

Beth Tephila Messianic Jewish Congregation

(Under same management for over 5781 years)

SHABBAT SERVICE

October 31st – 10:30 AM Lolo Community "Synagogue"

12:30 PM Oneg Shabbat & In-Depth Torah Study



And the Lord said to Avram, "Go forth from your birthplace.....to the land I will show you."

Parasha Lech Lecha -- Genesis 12 - 17

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל-אַבְרָם לְהֵצֵא

Vayomer Adonay el-Avram lech lecha

And the Lord said to Avram, go forth

מֵאֶרֶץ וּמִבְּיַת אָבִיךָ אֶל-הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אֲרָאֶךָ:

me'artsecha umimoladetecha umibeyt avicha el-ha'arets asher ar'eka.

from the land of your birth and from the house of your father to the land I will show you.

וְאֶעֱשֶׂה לְךָ גֹּדֹל וְאֶבְרַכְךָ וְאֶגְדַּלְתִּיךָ שְׁמֶךָ וְהָיָה בְרָכָה:

Ve'e'escha legoy-gadol va'avarechecha va'agadelah shemecha veheyeh berachah.

And I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, and you shall be a blessing;

וְאֶבְרַכְתָּה מְבָרְכִיךָ וּמְקַלְלֶךָ אֲרָר וְנִבְרַשׁוּ בְּךָ כָּל מִשְׁפְּחוֹת הָאָדָמָה:

Va'avarechah mevarachecha umekalelecha a'or venivrechuh vecha kol mishpechot ha'adamah.

And I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth will be blessed."

The Torah portion for this Shabbat, which includes the **Abrahamic Covenant**, is one of the most important Torah portions of the whole year! In this portion, God gives the land of Israel to His people, Abraham and his descendants. Also in this portion is **the promise of the coming Messiah**, in whom "all of the families of the earth shall be blessed" (vs.

6). Over and over again, we will refer back to Genesis, Chapter 12, the Abrahamic Covenant. God chooses Abraham and his descendants to be His people, and by faith, acquiescing to God's call, Abraham commits himself and his descendants to worship and obey God alone.

In our two previous Torah portions we have seen, (1) the creation of the material universe, including the earth and everything in the earth. (2) We have seen man choose to disobey God and thereby fall into sin, resulting in certain punishment. **Adam and Eve were expelled from the Garden of Eden**. Adam then had to work "by the sweat of your face" (Ch.3:19) for his food. Death and pain in childbirth occurred. Man was given headship over his wife. God instituted the first animal sacrifice to provide a physical covering for man and a continuing model for the covering of man's sins, which, if left uncovered, would separate man from God. (3) Abel brought the sacrifice required by God, while Cain brought the sacrifice he chose on his own. Upset by God's acceptance of Abel's sacrifice but not his sacrifice, **Cain murdered his brother**. (4) As men began to populate the earth, we have seen how the "evil inclination" of man for sin dominated all of his life, so that "every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Ch.

6:5). Yet in the midst of an evil and corrupt people, "**Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord...a righteous man, blameless in his time [because] Noah walked with God**" (vs. 8,9). We talked about how Noah could be "righteous" before God, while living among a corrupt people. He followed God's directions perfectly, which allowed him to participate in God's plans for his safety and in the beginnings of a new earth. Noah listened to God and followed God's directions, building an ark. The ark provided safety for Noah and the animals inside. We mentioned that God still provides safety for those to choose to listen and follow Him. The model of Noah listening to God and obeying Him, while living in a corrupt society, should be a model for our lives too. It is possible for us today to live a Godly life. **By listening to God and obeying Him, Noah literally "worked out his salvation..." (Phil.2:12), but did Noah spread the good news of God for the salvation of others?**

In the construction of the **Tower of Babel** by the descendants of Noah, we observed that **prideful men considered it more important to build "for themselves"** a tower for their own self-aggrandizement rather than to obey God; to congregate themselves into one area rather than to obey God by populating the whole earth. But **God's will cannot be thwarted!** God confused their language. Then, because they could not understand one another, they naturally separated from one another "over the face of the whole earth" (Ch. 11:9).

