



Shabbat Table Talk Page

Overview

- **Parashah: Lekh-Lekh (לֶךְ-לְךָ, "go for yourself")**
- **Chapters: Gen. 12:1-17:27**



בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו, וְצִוָּנוּ לַעֲסוֹק בְּדַבְּרֵי תוֹרָה

– Torah Study Blessing –

Synopsis

Last week's Torah portion (i.e., Noach) showed how the LORD miraculously preserved Noah and his family from cataclysmic judgment. Just as there were ten generations from Adam to Noah, so there were also ten generations from Noah to Abram. And just as Noah became the father of 70 nations, so Abram would become the father of the Jewish people, through whom the Promised Seed - the Messiah and Savior of the world - would eventually come.

In this week's portion, Abram was 75 years old, married to (his half-sister) Sarai, and guardian of his nephew Lot (his deceased brother Haran's son) when he received the promise of divine inheritance. In obedience to God's call, he left Charan, journeyed to the land of Canaan, and there built an altar to the LORD (between Bethel and Ai).

Shortly afterward, however, Abraham's faith was tested, since a severe famine in the Promised Land forced him to go south to Egypt for food. To protect himself, Abram conspired with Sarai to pretend to be brother and sister (rather than husband and wife) so that he would not be killed for her sake. Sure enough, Sarai was taken to Pharaoh's palace to be part of the royal harem, and Pharaoh gave Abram livestock, camels and servants for her sake. However, the LORD sent "great plagues" to Pharaoh's household until it was known that the reason for the trouble was that Sarai was Abram's wife. Pharaoh then released Sarai and dismissed Abram with his all his possessions.

After Abram returned to the land of Canaan, his nephew Lot separated from him and chose to settle in the evil city of Sodom, where he later became a captive during war in the Sodom Valley. Upon learning that his nephew was a prisoner, Abram set out with a small band and rescued him, miraculously defeating the kings. After his victory, Abram was met by the mysterious Malki-Tzedek (Melchizedek), the King of Salem and priest of the Most High God (El Elyon), who brought him bread and wine, and who blessed him. In response, Abram gave Malki-Tzedek a tenth (i.e., ma'aser) of everything.

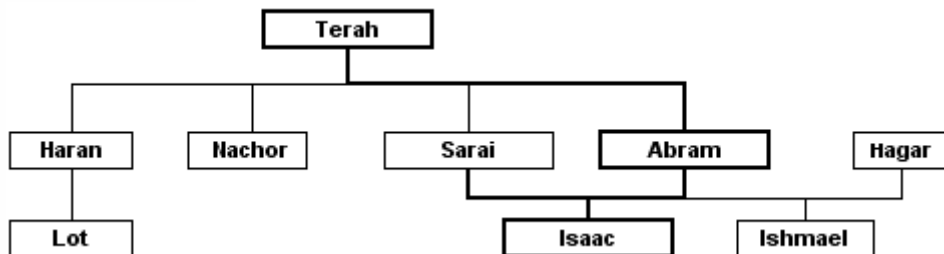
Abram was then given a vision from the Word of the LORD wherein he was reassured that, despite his great age, he would father a child and indeed be the forefather of a great multitude of people. "Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be. And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness" (Gen. 15:5-6).



The LORD then sealed His promise to Abram with the (unilateral) “Covenant Between the Parts,” and then foretold of the 400 year long exile of Israel (in Egypt). Nevertheless, the LORD swore to give to his descendants the Promised Land, which extended “from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates.”

Ten years passed, and Abram and Sarai were still childless. In a lapse of faith, Sarai urged Abram to sleep with her Egyptian maidservant, Hagar, in order to produce the family heir. Abram agreed, but soon afterward Hagar became disrespectful toward her mistress and finally fled the family when Sarai began treating her harshly. However, the Angel of the LORD (malakh Adonai) intervened and told her to return to Sarai. Indeed, the Angel told her that she was pregnant with a son, called Ishmael (“God will hear”), who would be the forefather of a great nation. Hagar believed the promise, returned home, and called the LORD El Roi (the God who sees me). Abram was 86 years old when his son was born.

