



Dear Friends,

Where is life taking us? Do we know where we want to go? Do we know how to get there?

Avraham's story, which began in the previous parasha and continues in this one, hints at the Grand Plan.

To begin with, Avraham did not initiate the departure from his home in Ur Kasdim. It was his father, Terach, who did so, and it is he who began the journey towards Canaan:

“Terach took his son Abram, his grandson Lot the son of Haran, and his daughter-in-law Sarai, the wife of his son Abram, and they set out together from Ur of the Chaldeans for the land of Canaan” (Bereishit 11: 31).

If Avraham was our forefather, then Terach was our “grandfather”. We don't really know why this grandfather of ours began his journey. Did God appear to him too? Was he a migrant worker? Perhaps he was seeking greener pastures? Various midrashim suggest that he was persecuted by the powers that be for his son Avraham's strange beliefs. In this drasha I would like to suggest a different answer to this question.

Whatever the reason for the Terach's journey, it ended in Haran - the region of present day Syria. His entire entourage either settled or got stuck there for some reason. Later in the story that branch of the family will be the source of wives for Avraham's son and grandson.

So it wasn't Avraham who uprooted everyone and set out on a journey that changed the face of humanity. Like Avraham, we all continue the journeys of previous generations.

Why is it, though, that Avraham embarks on the next leg of the journey, whereas the rest of the clan remains in the green pastures of Haran?

The answer to this question becomes apparent in the second verse of our parasha, as does Terach's goal, in retrospect.

It seems at first that the destination is unclear - **to the land that I will show you** (12: 1). But the story is not about a geographic destination to begin with, and it never is. When a person emigrates to Berlin or to New York, although he is moving to a specific place, that place, per-se', is not his goal. Rather, his goal is to fulfill a dream. He thinks or hopes that the location he is moving to will help his dreams materialize. Sometimes this is true, at least for a time, and then he or she is ready to move again.

It seems that Terach, our "grandfather", knew something even Avraham did not yet know, as we see at the end of the previous parasha, Parashat Noah.

"Now this is the line of Terah: Terah begot Abram, Nahor, and Haran; and Haran begot Lot. Haran died in the lifetime of his father Terah, in his native land, Ur of the Chaldeans. Abram and Nahor took to themselves wives, the name of Abram's wife being Sarai and that of Nahor's wife Milcah, the daughter of Haran, the father of Milcah and Iscah. Now Sarai was barren, she had no child. Terah took his son Abram, his grandson Lot the son of Haran, and his daughter-in-law Sarai, the wife of his son Abram, and they set out together from Ur of the Chaldeans for the land of Canaan; but when they had come as far as Haran, they settled there." (11: 27-31)

The text hints (or rather cries out) that Terach uprooted his family from Ur Kasdim and embarked on a journey because of Avram and Sarai's despair - **Now Sarai was barren, she had no child.**

In Hebrew, the word for barren and for uproot is the same - א.ק.ע. Barrenness and uprootedness contain feelings of extreme loneliness and alienation.

Terach saw his son and daughter-in-law's distress, and he did not leave them to face their fate alone. He uprooted the entire clan, including his grandson Lot who was an orphan.

Therefore, when Terach passed away, Avram, Sarai, and Lot continue on their way to Canaan, while the rest of the clan, who were already embracing offspring, remained in Haran. They were not "locals", but they were not experiencing the barrenness of Avram, Sarai, and the uprootedness of Lot.

When the Divine voice speaks to Avram and calls him to continue on the journey his father embarked on, He explains the goal of the journey, which, in retrospect, was also Terach's goal:

"I will make of you a great nation, And I will bless you"

In other words, you are embarking on a journey of birthing and continuity. That journey is the blessing you seek.

Please note: this blessing does not have to be through childbirth! One can also birth a meaningful life-long project and endeavor.

Avraham's story, from it's very beginning, in last week's parasha, until his death in Parashat Chayei Sarah which we read in two weeks' time, is a story of the human journey seeking the blessing of birthing, regeneration, continuity, and abundance. This is the miraculous journey which we are all on! We all yearn to birth our inner world, to bring forth our blessing, to sprout the seeds which are deep within us.

In the story of Creation it says: **“And God said, ‘Let the earth sprout vegetation: seed-bearing plants, fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it.’ And it was so. And God saw that it was GOOD!”** (1: 11-12)

We all wish to be seed-bearing plants of every kind (i.e. to continue our own species in some way), and to bear fruit from the seed within us. And intuitively, we all know that this is “good” - in the eyes of God, man, and most of all, ourselves.

But this goodness requires our inner selves to sprout - to see daylight. Otherwise, we remain barren, and this experience is very painful.

While the plants and the trees are rooted deep within the earth and cannot move around, man's roots are located deep within him. This is why the command is “Lech Lecha”. Lech, as in “go”, and Lecha, as in “to yourself”, within yourself, to the place where the seeds are waiting to bear fruit. Find them and help them grow.

In doing so, you will be a blessing.

This, then, appears to be the Grand Plan.

Shabbat Shalom,

Elisha