

## Come on Gators Lech-Lechu — Get Up and GO!

*Parashat Lech-Lecha* begins with the words: "*Vayomer Adonai el-Avram Lech-Lecha*" {"*Then Yah Adonai said to Abram, 'Get going'*" (Gen. 12:1)}. The Hebrew of *Matt. 4:19* reads that *Yeshua* said to them : "*Vayomer Yeshua eleihem lechu*" {"*And He said to them, 'Follow Me'*"} or in everyday language here in North Florida :*You all Lechú*. This is almost an identical construction to Father Abraham's calling. Scripture records Abram's response: "*So Abram went, just as Adonai had spoken to him. Also Lot went with him. (Now Abram was 75 years old when he departed from Haran.)* *Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his nephew, and all their possessions that they had acquired, and the people that they acquired in Haran, and they left to go to the land of Canaan, and they entered the land of Canaan. Abram passed through the land as far as the place of Shechem, as far as Moreh's big tree.*" Similarly, Peter and Andrew's response was immediately they *got themselves out of their boat* and followed Him. *Yeshua* saw Jacob (James) and John, *Zebedee's* sons working with their father and they also "*Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed Him*" (*Matt. 4:22*). The famous University of Florida Gators cheer ends with *Come on Gators get up and GO! So I say to us today: come on Kol Simcha, get up and let's go!* (See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jlx-zfUryE>)

*Lech-Lecha* is a great *Torah* portion. In it we have the first usage of *Lord My God* {*Yah Adonai*} (*Gen. 15:2*); the phrase "*He trusted Adonai and it was credited to him as righteousness (tzedakah)*" (*Gen. 15:6*); a new name for *Yah*: '*El Ro'i*' (*Gen. 16:13*) meaning *Yah Adonai of Vision*. We also have "*The Well of the Living One: Be-er LaChai Ro'i*"; *Yah's* Name *El Shadai*, meaning *the All-Sufficient One (lit. the 'breasted One')* (*Gen. 17:1*); the sign of the Covenant of Circumcision (*LeOt Berit*) – literally *a sign, a mark, a ring* (*Gen. 17:11*); and that Abraham laughed – *VaYitzchak* (*Gen. 17:17*).

According to the great Jewish commentator *Maimonedes (Rambam)* there is a principle in understanding the *Torah's* narrative concerning the Patriarchs: *LeAvot Siman LaBanim Kol Ma She-ira – Whatever happened to the Patriarchs is a portent for their children*. The *Torah* relates at length such incidents (their journeys, digging wells, etc.), because they serve as lessons for the future. Such is Abraham's first stopover in *Shechem*. It turns out later that *Shechem* will be the first place conquered by our Jewish people (see *Gen. 34:25*) hundreds of years before Israel gains full possession of the land. Abraham prayed there: "*I will give this land to your seed.*" *So there he built an altar to Adonai, who had appeared to him*" (*Gen. 12:7*). These prayers are now in place for Jacob's children (*Benei Israel*) who will fight against *Shechem*. The next place mentioned is *Ai*, the first place conquered by Joshua. He intercedes in this place praying at the very site his descendants will be faced with a potential catastrophe because of the sin of *Achan* (*Jos. 7*).

I am persuaded that we have an identical decision to make in our day: Get Going... I have the conviction that the Lord is requiring from you and I an answer to the same identical question posed to our father Abraham – *Lech Lecha Mearetzcha* – literally, *get going out from your familiar*. We must do the same thing today, even today – obey and get out of our comfort zone, get out of that which is familiar, get out of the traditions of our forefathers, even out of the vestiges our *mother country*.

When we consider *Genesis 12:1-3* the order of disengaging is significant (I believe the order of the words in Scripture is divinely inspired). First, he wants us out of our connection to our *homeland* (*Mearetzcha*). America, for all of its good, has also instilled in us a certain degree of rebellion, complacency and resistance to change. Frankly, things in this world have changed. Life demands change and we cannot continue in the same mindset we were last year.