God began human life with one couple, Adam and Eve. Because of the extreme wickedness of their descendants, God wiped out all humankind except Noah and his family. Again God started with one family, instructing them to be fruitful and multiply. In **Lech Lecha**, "Go forth, yourself," the first divine command ever given to a Jew, God begins a new phase of His relationship with humankind; a relationship where man trusts and obeys God by faith. This relationship began with one man, Abram, who heard God's voice and obeyed Him in faith. One might ponder, did Abram

always have the faith necessary to allow him to follow God's call? We might remember, **Joshua 24:2**, "In the past your ancestors lived beyond the Euphrates River, including Terach the father of Abraham and Nahor. They worshiped other gods." So what caused Abram's life to change so drastically that he could even respond to God? As Rabbi Jonathan Sacks says below, we don't know, but we do know for certain that Abram had a new life direction that allowed him to hear and obey the voice of God.

But before we begin this week's Torah portion with the life of Abram, let's consider why we Jews are called the children of Abraham, rather than the children of Adam, or the children of Noah. We have already established that Noah was a man of faith in a very Godless world. So was Abraham. What was it about Abraham and his faith that was so different from that of Noah, so that we are called the children of Abraham and not the children of Noah? Reading through the Torah, one can see that the life and interactions of Abraham are given in much greater detail than the life of Noah. Actually we don't know too much about the interactions of Noah with his community. **Lech Lecha stirs us to action. It is the action of going along with God's plans for us in faith.** Where Noah's **Lech Lecha** resulted in the salvation of a few people (and many animals) as a result of him following God's instructions despite the mocking and slander of those around him, Abraham was able to save possibly millions of people, as we will see beginning with this Parsha. Abraham truly left a legacy and is a model of the faith/walk life for us. As we begin reading about the life of Abraham, ask yourself **how can we truly be the children of Abraham?**

In this week's Torah portion is God's call to Abram in **Chapter 12**. Having moved with his father from Ur to Haran, Abram obeyed the call of God to leave the security of family and follow God into an unknown land. **Hebrews 11:8** defines this act as one of faith. **Abram immediately obeyed God, giving God trust and leadership over his life.** Just as Noah listened to God and obeyed Him, "**Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness**" (**Gen.15:6 & Gal.3:6**). Let's take a moment to examine the "**mechanics of faith.**" **Abram heard** the voice of God. **Abram immediately acted in accordance to God's voice.** There was no contemplation of what he was giving up to follow God. He did not take a poll to ascertain the decision of the majority. He did not question who this was, who was calling him, nor did he ask by what right did God intrude into his life. **He simply realized what was his position relative to God and submitted himself to the will of God.** How simple, yet how profound! Today, we're taught to analyze every situation...to weigh the positives against the negatives and choose the best possible outcome from all outcomes we can envision. Abram had no preconceived vision. He could not foresee that he would be the progenitor of God's people and be the recipient of God's promises and promised land. **He heard God and obeyed.** **And then he "stayed the course," even during "rough" times, when it might have seemed to him that all was not going as expected. It was just as simple as that, although the day to day living may not have seemed so simple at the time.** **Russ Resnik** says that we too, can hear God's voice. "I believe that the God we're talking about can and does actually communicate directly with human beings. This communication might take us by surprise, but **we can also seek it out by listening for his word through prayer, mediation, contemplation of Scripture, and quiet anticipation that God will speak** (usually not audibly, but clearly enough)."

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks describes the importance of God's words to Abram. "Lekh Lekha, and indeed Jewish history, begins with the words, "God said to Abraham, Go from your land, your birthplace and your father's house to a land I will show you" (Gen. 12:1). This is the boldest beginning of any account of a life in the Hebrew Bible. It seems to come from nowhere. The Torah gives us no portrait of Abraham's childhood, his youth, his relationship with the other members of his family, how he came to marry Sarah, or the qualities of character that made God single him out to become the initiator of what ultimately turned out to be the greatest revolution in the religious history of humankind, what is called nowadays Abrahamic monotheism." Contrast the call of God to Abraham with the call of God to Isaac, Jacob, and then to Joseph. We know so much more about their lives than we know about the life of Abraham prior to God's call. What was our life like prior to God's call to us, and how has our life been changed by our submission to God?

