

11-09-24 To Roeh Israel Abilene– Lech L'Cha (go forth, yourself)
Torah Portion; Genesis 12:1-17:27
Haftarah: Isa 40:27-41:16
Suggested Acheron K'tuvim: 1 Peter 5:8

Walk Together

Central question of this message: Are you walking with someone else to give you strength?

This parashah takes its name from the command given by G-d to Avram in the city of Haran, as recorded in Genesis chapter 12.

Gen 12:1-3

Now the LORD said to Avram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. 2 And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. 3 I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

וַיֹּאמֶר	יְהוָה	אֶל-	אַבְרָם	לֵךְ-	לְךָ	12:1
Now had said	the Lord	unto	Abram,	Get	thee	
<u>559</u>	<u>3068</u>	<u>413</u>	<u>87</u>	<u>3212</u>	<u>3807a</u>	
מֵאֶרְצְךָ	וּמִמְּוֹלַדְתְּךָ	וּמִבֵּית	אָבִיךָ			
out of thy country,	and from thy kindred,	and from house,	thy father's			
<u>776</u>	<u>4138</u>	<u>1004</u>	<u>1</u>			
אֶל-	הָאֶרֶץ	אֲשֶׁר	אֶרְאֶכּ:			
unto	a land	that	I will shew thee:			
<u>413</u>	<u>776</u>	<u>834</u>	<u>7200</u>			
וַיַּעַשׂ	לְגוֹי	גָּדוֹל	וַיְבָרֶכְךָ			2
And I will make of thee	a nation,	great	and I will bless thee,			
<u>6213</u>	<u>1471</u>	<u>1419</u>	<u>1288</u>			
וַיַּגְדִּלָהּ	שְׁמֶךָ	וְהָיָה	בְּרִכָּה:			
and make great;	thy name	and thou shalt be	a blessing:			
<u>1431</u>	<u>8034</u>	<u>1961</u>	<u>1293</u>			
וַיְבָרֶכְךָ	מִבְּרָכֶיךָ	וּמִקְלָלֶיךָ				3
And I will bless	them that bless thee,	and him that curseth thee:				
<u>1288</u>	<u>1288</u>	<u>7043</u>				
אָאָר	וְנִבְרְכוּ	בְּךָ	כָּל	מִשְׁפָּחַת	הָאֲדָמָה:	
curse	and shall be blessed.	in thee	all	families of	the earth	
<u>779</u>	<u>1288</u>	<u>871a</u>	<u>3605</u>	<u>4940</u>	<u>127</u>	

I will continue my series on covenant next weekend. Suzy Linett is our guest speaker this weekend, and her message will be delightful. But for the benefit of the many who are on the message distribution list, I am putting this study together so that you will have something from me to consider this Shabbes.

It is important that we as a body of faith in this darkening world stay strong. One of the ways we can stay strong is to walk the walk of faith in a believing community.

We know that this instruction, to leave Ur and go to Canaan was initially given to Terah, Avram's father. It was not given directly to Avram, because he was not the head of the family – his father was. We know that Terah journeyed not westward, toward Canaan, but rather northward. He settled in Haran, and died there.

Gen 11:31-32

And Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran, his grandson, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, his son Avram's wife; and they went out together from Ur of the Chaldeans in order to enter the land of Canaan; and they went as far as Haran, and settled there.

It was after Terah's death that Avram was given the command to continue the journey, and Avram obeyed. What we see in the opening lines of today's parasha is the *second call* – this time to Avram.

When Avram left Haran, to continue the journey, those who had lived alongside him in that area – and who had seen his relationship with G-d as something they wished to also have – came with him on the rest of his journey.

Gen 12:4-6

4 So Abram went forth as the Lord had spoken to him; and Lot went with him. Now Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. 5 And Abram took Sarai his wife and Lot his nephew, and all their possessions which they had accumulated, and the persons which they had acquired in Haran, and they set out for the land of Canaan; thus they came to the land of Canaan.

The English phrase “the persons which they had acquired” is unsatisfying to me. It suggests that Avram had purchased some people there, and they were slaves, or at least possessions. The Hebrew is quite different.