Another thirteen years passed, Abram was now 99 years old, and the LORD appeared to him again to reaffirm His covenant promise to make him the father of a multitude of nations. The LORD symbolized His commitment by renaming Abram (“exalted father”) to Abraham (“father of multitudes”) - adding the letter Hey to his name. The LORD also changed Sarai’s name (“princess”) to Sarah (“noblewoman”), and again promised that a son would be born to them. Upon hearing this, Abraham laughed, and wondered how a man who was 100 years old might father a child with a woman who was 90, but the LORD told him that the promised child - whose name would be called Yitzchak (“he laughs”) - would be Abraham’s rightful heir with whom the LORD would establish His covenant.



The portion concludes with the LORD commanding Abraham to circumcise himself and his offspring throughout the generations as a sign of the covenant made between the LORD and Abraham.



Parashah Questions



1. What does *lekh-lekha* (לֵךְ-לְךָ) mean? (Gen. 12:1) ¹
2. What was Abram's father's name? ²
3. Where was Abram originally from? ³
4. Who was Sarai? ⁴
5. Who was Lot? ⁵
6. Where did God tell Abram to go? (12:1) ⁶
7. What did God promise Abram for his obedience? (Gen. 12:2) ⁷
8. How old was Abram when he began his journey to the land? (12:4) ⁸
9. Who were the "souls Abram made in Haran" (12:5) ⁹
10. Why does the Torah say that Lot "went with Abram" and then says "Abram took Lot" and set out to go to the land of Canaan? (12:4-5) ¹⁰
11. Who came along with Abram? ¹¹
12. Where was the first place God appeared to Abram? (12:6-7) ¹²

¹ It means go out (or walk) for yourself... No one can *make* you walk the steps of faith, you must chose for yourself.

² Terach ben Serug, a descendant from the patriarch Shem. Terach died in the city of Charan when Abram was 75.

³ Ur Kasdim (אֹּר כַּסְדִּים), i.e., "Ur of the Chaldees," located in the eastern part of the "fertile crescent," in the city state of Sumer during the Bronze Age. Gen. 11:27-28 names it as the birthplace of Abram's brother Haran, and the point of departure of Terah's household. Later it is identified as the place of Abram's origin (Gen. 15:7).

⁴ Abram's half-sister (the daughter of Terach and an unknown woman). The Talmud states (Berachot 13a) that at first she was a princess to her people (i.e., שָׂרַי, "my princess"), but later she became a princess to the whole world (i.e., שָׂרָה, without the restrictive "my"). Sarah comes from the verb *sarar* (שָׂרַר) meaning to rule or reign.

⁵ Lot was the son of Abram's brother Haran. Haran died while the family still lived in Ur of the Kasdim. From Lot would come the Moabites and the Ammonites.

⁶ Wherever God would show him, but the LORD did not tell him the exact location before he set out.

⁷ God would make him a great nation and would bless Abram and make his name great so that he would be a blessing. God promised to bless those who blessed Abraham, but to curse the one who treated him lightly, for in him would all the families of the earth be blessed.

⁸ He was seventy five years old when he left Charan after the death of his father...

⁹ The Hebrew phrase (הַנְּפֹשֵׁי אֲשֶׁר-עָשָׂה בְּחָרָן) refers to people who converted based on Abram's preaching at Haran.

¹⁰ At first Abram tested Lot, but when he was convinced of Lot's faith in the vision, he made him a part of the community of faith making the pilgrimage...

¹¹ His wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, and the many converts Abraham had made while in Charan.

¹² At Shechem, before an "oak of Moreh," God appeared to Abram (before this, Abram simply heard the voice of the LORD but God did not appear before him). Because of this, Abram built an altar to mark the occasion.



