

### Lighting Our Travels Ahead

This past month saw an election of historic proportions. Since the election occurred in the same week as the Torah portion, *Lekh Lekha*, I found myself looking for the connections. Granted, I am a Rabbi; it will be no surprise to you then that I have always found that the Torah has an uncanny ability to bring clarity to the major and minor tribulations we face each day. The confluence of this exceptionally rich Torah portion and such a momentous time in our history – from the election to the economic uncertainty we face to the realigning international schematic as well as the major challenges facing us on the fronts of education, energy, and generally speaking, “people management,” cannot be ignored.

Let's face it: For good or for bad, with or without the election's results, our nation, the Jewish people, are heading to places unknown. In the Torah, Avram was guided by an unknown voice, an unknown God, to a land he did not know, to a future that he could not imagine.

So, perhaps, it is with us. We have a new President who favors a new direction for our country, one he and many others believe is designed to heal our nation on many fronts. If we consider, especially given the jobs numbers that came out recently (with a quarter of a million Americans losing their jobs in a single month – October), that our nation is ill, the intent is to provide some medicine and a healing touch to the patient. Of course, in our Torah, it is the world that was ill, and it was through God reaching out to Avram that he and it were healed.

As I have said, no worldly official is God and even fewer can be considered prophets, but perhaps we can speak to and learn from Avram's experience. When facing the unknown, Avram didn't do so with incessant worries or an empty faith in his unfolding future. Instead, Avram did what was necessary to face his future with courage and conviction. This was the brilliance in the brief words echoed in recent weeks regarding our currently unfolding economic crisis: "There is," as Avram easily could have said, as well, "nothing to fear but fear itself." In a world we construct to reflect meaningful community, none of us is alone. We all share in the suffering and in the healing. In Avram's courage we find our own, in his thoughtful faith we find our own, and in his diligence and sense of purpose we find our own.

On this fact we can all agree: The many exceptional challenges facing our world have yet to complete their assault on our lives. But, as when God commanded Avram to go to a place he knew not, we take comfort in knowing that our destination will be a better life, a better place, and a better future than where we are today. Our future may lie in a place we know not, but we do know it is no longer in the world of waste, of carelessness, and of disconnectedness that have been, to varying degrees, the bricks from which our world has been built.

Indeed, change is coming. Regardless of who would have been chosen to lead us, this probably would have been, to varying degrees, still true. It is my hope that we remember that those who lead our nation can only hold up a lantern by which we see the path ahead, but it is each of us who must choose which path to tread.

May we choose well and remember that we are not alone in our sojourning to a new nation, to a new life, to a new self. As God enticed Avram with the image of the greatness of his descendants, so let us imagine that the fruit of our facing our fears and of our traveling to a place we know not will yield a better life for our descendants.

May our Hanukkah celebration remind us that God's light brings comfort even in the darkest of times. And so we pray: May God help us, guide us, and protect us along the way ahead.

*B'Or v'Ed LaShem* (In Light and Bearing Witness to God),  
Rabbi Gerald R. Fox

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