One might ask, why hearing from God was so simple for Abram, yet not so simple for us today. Rabbi Paul Saal provides some insight on how we today may better hear from God. Hearing from God His direction for our lives presupposes that we are listening and willing to have a conversation (two way communication.) Too often today, we say we are either too busy to take time to talk with God or we have already made up our plans and don't really want God's input. Rabbi Saal reminds us, "we have been absent from the conversation" with God. "The first step to hearing from God in the face of apparent silence is engagement." To establish engagement with God, Rabbi Paul suggests that we review from our "memory... our past interactions with Hashem. I like to call this 'going to the videotape.'" When we review our past interactions with God, we again realize that God is still available to us. As we begin to speak with God, Rabbi Saal says that we should do so with the determination that **we will allow God's will to become our will.** "...when our Creator is trying to change us, God does not normally remove us from our situation; rather He allows us to change in the midst of our circumstance. Too often we try to change our own circumstances, rather than allowing ourselves to be changed." Then when we hear from God, we should take action, as Rabbi Saal shows us that Abram, when he heard from God took action, "**Lech Lecha – Go yourself.**" God is saying to Abram, you go and I will go with you." Just as when Abram heard and obeyed God, we, too, should engage in conversation with God and then steps of action to follow His direction, knowing that God will be with us regardless of our circumstances.

Because of Abram's faith, **God made a covenant with him and his descendants** (vs. 7) **to give them the land**, where He would lead them. **God promised: 1) He would make Abram into a great nation. 2) He would bless Abram. (3) He would make Abram's name great. 4) He would enable Abram to bless others. 5) He would bless those who bless Abram. 6) He would curse those who curse Abram. 7) Through Abram's descendants, all of the families of the earth would be blessed.** God foretold that Messiah would be one of Abram's descendants. Be sure to notice the word "all." Paul states that "all" includes Gentiles as well as Jews. All the "families of the earth," who by faith appropriate for themselves the atonement from sin produced by the sacrificial death of Messiah would be blessed (Gal.3:8,9). You will also **notice that the "Abrahamic Covenant" made by God with Abram, does not**

contain the word "if." "If" would denote a conditional covenant, whereby the two parties are bound by the covenant. Violation by one party violates the terms of the covenant. The Abrahamic Covenant, however, **is not conditional**. It is a **unilateral covenant** that provides a "gift" from God to Abram and to his descendants based entirely upon the faith of Abram and God's ability to uphold His promise. Rabbi Michael Schiffman points out that **Genesis 13:7** says, "The Canaanites and Perizzites were then **dwelling** in the land." He elaborates that "It is interesting that the Torah says the Canaanites and Perizzites **were dwelling** in the land. **It does not say it was their land**, implying that **the land belongs to whom God gives it, not who occupies it.**" (We would do well to remember this fact today.) "Abraham makes a magnanimous gesture, which was part of that culture, and gives Lot the choice of whatever part of the land he would like ." Then it was at that time that the Lord reaffirmed his covenant with Abraham; that **all the land he sees is his**, no matter what Lot did.... **God gave it to Abraham and his descendants forever. It could not be given away nor taken away.**



by Zvi Leonhard

“And He took him outside and said, ‘Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them.’ Genesis 15:5

"And the Lord said to Abram, **after Lot had parted from him**, raise your eyes and look out from where you are, to the north and south, to the east and west, for **I give all the land that you see to you and your offspring forever**.....Arise, walk about the land, through its length and its breadth, for **I give it to you.**" (**Gen.13:14-17**). **Genesis 15:**

6,16-18 recapitulates this covenant and includes borders of the land. **Because the covenant is unilateral, it is based only upon God's ability to deliver what He promised!** Also implicit in God's promise to Abram and his descendants is that Abram will have descendants. So far, Sarai has not produced children.

