PARASHA OF THE WEEK / 03

Lech-Lecha

לך לך

The people we carry forward

24 October 2026 · 13 Cheshvan 5787 · Genesis 12:1-17:27

A new beginning asks us to leave something behind. It also asks what we will take with us. Abram leaves his homeland, later separates from Lot, and still comes to his rescue. Between those departures, the Torah gives us a way to think about moving forward without making another person disposable.

THE JOURNEY THROUGH THE PARSHA

God calls Abram to leave his land and his father's house for a land He will show him, promising descendants and blessing. Abram travels to Canaan with Sarai, Lot, and their household. A famine takes them to Egypt, where Sarai is taken into Pharaoh's house after being presented as Abram's sister. God afflicts Pharaoh's household; Sarai is returned, and they leave Egypt. [2, 7]

Back in Canaan, the herdsmen of Abram and Lot quarrel. Abram proposes that they separate, giving Lot the first choice of land. Lot chooses the Jordan plain and settles near Sodom. When invading kings carry him off, Abram pursues them and brings back Lot, the other captives, and the goods. Melchizedek blesses Abram. Abram declines the king of Sodom's offer of wealth, while protecting his allies' shares. [2]

God promises Abram an heir and descendants as numerous as the stars. In the covenant between the pieces, Abram hears of future oppression and eventual deliverance. Sarai gives her Egyptian servant Hagar to Abram; after conceiving, Hagar flees Sarai's harsh treatment. An angel meets her, tells her to return, and promises descendants. She gives birth to Ishmael. Later, God changes Abram's name to Abraham and Sarai's to Sarah, establishes circumcision as the covenant's sign, and promises Sarah a son, Isaac, through whom the covenant will continue. Ishmael also receives a blessing. Abraham circumcises himself, Ishmael, and the males of his household. [2]

A THOUGHT TO CARRY THROUGH SHABBAT

A departure, and a promise

The story begins with a departure. We can easily imagine its appeal: a person steps beyond familiar expectations and discovers a larger life. Yet the promise that follows is directed outward. Abram is to become a blessing. His journey will be measured partly by what it makes possible for other people. [2]

That makes the dispute with Lot especially interesting. Their possessions have grown, their herdsmen are fighting, and remaining together is becoming difficult. Abram proposes separation while insisting on their kinship. How can he ask Lot to go and still speak of belonging? Is this a generous way to end a relationship, or a way to preserve one? [2]

The promise inside the distance

Rashi hears reassurance within Abram's proposal: wherever Lot settles, Abram will remain close enough to protect and help him. Rashi points ahead to the rescue when Lot is captured. The separation changes their living arrangements; it does not erase Abram's concern. [3]

There is wisdom here for situations much smaller than a quarrel over grazing land. Two relatives may need different ways of working. A grown child may choose a different home. Friends may discover that an arrangement once good for both now makes them resentful. We can be honest about what needs to change while taking care over the way we change it.

An argument often tempts us to settle a second, larger question: what kind of person the other one has always been. An awkward conversation becomes a complete verdict. We collect old disappointments until there seems to be nothing left worth protecting. At that point, even a sensible practical decision can acquire a cruelty it did not need.

Abram's example invites a more demanding conversation. What arrangement would reduce the friction? What responsibility can I still honor? What words would leave this person's dignity intact? These questions do not require us to remain in an unsafe situation. They ask us to notice when ordinary frustration is becoming permission to stop caring.

The difficult part may be allowing the other person to choose. Abram gives Lot room to select his direction. We, too, can offer help without requiring someone to make every decision as we would. A relationship has room to breathe when care can survive a difference in judgment.