עָשָׂר	אֲשֶׁר	הַנָּפֶשׁ	וְאֶחָד
they had gotten	that	the souls	and
<u>6213</u>	<u>834</u>	<u>5315</u>	<u>853</u>

As you can see, it is translated here as “souls that they had gotten.” But that is also a bit improper. The Hebrew word *asah*, is more properly translated as “made.”

OT:6213 אָשָׂה **`asah** (aw-saw'); a primitive root; to do or make, in the broadest sense and widest application (as follows):

This is a Hebrew idiom, indicating that these were people who had come to faith in G-d through the witness of Avram. This is how you “make a soul” for the kingdom.

So, Avram departed with not only his family, but also with a number of other believers who accompanied him. There was support, and strength, for him in this journey to somewhere he had never yet been. He was not alone.

G-d knows that in times of great spiritual battles, having someone – or many “someones” – beside you to give you strength. He told us to gather together in family groups – and to welcome-in neighbors. Together we could endure a very difficult night and following day – where slavery turned to freedom.

Ex 12:1-5

12 Now the Lord said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, 2 "This month shall be the beginning of months for you; it is to be the first month of the year to you. 3 Speak to all the congregation of Israel, saying, 'On the tenth of this month they are each one to take a lamb for themselves, according to their fathers' households, a lamb for each household. 4 'Now if the household is too small for a lamb, then he and his neighbor nearest to his house are to take one according to the number of persons in them; according to what each man should eat, you are to divide the lamb.

We know that there were a number of new believers who also sought refuge in the homes whose doors were marked with the blood of the lamb, because there were many who were not Hebrews who accompanied us out of Egypt. To have survived that night (in particular, the first-born), they had to be within the homes of Hebrews for Passover.

Ex 12:37-39

37 Now the sons of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand men on foot, aside from children. 38 And a mixed multitude also went up with them,

along with flocks and herds, a very large number of livestock. 39 And they baked the dough which they had brought out of Egypt into cakes of unleavened bread. For it had not become leavened, since they were driven out of Egypt and could not delay, nor had they prepared any provisions for themselves.

As we left Egypt, we did so as a group. There were likely more than 2 million of us departing Egypt, which meant the vast majority of what the Egyptians saw as “cheap labor” departed. It was certainly hard on the Egyptian economy, but it was even harder upon us as a group.

We had been in slavery for maybe more than 200 years. We had been forcibly governed and regulated by slave masters. and we had lost the ability to be self-governing and self-regulating. We knew very well how to be slaves, but had lost the ability to be free.

These were free times, but hard times. G-d knew that we would need to have community to make it through. Community begins with family, and expands to friendships, small groups, then to congregations, then to like-minded people in cities, states, and nations. Each level provides an amount of needed support.

As in waging war, surrounding yourself with wise counselors provides victory.

Prov 24:5

6 For by wise guidance you will wage war,
And in abundance of counselors there is victory.

Prov 11:12

14 Where there is no guidance, the people fall,
But in abundance of counselors there is victory.

After family, the first level of individual support is a godly friend. This friend will stand by you to support you, but he won't flatter you when you should receive correction.

Prov 27:5-6

5 Better is open rebuke
Than love that is concealed.
6 Faithful are the wounds of a friend,
But deceitful are the kisses of an enemy.

We are strongest when we partner with others.

Eccl 4:9-12

9 Two are better than one because they have a good return for their labor. 10 For if either of them falls, the one will lift up his companion. But woe to the one who falls when there is not another to lift him up. 11 Furthermore, if two lie down together they keep warm, but how can one be warm alone? 12 And if one can overpower him who is alone, two can resist him. A cord of three strands is not quickly torn apart.

Walking alongside others is even more essential when a person is in leadership, and that includes leadership at any level of service, and in any type of congregation or assembly.

Now that we have discussed the benefits of walking in faith with others alongside, I wish to discuss how these truths impact the aspect of leadership.

Not only is a leader a greater target for attack, but the accountability of a leader should be higher than that of those whom he leads. One cannot lead unless one is somewhat... ahead. That seems obvious, but I see some

leaders whose spiritual maturity is considerably inferior to those in his congregation. And that is a recipe for having a stunted congregation.

I wish to now draw from some secular sources regarding leadership, because even they have seized upon some of the deeper truths that are evident through Scripture.

