

Torah Weekly

ד'תש"פ

PARSHAT Lech Lecha

October 18-24, 2026

Cheshvan 7-13, 5787

Torah Reading

Lech Lecha: Genesis 12:1 - 17:27

Isaia 40:27 - 41:16

Calendars

We have Jewish Calendars. If you would like one, please send us a letter and we will send you one, or ask the Rabbi/Chaplain to contact us.

Family Programs

Do you have family on the outside struggling? Please contact or have them contact our office to learn more about our family programs. You and they are not alone, we are here to help.

Grape Juice & Matzah

We offer free Grape Juice and Matzoh for you to be able to make the blessings every Shabbos. Please have your chaplain / Rabbi contact us to enroll (available to all prisons).

Color Me Skeptical

When an earth-shattering miracle occurs, it indeed is easy to believe. After all, if you see the sea split, or water turn to blood, how can you *not* believe in G-d? Even when it's not an outright supernatural occurrence, when G-d's hand is clear, it's clear—and it's easy to believe in the moment. When a loved one is deathly ill, all the doctors have given up hope, and then suddenly they make a miraculous turnaround, all the "color me skeptical" people come running back saying, "You were right! I believe now!"

But the reality is that such "belief" isn't really belief at all. It's simple fact, observable truth. "Seeing is believing" is one of those clichés that sound good, but isn't true. If you *see* it, you don't need to *believe* it. It just is.

Do you need to believe that the sun rises in the morning? Do you believe you're alive? Do you believe ice cream tastes good?

Of course not. You know these things are cold, hard, delicious truths. Belief begins when skepticism is a viable option. When you witness a medical miracle once, you're blown away and run to *shul* and pray like Moses. But when you start working in the hospital and witness such miracles over and over again (thank G-d!), it's no longer as convincing. It's just "science" and "statistics" or whatever other banal explanation people so readily come up with.

When you choose to believe despite the viable, easy, and rational justifications, then you're a *true* believer. When you choose to look under the hood of familiarity and see the incognito hand of G-d, then you *really* believe.

So when G-d performed a miracle for the kings and those who witnessed it chose to believe that what occurred to Abraham was also a miracle from G-d, it made them *true* believers—more so than in the past when it was more clearly an act of G-d.

Aharon Loschak

Keep On Trucking

This week's Torah reading details the difficult journeys of Abraham, the first Jew. Abraham travels from his homeland to Israel and immediately a nasty famine breaks out. Was it his fault? Not really. Was it bad PR? Definitely. New Guy shows up in a country, screaming about the oneness of G-d, and crisis strikes.

Abraham leaves the famine, runs to Egypt, and Sarah, his lovely wife, is abducted. Good times.

The name of the Torah portion is the "theme" of that portion. The name of the tough-luck Torah portion which recounts this story is "*Lech Lecha*." In its most literal sense it means, "Go to yourself." It is a command to Abraham, the first Jew, and the rest of us as well.

"*Lech Lecha*" entails an inner journey to discover one's essence, and to integrate that essence into our life and environment. It is a message of inner discovery that leads to movement in a positive direction.

The title of the Torah portion (the supposed theme of the entire portion) is one of forward mobility toward spiritual achievement and G-dly revelation, while the content of the portion seem decidedly negative and uninspiring. How do we reconcile the contradiction?

The journey of life is like a car that moves forward but never stays on level ground. We ride up mountains and into deep valleys. Life is similar. The objective is to see the opportunity for growth at every twist in the road, and keep on trucking.

On rare days, we coast along at the top of our game. We cruise the peaks of personal and spiritual fulfillment. Our role and place in the universe is apparent and we feel satisfied.

On the bad days, we careen out of control and into a valley of personal problems and issues. Our desire to "keep on keeping on" falters.

On most days, we sit in traffic and question if we are moving at all. The lesson of *Lech Lecha* offers hope and support to those traveling through the ups and downs of life. We must recognize that the goal is forward movement. Hence, even a self-imposed pitiful state of being is a step forward in the journey. Just as Abraham needed to go to Egypt (in order to leave with great wealth), so, too, G-d needs us to be where we are.

Although we should seek to correct the root cause of a particular downward spiral, we must also view the resulting situation as a Divine opportunity. We should not lose hope but rather pick up the pieces and continue forward.

Simcha Levenberg

Do the (Spiritual) Math

Math (if they even call it that anymore in school) was always my worst subject. Yet when I am trying to make sense of a situation, understand someone's behavior, or best predict an outcome, I will use that expression: Do the math. Whether this is true or not, to

Sacred material please do not desecrate

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me mathematics represents reality as it is—without distorted perception, wishful thinking or resistance to what merely is.