Although God calls Abram, the "man of faith," the scriptures show **several instances where Abram tries to resolve his problems by himself**: His encounter **with Pharaoh** (Ch.12); **with Abimelech** (Ch. 20); and also in **trying to please his wife to produce a child for her** (Ch. 16). In these situations, **God comes to the rescue of Abram. God's promises will not be denied!** For example, if Pharaoh or Abimelech had taken Sarai into their harem, Isaac would not have been born. Abraham listened to God and sent away Ishmael (**Gen. 21:10-12**), so that "through Isaac your descendants shall be named." **Just like Abram, we, too, sometimes try to resolve our problems without God's help. How much easier it would be to trust God instead of ourselves all of the time! There would be much less "mess" for God to have to clean up!**

Other things from this Torah portion that we will discuss on Shabbat during our interactive Torah discussion include the following: **1) The gift of the "best" land to Lot** (Ch.13:11-13). Sometimes what we consider "best" may not be what God considers "best." We only have to look at the immoral people, who inhabited this "best" land to understand that Lot made a poor choice. **2) The first Holy Land tour** occurs in Ch.13:17, and Abram certainly had the best tour guide! **3) The appearance of Melchizedek** in Ch.14:18-20. This "king of righteousness" was a foreshadowing of the ultimate "King of Righteousness," the Messiah, Yeshua (**Hebrews Ch.5:1-10**). As a "priest of God Most High," "**El Elyon**," a title of God that emphasizes God as possessor of heavens and earth, Abram gave him a tenth of all he had. We will discuss whether this was an actual appearance of Messiah (a theophany). A theophany occurs when a "person" comes from nowhere, claims to be God by doing works only God can do, and vanishes. Here, Melchizedek came from Jerusalem, "King of Salem," and returned there. A theophany occurs in **Genesis 16:7-14** and in next week's Torah portion in **Chapter 19**. **4) In Chapter 17, the circumcision of Abraham occurs. Circumcision was the sign of God's covenant with him.** In this chapter, God changes of names of both Abram (exalted father) to Abraham (father of many nations) and Sarai (my princess) to Sarah (princess).

Individual Tikun Olam

Messianic Jews understand the prophecy that through the descendants of Abraham, will come the Messiah of Israel, and through Him all the families of the earth will be blest. **Rabbi Hanan Schlesinger** points out a concomitant ongoing Jewish responsibility: "... God blesses us and we must pass the blessings along. We ought never to hoard His blessings for ourselves. God gives life, and light, and sustenance and hope, and so must we give these blessings to others as well." "No true good can be enjoyed without passing it on. We... must be open-ended vessels. **Blessings are not meant (only) to flow into us, but rather to flow through us.**" "How do you be a blessing? With a smile, or with a hug. By always thinking of giving, of helping, of lending a hand. By offering an invitation instead of waiting to receive one. By opening up to a stranger, by making someone feel at home. By teaching, and helping others to learn. By offering insight and inspiration. By encouragement or a kind word. It is not hard to find ways to be a blessing - you just have to constantly be aware of it." "One should

always ask himself: Is the world a bit of a better place today because of me?" Reviewing Jewish history illustrates how God has disproportionately enabled Jews to become a blessing to the families of the earth. Rabbi Schlesinger asks us individually to ask ourselves, "Is the world a bit of a better place today because of me?" Being a blessing for the families of the earth is what we call **Tikun Olam**, repairing the world – making the world a better place. In our conversations with God, let's remember to pass along the blessings of God to us by asking Him how we can make our world a better place. And remembering that God's will is to make our world a better place through His Appointed Messiah.

Haftorah -- Isaiah 40:27 - 41:16

Verse 31: "Yet those who wait for the Lord will gain new strength. They will mount up with wings like eagles. They will run and not get tired. They will walk and not become weary."

Psalm 3

Verses 2-3,8: "Many are saying of my soul, 'There is no deliverance for him in God.' But Thou, O Lord, art a shield about me. My glory, and the One who lifts my head. Salvation belongs to the Lord. Thy blessing be upon Thy people!"