13. Where did Abram go next? (12:8-9) ¹³
14. Why did Abram have to leave the promised land very soon after he arrived? (12:10) ¹⁴
15. Where did they go? (12:10) ¹⁵
16. Why did Abram instruct Sarai to tell others that she was his sister? (12:11-13) ¹⁶
17. Who tried to take Sarai as his wife and was punished? (12:14-17) ¹⁷
18. How did Pharaoh discover that Sarai was Abram's wife? (12:18-20) ¹⁸
19. Where did Abram go after he was "run out of" Egypt? (13:1-4) ¹⁹
20. Why were Lot and Abram unable to live together after they returned from Egypt? ²⁰
21. How did Abram resolve the issue of settlement in the land? (13:8-12) ²¹
22. What were the men of Sodom (סְדֹם) called (13:13)? ²²
23. After Lot left for the Jordan Valley, what did God say to Abram? (13:14-17) ²³
24. Where did Abram settle after Lot separated from him? (13:18) ²⁴
25. After Lot was rescued by Abraham's posse, what happened? (14:17-20) ²⁵

¹³ First he went east of Bethel, and then he continued south toward the Negev.

¹⁴ Because there was a famine in the land.

¹⁵ To Egypt...

¹⁶ He was afraid of being killed so that she could be taken by others.

¹⁷ The Pharaoh was afflicted with "great plagues" for taking Abram's wife. This theme would be replayed in the Exodus.

¹⁸ We are not sure, though Abram was given dowry gifts by Pharaoh and might have put two and two together. An interesting question is why Abram did not return the gifts to Pharaoh... Also note that Lot was present (13:1).

¹⁹ He retraced his steps back through the Negev to Bethel, where he had built an altar to God.

²⁰ They were so well-off that there was not enough room for both of them, with their large flocks, in the same area, and strife between the herdsmen of the two camps began to take place.

²¹ He graciously offered Lot the best of the land (the plain of Jordan) while he remained in the land of Canaan. Lot eventually settled near the city of Sodom.

²² "Great sinners against the LORD" (חַטָּאִים לַיהוָה מְאֹד).

²³ God told him to look north, south, east, and west – in every direction – because all the earth would be given to him and his descendants forever (compare this to Romans 4:13, where Abraham is described as the "heir [κληρονόμος] of the world"). God promised to make Abram's descendants like the dust of the earth (פְּעֵפֶר הָאָרֶץ), too numerous to be counted. Note that dust implies ubiquity as well as humility. Torah only exists among the humble of heart.

²⁴ Abram settled by the oaks of Mamre in Hebron. Note that Mamre (מַמְרֵא) was the name of one of the three Amorite chiefs who joined forces with Abraham in pursuit of Chedorlaomer to save Lot (Gen. 14:13,24).

²⁵ After the regional war (near the Dead Sea), the king of Sodom came to offer Abram homage, and Melchizedek, "king of Salem," brought him bread and wine and blessed him (see the next question regarding the identity of Melchizedek).



26. Who was Melchizedek (מֶלְכִי־צֶדֶק)?²⁶
27. How do we understand the statement that “where there is a change in the priesthood, there is necessarily a change in the law”? (Heb. 7:11-12)²⁷
28. How did Melchizedek bless Abram? (14:19-21)²⁸
29. Why didn’t Abram accept tribute from the king of Sodom? (14:21-24)²⁹
30. After the battle of the kings, what did God promise Abram (15:1-6)³⁰
31. Why was Abram “reckoned” as righteous before the LORD? (15:6)³¹

