

Lech Lecha

Abram was the first person to realize that G-d is a Supreme Being and that G-d is not dust, an idol, the sea or the sun. He spreads this message all the time in the city of Charan where he lives. One day G-d tells him to leave his city and his father's home and to go to the land which G-d will show him. So Abram and his wife Sarai together with his nephew Lot leave Charan and travel to the Land of Canaan where G-d reveals Himself to him and tells him that He will give this land to Abram's children. Abram builds an altar there.

Abram and Sarai love having guests. Their tent is open from all four sides so that people could come in from any direction in which they are traveling. Abram and Sarai feed and take care of all their guests and teach them about G-d.

A short while later a famine comes onto the Land of Canaan so Abram and Sarai have to travel to Egypt to get food. There they say that they are brother and sister, because Sarai is so beautiful that Abram fears the palace guards will kill him to give Sarai to Pharaoh as a wife. Sarai is indeed taken prisoner to the palace, but overnight G-d sends a plague to Pharaoh, who gets the message and frees Sarai. He also gives many gifts of animals, gold and silver to the couple and sends them on their way.

Back in Canaan, Lot goes to live in the city of Sodom. He is captured during a local war and Abram runs to his rescue with a small army and miraculously defeats a big army of four kings. G-d makes a covenant – a pact or deal - with Abram and tells him that his children will suffer in exile – galut – but will then be freed and brought to the Holy Land which will be theirs forever.

Sounds good? Sounds great! But...Abram and Sarai were married for a long time and do not have children, and they are getting older...so Sarai encourages Abram to marry her maid Hagar, who was a converted Egyptian princess (at the time men were allowed to marry more than one wife), to give Abram the chance to have a child. Hagar becomes pregnant and has a child Yishmael. But Hagar is disrespectful to Sarai and runs away, then returns to Abram's home after an angel convinces her to go back.

Finally, G-d promises Abram that his children will be as numerous as the stars in the sky and the dust of the earth. G-d makes a covenant with Abraham and commands him to circumcise himself--do a brit milah--as a sign of the covenant. From that day on, all Jewish boys do a brit milah at 8 days old. G-d changes Abram's name to Abraham and Sarai's to Sarah and tells Abraham that they will have a child who they should name "Isaac" and that from Isaac will come the nation to which G-d promised the Holy Land. At this time, Abraham is 99 years old and Sarah is 89.

Here are my thoughts regarding this Parasha:

I somehow feel that this Parasha is closely related to me. When I graduated from high school, I felt a very strong urge to leave my hometown to pursue a better life elsewhere. There were times that I wondered about this decision of mine to leave my family and everyone I knew behind and come to practically to the other side of the planet! But as revolution in Iran materialized, I wondered no more! The fact is that we may not understand why some events take place or why we do things that we do! However, years later we become aware of the reasons.

It's interesting to note that the Jewish population in Iran was more than half a million before the revolution, but almost 35 years later there are only about 20 to 30 thousand Jews left in that country now.

When I was a kid in native country, I asked our Chief Rabbi about this Parasha and the the age of Sarah being 89 when she had Isaac. His response was quite interesting! He told me that in that time of history, the year meant a season. Which means that Sarah was 44.5 years old when she had Isaac and Abraham was almost 50. Now, that makes more sense!

Regarding Abraham's first born (Yishmael or Esmaeel in Arabic) : he is father of Arab nations. I honestly believe if we and Arabs were to put more emphasize on what we have in common as oppose to what makes us different, we would be much better off today!

Ultimately, this Parasha teaches us to believe in G-d's plans for us, as everything is part of a much bigger plan. We later come to this conclusion as we put the puzzle

pieces together and try to make a little more sense of it all. Last thing: Do not ever lose faith as G-d is always by your side!

Always Remember This!!!

Shabbat Shalom,
Amir