Nevertheless, there is another way of looking at numbers. Maybe one of the lessons of *Lech Lecha* is to learn a new type of math, “spiritual math.” Sometimes, we measure our success in any of our endeavors based on mere numbers, but what about looking beyond the numbers to the contribution and impact we may make? And how about our own experience and growth throughout the process? We think of capital in terms of money only, but what if we expanded it to encompass social capital, relationship capital and spiritual capital? Isn’t that what counting our blessings is all about?

Lech Lecha is the command by G-d to Abraham to go from his “country,” his “place of birth” and “his father’s house.” These places are not just geographical but psychological: They represent the influences and biases of our society, cultures and the times our nature, our inherited genes, our dispositions and our family of origin. While the debate has raged for decades over which is stronger—nurture or nature—either side of this argument buys into control being exerted by an external force or circumstance outside of one’s control, and thus, a limitation.

In the city of Ur Kasdim, Abraham and Sarah were extremely wealthy and influential, successful by anyone’s math. Abraham and Sarah left their material comforts to go to a land that G-d showed them—and it didn’t flow with milk and honey. It was desolate. There was severe famine, and they had to set out for Egypt. *Lech Lecha*, however, set into motion the chain of events that changed not just the lives of Abraham and Sarah, but the entire course of human history.

The journey of actualization is to break free of limitations. But we are not alone. What Abraham and Sarah taught us is that each of us has a direct and intimate relationship with our Creator. Alone, we are limited. Connected to G-d—and to each other—we are transcendent. To follow in the footsteps of Abraham and Sarah doesn’t mean leaving behind the places and people we love or give up our comforts or way of life. It does expect, however, that we should be willing to re-evaluate our assumptions, our priorities. When it comes to our society, culture and times, can we break free of the blame and finger-pointing, and be ethical, kind and responsible citizens and members of our communities?

Are we willing to re-narrate our victim stories with compassion for those who have hurt us? As we look to our inner circle, what do we consider to be our precious commodities, and what do we devalue? What do we give freely, and what do we hoard? Are we squandering thousands of life hours for no return? Are we wisely investing our social, relationship and spiritual capital?

Lech Lecha is about charting the spiritual trajectory of our lives. For G-d’s sake, do the math.

Hanna Perlberger

IN JEWISH HISTORY

Sunday, October 18, 2026
7 Cheshvan, 5787

Last Jew comes home (2nd Temple Era)

During the Second Temple Era (circa 230 BCE), Cheshvan 7 was the date on which the Jew most distant from the Holy Temple -- who resided on the banks of the Euphrates River, a 15-day journey's distance from Jerusalem -- arrived at his homestead upon returning from the Sukkot pilgrimage. All Jews would wait for this before beginning to pray for rain. Cheshvan 7 thus marked the return to everyday activities following the spirituality of the festival-rich month of Tishrei.

Monday, October 19, 2026
8 Cheshvan, 5787

Passing of R. Jonah of Gerona (1263)

R. Jonah was a thirteenth-century scholar who lived in Spain. Although originally opposed to Maimonides philosophical works (most notably, his *Guide to the Perplexed*), he later changed his views and even vowed to travel to Maimonides’ gravesite to posthumously beg for forgiveness. (He indeed began the long journey but passed away before completing it.)

R. Jonah authored *Shaarei Teshuvah* (an ethical work on repentance), a commentary on R. Isaac Al-Fasi’s halachic compendium, and a commentary on *Ethics of the Fathers*, among other works.

Tuesday, October 20, 2026
9 Cheshvan, 5787

Passing of Rosh (1327)

The life and influence of Rabbi Asher ben Yechiel, known by the acronym "Rosh", straddled the two great spheres of the Jewish diaspora of his time, the Ashkenazic (Franco-German) and the Sephardic (Spanish-Mediterranean) communities. Born approximately 1250 in Western Germany, Rabbi Asher studied under the famed Tosaphist Rabbi Meir of Rothenburg, fathered eight sons, and authored one of the earliest codifications of Jewish law. In mid-life he fled the persecutions of medieval Christian Europe, settling in Spain where Jews prospered materially and Jewish learning flourished in the Spanish Golden Age.

Wednesday, October 21, 2026
10 Cheshvan, 5787

Birth of Gad

Gad, the son of Jacob and Zilpa, seventh of the Twelve Tribes, was born on the 10th of Cheshvan. He lived to be 125 years old.

Thursday, October 22, 2026
11 Cheshvan, 5787

Passing of Methuselah (2105 BCE)

Methuselah, the longest-lived human being of all time, died at the age of 969 years on the 11th of Cheshvan of the year 1656 from creation (2105 BCE) -- exactly seven days before the beginning of the Great Flood. Methuselah was Adam's great-great-great-great-grandson and Noah's grandfather.

Friday, October 23, 2026
12 Cheshvan, 5787

Yitzhak Rabin (1995)

Yitzhak Rabin, Commander-in-Chief of the IDF during the Six Day War and later Prime Minister of Israel, was assassinated on this date in 5756 (1995).