



**Shabbat Table Talk**  
**Parashah Lech Lecha – Erev Shabbat 19<sup>th</sup> October, 2018**  
**Week of 14<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> October 14, 2018**

**Torah portion: Gen 12:1 - 17:27**

**Haftarah : Isa 40:27 - 41:16**

This week's Torah portion, Lech Lecha (literally, betake yourself; go to you), begins with the story of God's call to Abraham, the promise of blessings and Abraham's response (Gen 12: 1-3). Towards the end it tells us that God describes his covenant with Abraham and his descendants "as an everlasting covenant throughout the ages" (Gen17:7).

Conroy says that Abraham's call has two components: The "go from" and the "go to." The "go from" command has these details – "Go from your country, your kindred and your father's house." Like a migrant today, Abraham is asked to leave his country and his family. He is asked to leave everything behind.

The "go to" command, however, says only vaguely, "Go to the land that I will show you." But where? How far? No details are given, making the command difficult as Abraham is not given the security of knowing his destination.

The promise though after the command is quite clear: "I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all families of the earth shall be blessed." It is a promise full of blessings (It repeats the word bless/blessing many times).

Rashi says that the promise "And I will make you into a great nation" addresses the concerns when one is traveling (there's diminished procreation, money and fame) and is about the three blessings concerning children, money and fame.

Abraham's response is also quite clear. The narrative, in fact, is brief: "So Abram went, as the Lord had told him." There is nothing said about the doubts of Abraham, if any. There was nothing said on how he arrived at the decision, on how he told those he would leave behind, etc.

What the text tells us is the perfect obedience of Abraham, telling us that he is a man of faith. Despite the unclear destination, Abraham trusted the Lord and left everything familiar. This makes Abraham a model of faith for all of us.

But Abraham's journey of faith was not smooth. In Gen 12:7, we learned that the Lord makes another promise to Abraham: "To your offspring, I will give this land." Despite the Lord's explicit promise of offspring to Abraham, who at 75 then was childless, Abraham, on the face of famine, decided to leave the land being promised to him and went down to Egypt and resided there as an alien. Before entering Egypt, Abraham told his wife Sarah to pretend he was her brother, so that "my life may be spared on your account." Because of this, Sarah was taken to Pharaoh's house, endangering the promise of offspring to Abraham.

But despite his selfish act, the Lord does not abandon Abraham. In a later vision, he tells Abraham not to be afraid: "I am your shield; your reward shall be great." (Gen. 15).

In Gen 17, God commands Abraham to "walk before me and be blameless" and changes his birth name Abram to Abraham (father of multitudes in Aramaic and Hebrew) as he makes another covenant with Abraham to "make you exceedingly numerous."

There is a Jewish term, Avraham Avinu (Abraham, our Father)." But today, not only Jews consider themselves children of Abraham. Muslims as well as Christians also consider Abraham as their ancestor (Matthew 1:1).

Like Abraham, we may have our moments of perfect immediate response to a call to serve God and express our faith. But though we try to be committed Christians, there may be times when, like Abraham, we get sidetracked and may not be as faithful as we hope to be. Abraham's journey of faith tells us that the Lord will not abandon us even in our moments of weakness. God will always be with us.

**Reflection and Discussion:** 1) Recall and share a moment when like Abraham you immediately answered or acted on a call to serve God. 2). Do you have an Abraham-like model of faith? Please share why he/she is your model. 3) In your journey of faith, also recall a moment of when you were weak and felt like losing faith. What did you do to walk with faith once again? 4) How can we help in the journeys of faith of members of our family and community?

**Bibliography:** Conroy, *Journeys and Servants*, CBAP Lectures 2003 (Quezon City, 2006); ETZ Hayim: Torah and Commentary (New York, 2001); NRSV and <http://www.chabad.org>

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