A THOUGHT TO CARRY THROUGH SHABBAT

A blessing with somewhere to go

Later, news arrives that Lot has been taken captive. Abram acts. Our editorial reading of this sequence is that his earlier words acquire weight through a later deed. We learn what an offer of continuing care meant when it becomes inconvenient to keep it. [2, 3]

Receiving, so that we can give

Or HaChaim, Rabbi Chaim ben Attar, notices the order of God's promise in Genesis 12:3: blessing comes first to those who will bless Abram. Among his explanations is that this enables their blessing to take effect. [4] In his published lecture text, Rabbi Eli Mansour develops this Sephardic teaching as an invitation to seek the ability to bring blessing to others. [5]

At our table, that can become a question about the things already entrusted to us. Perhaps we have time, experience, a useful introduction, or a calm voice in a tense room. We may be waiting to feel more accomplished before offering any of it. Yet a modest resource can already have a destination: someone who needs precisely that kind of help. This application is ours, rather than a promise that generosity will produce material reward.

When the road is not straight

The journey itself remains difficult. In the published transcript of his video teaching, Reb Yoel Kahn asks why a parsha about spiritual ascent includes Abram's descent to Egypt. His Chabad reading understands that descent as part of a larger ascent. [6] It is a religious interpretation of the journey, not a timetable for the end of anyone's suffering.

For us, a practical question follows: while a hoped-for future is still uncertain, what kind of person can I be here? We may not yet know where a move, a disappointment, or a changed relationship will lead. We can still choose how we speak, whose difficulty we notice, and which commitment we keep this week. A journey can have moral direction before its outcome is clear.

That brings us back to Lot. Abram's life moves onward, but a person from an earlier chapter has not ceased to matter. Perhaps one sign of growth is that our world becomes large enough to hold both a necessary change and a continuing kindness. We can make a new beginning without rewriting everyone behind us as an obstacle.

This Shabbat, think of one person whose path now differs from yours. Is there a good wish you can express honestly, a practical kindness you can offer freely, or simply an old accusation you can stop repeating? The first step may be small. It gives the blessing we hope to receive somewhere to go.

Shabbat shalom.

Let the conversation begin here

Has someone ever given you room to make a different choice and still stayed close? Tell the story, if you wish. What did that person say or do that made the difference? A departure for school, a change at work, or a family decision may bring the question close enough for everyone to enter the conversation.

From there, consider what makes an offer of help feel free of control. How do we stay available without taking over? And which ordinary gift at this table - patience, knowledge, humor, time - could become a blessing for someone in the coming week? Let people answer in their own way; there is room for an unfinished thought.

SOURCES & FURTHER LEARNING

[1] The week's reading
24 October 2026, 13 Cheshvan 5787. Full annual reading agrees in Israel and the Diaspora.
Hebcal · Lech-Lecha 5787

[2] Torah: Genesis 12:1-17:27
Call: 12:1-3; separation: 13:5-12; rescue: 14:12-24; covenants: chapters 15 and 17.
Sefaria · Genesis 12:1-17:27

[3] Rashi on Genesis 13:9:1
Abram's continued protection of Lot, connected explicitly to the rescue in 14:14.
Sefaria · Rashi on Genesis 13:9:1

[4] Or HaChaim on Genesis 12:3:2
Rabbi Chaim ben Attar's explanation of blessing those who bless Abram.
Sefaria · Or HaChaim on Genesis 12:3:2

[5] Rabbi Eli Mansour · 14 Oct 2021
Receiving the Power to Bless. Publisher's written lecture text, alongside the audio recording.
iTorah · Lecture text and recording

[6] Reb Yoel Kahn · 26 Oct 2023
Published English transcript accompanying the video. Further study: Likkutei Sichot, vol. 5, pp. 57-63.
Anash.org · Video and English transcript

[7] Chabad · Torah with Rashi
Full reading and commentary, also used to check the narrative overview.
Chabad · Full reading with Rashi

Reb Yoel Kahn · YouTube video

Original editorial letter. Contemporary teachings are paraphrased from published lecture text and video transcript; the recordings were not independently transcribed. Personal applications are editorial reflections. Sources checked 18 October 2026. English and Spanish develop the same argument.

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