²⁶ The name “Malki-Tzedek” literally means “my king” (i.e., מֶלְכִי, from מֶלֶךְ, “king”) is “tzedek” (i.e., צֶדֶק, “just, righteous”). Note that it does not mean “King of righteousness” (as is sometimes claimed by Christian theologians), since the word “malki” contains a possessive personal pronoun (i.e., “my king”). Jewish tradition identifies Malki-Tzedek as Shem (שֵׁם), the firstborn son of Noach, who settled in Salem (שֵׁלֶם) some time after the great Flood to become the high priest of Zion. Although Jewish tradition regards Malki-Tzedek to be the patriarch Shem, he is clearly a picture of Adonai Tzidkenu (i.e., Yeshua). He is called the “King of Righteousness and priest of the Most High God” (Gen. 14:18-20; Psalm 110:4; Heb. 5:6). Some Christians regard Malki-Tzedek as a preincarnate manifestation of Yeshua, though the Book of Hebrews says that Yeshua is “in the similitude” (ὁμοίωσις) of Malki-Tzedek, not that He is Malki-Tzedek (Heb. 7:15). Moreover, Malki-Tzedek is said to have been “made like” (ἀφομοιόω) the Son of God, “having neither beginning of days nor end of life” (Heb. 7:3), but again it does not explicitly say He is the same person.... It’s entirely possible that Malki-Tzedek was both a historical person and a picture or “parable” of Yeshua as the great High Priest and King. Yeshua came after “the order (τάξις) of Malki-Tzedek” (Heb. 6:20), a term that refers to an office or position as the true King and High Priest of God.

²⁷ This priesthood of Yeshua is said to be after the “order of Malki-Tzedek,” based on a direct oath from God, that predates the operation of the Levitical priesthood (just as the Passover sacrifice predated the Levitical priesthood). Yeshua is our great Kohen Gadol (High Priest) after the order of Malki-Tzedek (Heb. 5:10, 6:20; 7:1-28), just as He is our King and the final authority of the Torah. The Levitical priesthood (the ritual expression of Sinai) “made nothing perfect” and therefore a “new priesthood” was required to finally reconcile us back to God (Heb. 7:19; Psalm 110:4). “For when there is a change (μετατιθεμένης) in the priesthood, there is necessarily a change (i.e., metathesis, μετάθεσις) in the law as well” (Heb. 7:12). The word translated “change” here comes from the verb μετατίθημι (from meta, “after” + tithemi, to “set”) which would be better translated as “transposed.” The idea is the priesthood reverted back to the original priesthood of Zion and therefore required a corresponding “transfer” of authority (μεταθεσις) to the original kingship as well (Heb. 7:12). The priesthood of Yeshua is not contrary to the Torah of Moses but underlies it and grounds it in the deeper purposes of God’s redemptive plan for the ages.

²⁸ When he blessed Abram, Malki-Tzedek invoked the name *El Elyon* (אֱלֹהֵי יְיָ), “God Most High,” or the “ascended God,” who is the “possessor” of heaven and earth – clearly a reference to Yeshua our Savior. Note that the word translated “possessor” (קָנָה) also can mean Creator (Psalm 139:13) or Redeemer (Exod. 15:6). The LXX uses the word “creator” (ὁς ἔκτισεν). The blessing itself is only implied: “God has delivered your enemies into your hand.”

²⁹ Abram did not want others to think that he obtained any wealth or blessing from Sodom.

³⁰ First the “Word of the LORD” (דְּבַר־יְהוָה) promised to be a shield for him (לְךָ) who would grant him great reward. Second, he promised Abram a child who would inherit the reward (i.e., Isaac). Third he promised that Abram’s descendants would be as numerous as the stars in the heaven.

³¹ Abram was considered righteous because he believed God’s promise to him. Note that this is very first occurrence of the word “righteousness” (צֶדֶקָה) in the Scriptures (though the root appears in the name Malki-Tzedek). It was Abram’s trust (*emunah*: אֱמוּנָה) in the promise of God that resulted in the Divine verdict (i.e., *cheshbon*: חֶשְׁבֹן) that he was righteous. As the Apostle Paul notes, Abraham is the father of saving faith (Gal. 3:6, Eph. 2:8-9, Rom. 4:1-4, etc.).



32. Why did God call Abram out of Ur of Chaldees (15:7)? ³²
33. How did God reassure Abram about the promise to inherit the land? (15:18-21) ³³
34. What happened when Abram fell into a deep sleep? (15:12-14) ³⁴



Abraham's Inheritance
Genesis 15:18-21

35. Who was Hagar? (16:1) ³⁵
36. Whose idea was it to use Hagar as a surrogate mother? (16:2) ³⁶
37. How long had they lived in Canaan while Sarai remained childless? (16:3) ³⁷
38. What happened to Hagar after she conceived? (16:4-6) ³⁸

³² To give to him the promised land.

