four Kings, miraculously routing them, rescuing Lot and sanctifying the name of G-d by refusing any reward.

G-d appears to Abram, promising him great reward for his virtue. Abram points out that he is childless.

*Then took him outside, and said, “Look, now, to Heaven, and count the stars, if you can count them.” [G-d] said, “So shall be your children!” And he had faith in G-d, Who held it to his credit.*

“Know, indeed,” G-d says further, “that your children will be strangers in a land not their own, and they shall enslave them and oppress them – but afterwards they shall leave with great wealth.....”

Sarai, seeing that she has borne no children, urges her husband to take her maidservant, Hagar, as a second wife. Abram acquiesces and marries Hagar, who conceives – and begins to lose some of her respect for Sarai. The two are eventually reconciled, and Hagar bears a son, Ishmael. Abram is eighty-six.

Thirteen years later, when Abram is ninety-nine, G-d again appears to him, changing his name to Abraham – “father of many nations.” Sarai, “my princess,” is now to be called “Sarah” – a “princess” to all. The new names will pave the way for a new destiny, and Abraham and Sarah will finally be blessed with a son of their own, who is to be called Isaac – the primary heir to Abraham’s legacy and mission. Finally, G-d instructs Abraham to circumcise all the males in his household, a Mitzvah that is to be observed for all future generations.