



13 Cheshvan 5784 | October 28, 2023

Lech Lecha: Into the Unknown **Luz Toff, Class of 2025**

Let us remind ourselves of the opening verses of this week's *parsha*:

God said to Abram, "Go forth from your native land and from your father's house to the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you and curse the one who curses you; and all the families of the earth shall bless themselves by you." (Genesis 12:1-3)

In these verses, how many unknowns are there? Where is Abram being sent? Why is he being instructed to go? What about his family? Why should he trust in all of these unknowns and in the rewards promised?

When the movie *Frozen 2* came out in 2019, I recall being captivated by the scene and the lyrics of the song "[Into The Unknown](#)." As I look at these verses at the beginning of this week's *parsha*, I wonder if perhaps this song could be representative, in part at least, of an internal monologue Abram had between these verses of command and the next few indicating fulfillment.

Abram does end up going, but I wonder what we might learn about his deliberation process if we look at three lyrics of the song in conversation with some of the traditional commentaries on these opening verses. For clarity, we will go in order of the verses as opposed to the order of the lyrics in the song.

Firstly, with the opening command in the *parsha*, there is the beginning of the instruction to journey. *Lech lecha*. In the song, Elsa asks if the voice she is hearing in her dream is someone "who knows deep down I'm not where I'm meant to be." Abram's destination isn't specified and God keeps him in suspense. Rashi elucidates that this means that the destination was more beloved in Abram's eyes and also that he was rewarded for every step taken. When we face unknowns in our own lives, sometimes what matters more is where we are exiting from and, other times, it's more

significant where we are going to. In this case, it seems to be that both are significant and there's a balance but Abram needs to leave.

Secondly, Elsa speaks of feeling like her power is growing and that there's a part of her "that longs to go." On the words "and you shall be a blessing," Rashi notes that Abram will have the power to bless whomever he wishes. On the other hand, Ramban interprets this to mean that Abram will be the standard by which others will bless themselves. When there are unknowns, how might we measure the power at play? When might we use someone else as a barometer for our own power and when might others use us?

Thirdly, regarding "I will bless those who bless you": One of Elsa's fears is that "Everyone I've ever loved is here within these walls." This fear of being alone is something that perhaps Abram too feared. On this verse, Chizkuni notes that Abram is being told that he must never think that there are no people that are psychologically close to him and potentially saviours for him, because God loves those who love him. In the affirmative, God knows that there are people who love Abram and he should know that too. The edge of the unknown can be a daunting place, but this reminds us to not feel alone, even if we might be physically alone.

To bring these together and summarize, at the beginning of this week's *parsha*, Abram is at the edge of an unknown, beginning a divinely-directed journey. When we find ourselves embarking on a journey, facing the unknown, perhaps we might take heed of three things:

1. Know where we are going from and where we are going to.
2. Know the power we and others hold in this journey.
3. Know that there are others on this journey with us, even if they aren't physically with us.

We are currently living in a climate where there is so much that is unknown and uncertain. Perhaps by reminding ourselves of these aspects of Abram's journey, we might find some strength and comfort for the road ahead. Shabbat shalom.



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Luz Toff grew up in Oxford, England and has been involved in Limmud UK from a young age. Luz moved to Israel and then London and then back to Israel before pursuing her undergraduate degree in Brighton, England. For the last 6 years, Luz has been sharing a thought on the weekly parsha and how it can be relevant to us in our lives today.