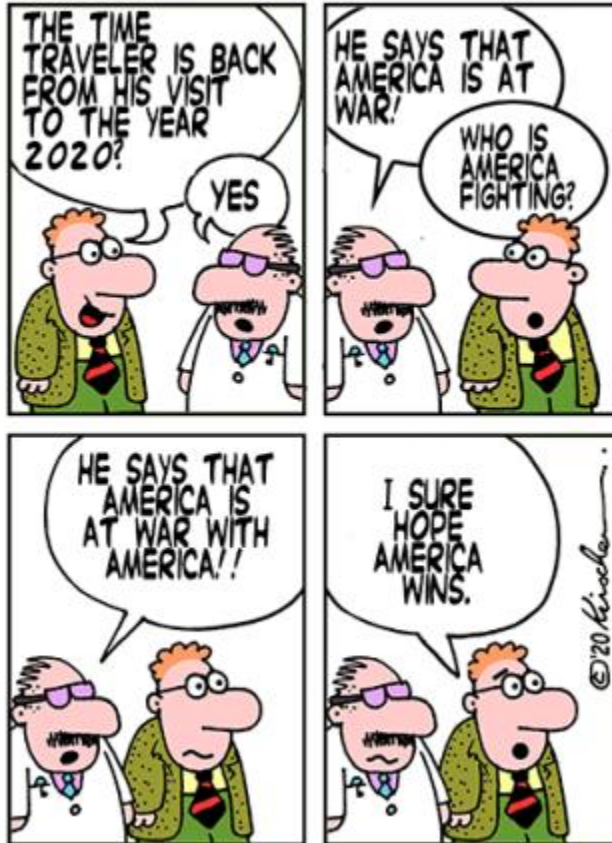
Romans 4:1-25

Verses 13-16: "For the promise to Abraham or to his descendants that he would be heir of the world was not through the law but through the righteousness of faith. For if those who are of the law are heirs, faith is made void, and the promise is nullified. For the law brings about wrath, but where there is no law, neither is there violation. For this reason it is by faith that it might be in accordance with grace, in order that the promise may be certain to all the descendants, not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all..."

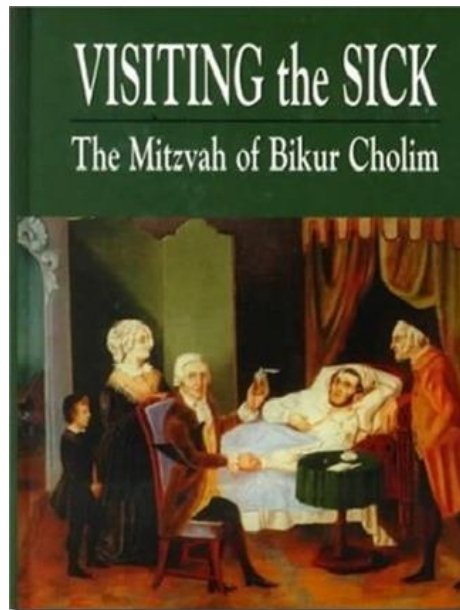
SHABBAT SHALOM

Dry Bones

THE TIME TRAVELER



Bikur Cholim



Bikur Cholim, "visiting the sick", refers to the **mitzvah** (Jewish religious commandment) to visit and extend aid to the sick.

It is considered an aspect of **gemilut chasadim** (benevolence, selflessness, loving-kindness).

It is traditional to recite prayers for healing, such as the **Mi Shebeirach** prayer in the synagogue, and Psalms (especially Psalm 119) on behalf of the sick. The roots of **Bikur Cholim** can be traced back to the Torah, when God visits Abraham after his circumcision (Genesis 18:1).

Phoning and then actually visiting the sick is one of the most beautiful forms of showing God's loving-kindness.

Without thought of recompense, we show our love for one another by visiting with the sick and talking in person with him/her to let them know we have come to help with their recovery.

Thank You to those who have shown Bikur Cholim to me at this time.

Louis



Rick Paris – 4 visits, chocolate donut & Doritos