A great truth is that a leader who lacks a few godly, spiritually mature, and courageous ones (of the same gender) who will surround this leader with counsel, support, and accountability, will be far more susceptible to sin.

I believe that Satan sees the lone leader much like a lion sees the lone animal apart from the herd – vulnerable to attack.

The leader in any faith-based organization has two separate lines of accountability. He is certainly accountable to G-d for his actions. But he is also accountable to those under his leadership. If he is a Rabbi or Preacher, he stands before the throne of G-d for his teachings and leadership of those who are trusting him for guidance. Timothy offers a stinging rebuke to those who are immature in the faith, but still presume to be Torah teachers, but lead those under them astray.

1 Tim 1:6-8

6 For some men, straying from these things, have turned aside to fruitless discussion, 7 wanting to be teachers of the Law, even though they do not understand either what they are saying or the matters about which they make confident assertions.

And it is clear that those who undertake to be teachers aren't merely judged for the conduct of their own lives, but are also judged for their directions of the lives of others.

James 3:1-2

3 Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we shall incur a stricter judgment.

These two passages of Scripture should be sufficient to place into any person who is elevated to the position of teacher (Heb. Rabbi) a level of solemnitude, properly bordering on fear.

Jeffrey Kays published an article in November 2023 speaking of leadership accountability. It is entitled, *The Cornerstone of Leadership*

*Success: The Importance of Accountability.*¹ In this article, he sets out a number of benefits which flow to any organization when its leader is accountable.

1. **Builds Trust.** He says that trust is the foundation upon which leadership success is founded. Accountable leaders show those under them that they can be trusted to do what is right, even when it is difficult. A good leader is open to questions and concerns from subordinates who feel safe in speaking them.
2. **Fosters Responsibility.** Leaders lead by example, and consistently take responsibility for their actions. This sets the standard for the entire organization. This leads to increased productivity and a sense of ownership in those below them in the organization.
3. **Encourages Learning and Growth.** Accountability continues, when the people learn from mistakes. A mistake is not a failure if it provides an opportunity to remedy an existing problem and move forward in a better way. A leader who acknowledges his own failings, and actively seeks to remedy them, it sets a pattern for others in his organization to follow, doing the same.
4. **Enhances Problem-Solving.** An accountable leader doesn't shy-away from difficult decisions or tough conversations. He confronts problems head-on, and works with others to find solutions. This

¹ <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/cornerstone-leadership-success-importance-jeffrey-kays-gyjkc>

promotes a culture of problem-solving at all levels of the organization.

5. **Increases Transparency.** Transparency is a key factor in accountability. If the leader is transparent, then the people under his leadership will also be transparent. Fear urges people to hide their faults, and make excuses. Faith urges people to be honest and open, and not be governed by fear.

6. **Boosts Morale and Motivation.** An employee who sees the leader as being accountable, it boosts his motivation and morale. Addressing concerns promptly and with fairness will lead to greater joy in the organization and greater loyalty.

7. **Sets a Standard of Excellence.** When a leader is accountable, he sets a standard for everyone in the organization. This creates a culture of excellence. A culture of excellence lifts an organization above the others.

These factors are good in business, but they are also good for faith-based organizations.

Some leaders seem to believe that if they display most of the factors listed above, it would be showing weakness. That is an unfortunate attitude. In reality, those factors are consistent with Scripture and are demonstrations of greater strength.

The goal of the leader of a faith-based organization should be to find ways to advance the ministry of the organization by advancing the faith and strength of the people who are accomplishing the various aspects of that ministry.

One final aspect of leadership is humility. The two leaders that most clearly exemplify this aspect are Moses, and Yeshua. As we know, Moses was the most humble man of his time.² And Yeshua gave us a shining example of servant leadership which stands the test of time even to today.

So, it is best for believers to walk our faith with close associations of other believers. Begin with family, and godly friends. Don't neglect being part of a holy congregation of believers. And be ready to step over the dividing walls that denominations seem to erect for purposes of division. We will be stronger, and grow better, with others at our side.

For leaders, having an accountability covering is far more important. It can be the difference between fending off the attack of Satan, or being brought down and eaten by the "roaring lion."³

² Num. 12:3

³ 1 Peter 5:8