³³ God made a promise, the “covenant between the parts” (בְּרִית בֵּין הַבְּתָרִים) wherein he unilaterally performed the terms of the covenant (symbolized by walking alone among the sacrificial pieces). Note that the boundaries of the land promised to Abraham extended all the way from the “river of Egypt to the Euphrates.”

³⁴ A dreadful and great darkness fell upon him as God revealed to him to the 400 year affliction of Israel in Egypt, though God also revealed to him the exodus and Israel’s return to the land with great possessions.

³⁵ She was an Egyptian servant given to Sarai, perhaps by the Pharaoh who tried to marry her earlier. According to midrash, she was actually a daughter of the Pharaoh himself. She later became a concubine to Abraham and the mother of Ishmael, a source of later trouble to all Israel (i.e., the Arab nations descend from Ishmael).

³⁶ Sarai said to Abram that since she was barren, he should “go in to my servant that I shall obtain children by her.”

³⁷ Ten years. Abraham was 75 years old when they came to the land, and 86 years old when Ishmael was born.

³⁸ Sarai abused her and she ran away into the desert, with Abram’s consent....



39. What happened to Hagar in the desert? (16:7-9) ³⁹
40. What did the Angel of the LORD promise to Hagar? (16:10-11) ⁴⁰
41. What does Ishmael (יִשְׁמָעֵאל) mean? (16:11-12) ⁴¹
42. What did Hagar call the Name of the LORD (שֵׁם־יְהוָה) who spoke to her? (16:13) ⁴²
43. What did Hagar call the place where she encountered the Angel? (16:14) ⁴³
44. How old was Abram when Ishmael was born? (16:16) ⁴⁴
45. How old was Abram when he was renamed Abraham and given the commandment of circumcision as a sign of the covenant? (17:1-14) ⁴⁵
46. What does *brit milah* mean? ⁴⁶
47. How old was Sarai when her name was changed to Sarah? (17:15) ⁴⁷
48. Why did Abraham laugh at the idea of being a father at age 100? (17:17) ⁴⁸
49. What blessing did Ishmael receive based on Abraham's prayer (17:20) ⁴⁹
50. What does the name Isaac (יִצְחָק) mean? (17:19) ⁵⁰
51. What was promised to Abraham regarding his son Isaac? (17:21) ⁵¹
52. How old were Abraham and Ishmael when they were circumcised? (17:23-26) ⁵²

³⁹ She encountered the Angel of the LORD (מַלְאֲכֵי יְהוָה) by a spring of water in the desert, who then instructed her to return to Sarai and submit to her.

⁴⁰ The Angel promised her that He would “multiply her offspring so that cannot be numbered for multitude,” and named her son “Ishmael” (יִשְׁמָעֵאל), because the LORD listened (שָׁמַע) to her affliction.

⁴¹ Ishmael means “God will hear,” a name formed from the verb “shema.” Ishmael was foretold to be a “wild donkey of a man” (i.e., belligerent and not easily restrained) who would dwell apart (or in opposition) to his brothers.

⁴² Hagar called the LORD *El Roi* (אֱלֹהֵי רֹאֵי), the “God who sees.” She explained that she called the LORD this because “I have seen the One who sees me” (רָאִיתִי אֶחְרֵי רֹאֵי). Note that some of the sages say that the trouble the Ishmaelites brought to Israel was the result of Abram's neglect of Hagar and the ongoing ambivalence Isaac felt toward his older half-brother.

⁴³ Hagar called it *be'er lachai ro'i* (בְּאֵר לַחַי רֹאֵי), “the well to the Living One who sees me.”

⁴⁴ Eighty six years old.

⁴⁵ He was 99 years old, and therefore Ishmael was 13.

⁴⁶ *Brit milah* means “ritual circumcision,” though literally it means “covenant of the word.”

⁴⁷ She was 89 years old.

⁴⁸ The sages said he laughed from joy, not from scorn. God foretold that Isaac

⁴⁹ God would make Ishmael into a great nation, and from him would descend twelve princes.

