

LECH LECHA (GENESIS 12:1-17:27)**CHANGE!!**

2008 · Rabbi Yerachmiel Sepowitz

G-d said to Abram, “Go for yourself from your land, from your relatives, and from your father’s house... (Genesis, 12:1)

Change is difficult. It is challenging, and sometimes frightening to leave one’s comfort zone and to go into uncharted waters. Abram was called upon to take leave of his familiar surroundings. And it wasn’t as if he had a clear idea as to exactly where he was headed:

...to the land that I will show you. (Ibid)

G-d did not give Abram an itinerary. Abram was told to have faith that it would all work out. But he was given no details. There was, however, a promise:

And I will make of you a great nation. I will bless you and make your name great, and you will be a blessing.” (Ibid, verse 2)

As the Torah Portion progresses, we read of the many challenges that Abram is forced to confront:

- No sooner does Abram reach his destination (Canaan, the Holy Land), that there is a famine that forces him to go to Egypt to survive.
- He gets to Egypt and his wife is abducted.
- His nephew/brother-in-law Lot is captured, forcing Abram to go to war to save him.
- He is commanded to circumcise himself at an advanced age.

In total, Abram (later known as Abraham) was subjected to ten tests of his faith. Ten times, he was forced to deal with unexpected change. Ten times he rose to the occasion.

Let’s face it. CHANGE is in the air. Our country is beginning to undergo a fundamental change in its entire method of doing business. Some of us welcome the change. Some of us are profoundly disappointed. Some of us have great hope and optimism for the future that will be heralded in by our new president and Congress. Others are frustrated and frightened by what will happen to our economy, our status in the world, our security and Israel’s security.

Let me give both sides a bit of news. You're both wrong!

In discussing the Book of Esther and the Purim story, the Talmud (Megillah 15b) discusses Queen Esther's motives. Why, asks the Talmud, did Esther invite Haman to her parties with the king? She could have just gone to the king and said, "Your Majesty, I want you to know that I am Jewish. I also want you to know that Haman is plotting to murder my people, and I am begging you to stop him."

That would have been the end of the story. The king would have strung up Haman, the Jews would have been saved, and we'd all live happily ever after. Right?

One little problem. It doesn't work that way. Rabbi Nechemia says that Esther was concerned about people's attitudes. "We have a sister in the king's palace," they said. "She'll speak to the king and take care of everything."

Esther did not want her people to put their faith in anyone, not even her. Once they saw that she was pretending not to be Jewish, they started to get nervous. Once they saw that Esther was rubbing elbows with Haman, they feared that she had abandoned them. They were left with but one option: G-d.

The Jews of Shushan fasted. They repented and cried their eyes and hearts out to the only One Who is really in a position to save us.

And they were saved.

We Jews attempt to forge political connections. We try to seek out friends of our community and elect them to positions of power and influence. And we try to make friends out of those who are already in positions of power and influence.

And that is the proper thing to do. We are not supposed to sit back and expect miracles. We should be politically active.

However, we must remain cautious. We rely too strongly on anyone at our own peril. We dare not say, "We have a sister in the king's palace."

We have no one upon whom we can rely. Friends sometimes become enemies, and enemies even occasionally become friends. Presidents Truman and Nixon, anti-Semites in their personal lives, showed themselves to be great friends of Israel. Truman led the world in making the United States the first country to recognize the State of Israel, and Nixon airlifted massive amounts of arms to Israel shortly after the outbreak of the Yom Kippur War. Bill Clinton, the great lover of Jews and Israel, pressured the

Israelis to give away East Jerusalem. George W. Bush, a man who had the wisdom to take out Saddam Hussein and eliminate that threat to Israel, turned around and forced Israel to give up strategic territory in Gaza.

Do you think Obama is a threat to Israeli and American security? Pray. It's all in G-d's hands.

Do you think Obama is a boon to Israeli and American security? Pray. It's all in G-d's hands.

Can we trust in G-d to watch over us? "Yes, we can!" Can He protect us from whatever adversity may come our way? "Yes, He can!"

G-d tested Abraham and He tests us as well. Sometimes he tests us by making life difficult; sometimes he tests us by making life too easy. Abraham walked with G-d through every experience, and G-d walked with him, through thick and thin. "...*I will make of you a great nation. I will bless you and make your name great, and you will be a blessing.*"

And that promise is one thing that will never change.

Have a great Shabbos.

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