



Shabbat Lekh Lekha – October 16 2021, 2021 – 10 Cheshvan, 5782

Dear TBE Friends and Family,

The opening lines of this week's Torah portion (Parashat Lekh Lekha) concisely capture the Jewish understanding of humanity's relationship with the Divine. God addresses Abraham and says to him, "*Take yourself* from your land, from the place of your birth, from your father's household to a place that *I will show you ... and you will be a blessing* [to] all the families of the earth." (italics mine)

Surely a deity capable of summoning the world into being out of nothingness has no need of offering invitations or making suggestions?!? If God wants Abraham to move could God not simply relocate him directly? In fact, if God's larger is to elevate Abraham's name – or God's own, which many read as the underlying aim of Abraham's promotion – could God not have simply have effected these things directly?

Our common understanding of power is that it consists in the ability to compel other individuals to comply with one's will even when it conflicts with their own. Indeed, the maxim that "absolute power corrupts absolutely" reflects the belief that given unchecked authority, an actor will gravitate towards ever more arbitrary and self-guided expressions of self-will.

But God's authority, at least as manifest in the Divine relationship with humanity, is fundamentally different. For whatever reason (or none at all), God prefers to act in partnership with human kind, choosing to invite, entice or cajole, rather than dictating the direction of our lives.



If this kind of expression of power might seem at first to diminish our understanding of God's potential, creating space for Creation to at times go horribly astray (or so we must assume), it is ultimately an awesome testament to a Creator who in "obfuscation" (through God's absence or inaction) creates the space for us to act and so imbues our actions, our existence, with potential and meaning.

"Take yourself from the place where you are as you read this," our parashah beacons, "and transport yourself to a place, transform yourself into a person, who will inspire respect and greatness in others."

Shabbat shalom,

Rabbi Rachel Safman