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Please let us add your name here

November Shabbat Service Schedule

Saturday, November 14th

Parshat Chayei Sarah
Birchat HaChodesh Kislev

Saturday, November 21st

Parashat Toldot

Candle Lighting Friday, October 30th 5:32 pm

Saturday, October 31st

Old Whalers Church 9:30
44 Union Street Sag Harbor
Kiddush following services

Torah Reading for Lech Lecha

Annual (Gen. 12:1-17:27): (Etz Hayim, p. 69)
Triennial (Gen. 16:1-17:27): (Etz Hayim, p. 86)
Haftarah: (Etz Hayim, p. 95))

Lech Lecha Musings

Reiterating the promise of the blessing, God uses two metaphors in the same parashah that will be repeated throughout the entire biblical text: "I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth" (13:16) (also used in other verses, the sand of the sea) and "Look towards the heavens and count the stars if you are able to count them." And next He added: "So [numerous] will your descendants be" (15:5).

Although the common denominator of both images –the dust of the earth and the stars of the heavens– give the sense of infinity, they are essentially different: the stars shine in the sky, hard by heaven, while the dust of the earth may be stepped on and trampled on by anyone.

Rashi, the outstanding exegete, refers exactly to this disparity in his commentary regarding one verse in the book of Esther (6:13): "This nation has been compared to the stars and to the dust. When they descend, they descend to the dust, and when they ascend, they ascend to the sky and the stars." To Rashi, metaphors not only refer to the number of descendants but also to their quality potential: ascension or descent. God "guarantees" the multitude; our ascension is up to us. <http://www.ujcl.org/english.html>

Avram is our first Jewish role model not because he accepts the charge to go on a personal journey. No, spiritual seekers of all faiths have been journeying since time immemorial, leaving their homes and seeking out new horizons. Rather, **Avram's journey involves a progression from the personal to the community, from a focus on his own benefit to an inclusive paradigm, one that invites in the stranger that considers the welfare of people beyond himself in his choices.**

<http://www.ujc.org/page.aspx?id=9319>

For Abraham, it's not just a case of going to something new; the parasha is also quite specific about what must be left behind and it's a lot: his country, his birthplace, his land, his father's house -- in short, his home, all that is familiar to him and all that he holds dear. Herein lies the most powerful resistance to change we all have: **to change, to become something different, even if it's something ostensibly better, we have to give up what is known and familiar and move into territory that is unknown and unfamiliar -- vague, ambiguous, uncertain, perhaps exciting, but also frightening.** God is very specific in telling Abraham what's to be left, but very vague in telling Abraham where he's going -- it's "to the place I'll show you." So in my mind this begs the next question: **what enables us to tolerate such ambiguity, to leave what we know to set sail on such uncertain seas?** I find in Abraham's story three things that speak to this question.

The first and perhaps most obvious is the promise of rewards. Here the rewards seem quite lavish: fame, fortune, power, land, legacy, blessings. Which of these things that God promises Abraham would motivate *you* to leave home? Would any of them? Motivation is important. However we define those rewards, they have to be personally meaningful in order to get us off the dime. So again, the question becomes, what motivates you to change your life, to take the risk of leaving the known shore for the place that's not yet seen? We can all name endless ways we'd like to change or think we should change -- that's what new year's resolutions are all about -- but what allows us to actually follow through?

http://leahj.blog-city.com/guest_post_lech_lecha_dvar_torah_by_jill_gardner.htm

Kavanah is the delight of the mitzvah, the pause before one's prayer to gather one's feelings and bring them into the experience. Kavanah is the moment I pause before studying, to see how a page of Talmud makes me closer to G-d. (If I don't see how it makes me closer, maybe I should learn the page again the way Reb Nachman of Breslov suggests--by envisioning it as a prayer.) Slowing down and catching our breath before we do a mitzvah, before we meditate, or before we sing a niggun, helps tune our neshama our soul, to the experience.

Having the right kavanah is something that many of us strive for, but do not always achieve. Many of us would love to feel inspired and connected every time we open a prayerbook, every time we interact with others, but this is easier said than done. The kabbalists and chassidic rebbes offer many techniques that can help us live our lives with more intention, more kavanah, ultimately living a more inspired life.

http://isabellafreedman.org/email/biweeklies/20091028/email.html?utm_campaign=Lech%20Lecha%3A%20Traveling%20more%20deeply%20into%20yourself&utm_medium=Email&utm_source=VerticalResponse&utm_term=Click%20for%20alternate%20version%20of%20this%20email

Who Knew?

In a Talmudic passage (Bava Metzia 163a) that discusses the space that should be left between the lines in a document, the reference is to write the expression Lekh Lekha one on top of the other, since the LAMED is the highest letter of the Hebrew alphabet, and the CHAF SOFIT (final) is the letter that reaches lowest.

<http://www.ujcl.org/english.html>

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Yom Huledet Sameach

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Quote of the Week

"Would you tell me please, which way I ought to go from here?"

That depends a good deal on where you want to get to," said the Cat.

"I don't much care where ..." said Alice.

"Then it doesn't matter which way you go," said the Cat.

– Alice's Adventures in Wonderland – by Lewis Carroll

Shabbat shalom.

Stacy

Stacy Menzer

President

The Conservative Synagogue

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