The next level is that of our *kindred* (*Mimoladtecha*), literally, homeland, country of birth, motherland. *Yah Adonai* is not so interested in our kindred – our, allied, germane, similar, related, alike, associated, i.e., *birds of a feather* people. He is interested in giving us a *new lineage*. Lastly, out of our *earthly father's house* (*Mebayit Abicha*), or our immediate family circle. This means that we are to exchange the familiar traditions of our upbringing, and the fond and persistent memories of our youth growing up in our home and trade them for those of His Kingdom.

*Yeshua* was not really seeking large crowds; He wanted disciples (*talmidim*): *“His disciples came to him.”* The job of a disciple was to learn everything that his teacher (master) had to teach. They learned the stories and the lessons that the teacher told. They learned to eat the foods that their teacher ate, and the way their teacher ate them. They learned to keep the *Shabbat* the way their teacher kept *Shabbat* and to practice righteousness (*tzedakah*) the way their teacher practiced it. They learned how to keep (*shomer*) *Yah Adonai's* commands the way their teacher kept them. The disciple's goal was to become like his or her teacher. Thus, it is written for us: *“<sup>40</sup>A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher”* (*Luke 6:40*). When the disciple was fully trained, he eventually became the teacher and passed on the teaching to disciples of his own, which in turn, became teachers and raised more disciples of their own. From the days of Abraham this was the method! *Yeshua* had a goal for his disciples that they would be his witnesses *to the uttermost parts of the world*.

I believe *Yeshua* was the greatest *Torah shomer* in all of Scripture! Let us view his first disciple teaching session and observe the *shomer* extraordinaire at His best. Unlike the world's perception of Bible teaching in our day, we see *Yeshua* doing the *Jewish Rabbi* thing, raising disciples, training them in the *ways of Torah* (*Derech HaTorah*), doing *Naase V'Nishma*, and establishing the Kingdom right now (because The King (*HaMelech*) is here), so that the disciples could indeed start receiving the benefits of the Kingdom (*malchut*). Thoroughly Jewish *Yeshua* is not doing an evangelistic thing – He is doing a thoroughly Jewish thing. He is *“commanding His children after Him to keep derech Adonai by doing tzedakah u'mishpat”* – just like our Father Abraham: *“<sup>19</sup>For I have made myself known to him so that he will command his sons and his household after him to keep the way of Adonai by doing righteousness and justice, so that Adonai may bring upon Abraham what He has spoken about him”* (*Gen. 18:19*).

*Yeshua* calls His disciples the salt of the earth: *“<sup>13</sup>You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt should lose its flavor, how shall it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men. <sup>14</sup>You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. <sup>15</sup>Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a basket. Instead, they put it on a menorah so it gives light to all in the house. <sup>16</sup>In the same way, let your light shine before men so they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven”* (*Matt. 5:13-16*)”. Just like salt adds the flavor to food, we are to add the flavor to the earth. A little bit of salt can make an otherwise bitter taste palatable. We are to be the force for good and righteousness that balances the bitterness and ugliness of the world and all that is evil and wrong and wicked. Salt is used as a preservative. We are to be that which preserves the world – that which repairs/heals the world (*Tikun Olam*). He also tells us that we are the light of the world. One little lamp can dispel a lot of darkness. Just as a lamp on a stand gives light to the whole room, so too we are to be the force that dispels the darkness from the earth. Could it really be so simple? Our saltiness and our light (that we are in danger of losing/concealing and therefore being worthless to the kingdom) are our good deeds, our *tzedakah u'mishpat* (*righteousness and justice*). In Hebrew thought righteousness (*tzedakah*) is always idiomatic for the commandments of *Torah*. If we keep the *Torah*, we will keep our saltiness and our light will shine before men. Are we ready? *Come on Gators, Get Up and Go! Shabbat Shalom!*