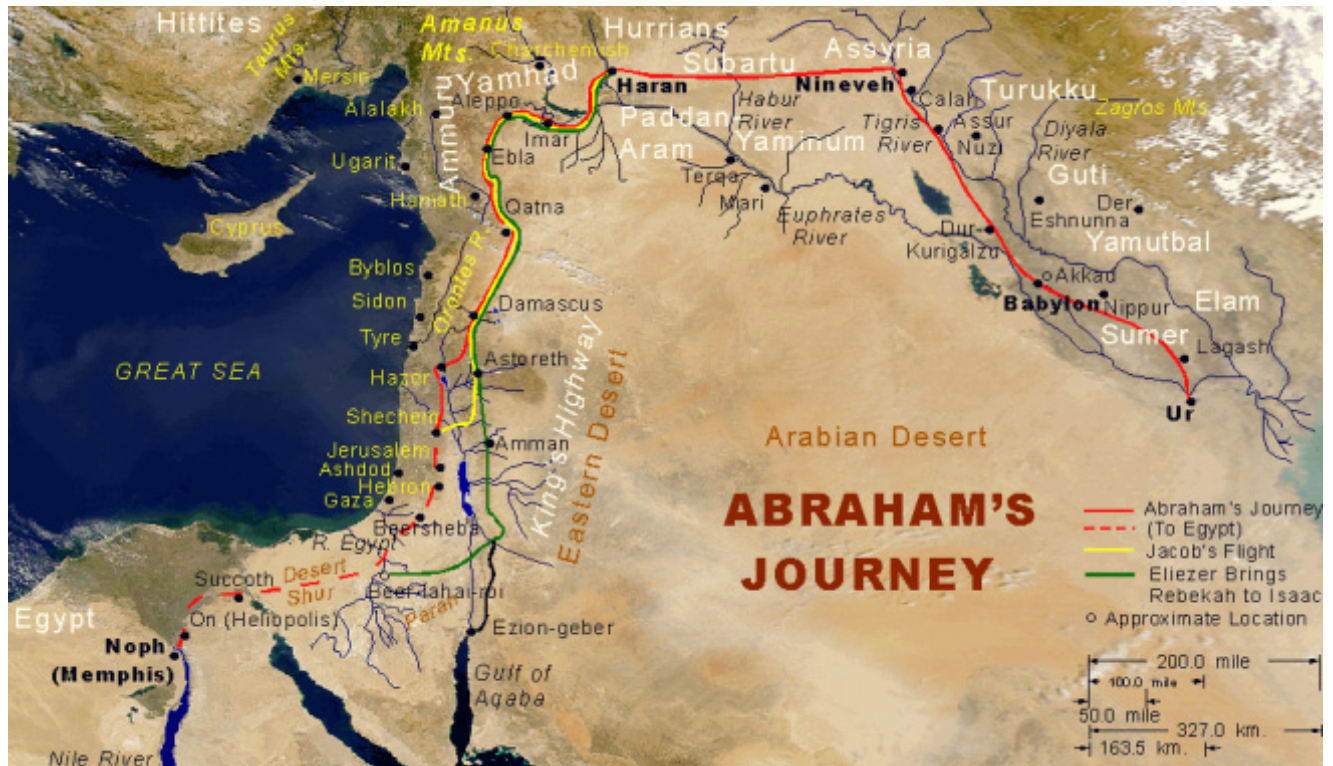
⁵⁰ The name *Yitzhak* (Isaac) means “he will laugh” or “he laughs,” from the verb *tzahak* (צָחַק), “to laugh.”

⁵¹ God would establish his covenant (בְּרִית) with Isaac (not Ishmael).

⁵² Abraham was 99 and Ishmael was 13.



Map of Abraham's Journey to the land of Canaan:



For Next Week:

- Read parashat **Vayera** (i.e., Genesis 18:1-22:24)
- Read the Haftarah (2 Kings 4:1-37)
- Read the New Testament (Luke 1:26-38; 24:36-53; 2 Pet. 2:4-11)