

RaYBaSH's The Weekly Way
Parashah #3, Lech Le'cha: "Go Out"
B'reshit/Genesis: 12:1-17:27
Haftarah: Yesha'yahu/Isaiah 40:27-41:16
Brit Chadasha: Romans 4:1-25, Hebrews 11
By: Rabbi Yehudah ben Shomeyr

Abram (Abraham) from the get go seemed like an alien, out of place in the place of his birth and in his own skin; out of step with the rest of the world and in step with the Almighty. The Scriptural narrative up to this point makes clear that the world was concerned with hedonistic pursuits. However, Abram seemed restless, uninterested in regards to the things of this world; waiting and knowing there's more to like than shallow self-serving interests. Abram seemed to always be looking ahead to the horizon; some people probably thought his head was stuck in the clouds. It appears that in order to produce a peculiar people (Exd. 19:5; Deut. 14:2; 26:18; Psa. 135:4) God chose a peculiar man.

Abram probably today would look like a rich eccentric, by his servants and livestock he was a wealthy man and being a monotheist, he was in the minority and probably stuck out like a sore thumb.

Tough odd in the eyes of the world Abram was no dummy. He had become the trusted patriarch of his clan, adoptive father to his nephew Lot, and a well-known man of wealth and influence to the rulers around him. By this the Torah portion we see he was somewhat of a military strategist as well. Despite all Abram had going for him he understood that he was small and helpless in the big scheme of things and sought supernatural fulfillment which his possessions couldn't give him and a type of help his mind and men could not achieve. He submitted to and covenanted with The One he recognized as the God over all, which showed he looked beyond the veil which hangs over this world and separated us from the next and knew the key to wholeness on every level came from there and The One who ruled over both. This deemed him worthy of a new name. From Abram (High father) to Abraham (Father of a multitude), one letter can make the difference from being a boar to being on board. In this case the Hebrew letter "Hey" was added to his name, a letter attributed to life, which took him from being the father of his clan, to the father of nations of people. This "Hey" was the cure to Abram's sterility and Sari's infertility. No wonder Abraham is a man who is attributed to having extraordinary faith.

The Haftarah portion elaborates on this life-giving, restorative power of ADONAI.

Isa. 40:27-31 Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, My way is hid from the LORD, and my judgment is passed over from my God? Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding. He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.

The God who brought definition to the meaning, “father of a multitude.”

Isaiah 41: 1-2 Keep silence before me, O islands; and let the people renew their strength: let them come near; then let them speak: let us come near together to judgment. Who raised up the righteous man from the east, called him to his foot, gave the nations before him, and made him rule over kings? he gave them as the dust to his sword, and as driven stubble to his bow.

Why? Not by merit, but by choice.

Isa. 41:8-10 But thou, Israel, art my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend. Thou whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, and called thee from the chief men thereof, and said unto thee, Thou art my servant; I have chosen thee, and not cast thee away. Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.

Abraham chose ADONAI above all other gods and thus ADONAI chose Abraham above all other men, and Abraham proved his faith in God by his choices; his actions.

Romans 4:1-3 What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found? For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.

Heb. 11:8-12 By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised. Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable.

No wonder the three largest monotheistic faiths attribute Abraham as their founder and father of their followers. May it be that we should be so bold and brazen in our faith and stand for ADONAI. To be such means being different, standing out, going against the grain and marching to the beat of a different drum and drummer, trusting God and sometimes even taking risks. The proof of such faith will be determined by our actions. May it be that we all be faithful to Torah and be worthy of the title, “sons and daughters of Abraham.”

Shabbat Shalom and Shavuah Tov!
-- Rabbi Yehudah