

# *Journey into the Unknown*

Drash on Parashah 3; Lech Lecha

By Oriyan (aka Kevin Phipps)

*Now Adonai said to Avram, "Get yourself out of your country, away from your kinsmen and away from your father's house, and go to the land that I will show you."  
[Bereshheet/Genesis 12:1]*

In the days of Avram, Ur was a center of religion and commerce in the Mesopotamian world. It was the central city of the primary lunar god at the time Sin, and a ziggurat still stands today to mark the spot of this ancient city. From Ur, Avram's father, Terach, brought the household, including Lot, Avram's nephew and Sarai, Avram's wife to Haran (Charan), another center for the worship of Sin. There was a temple there called, *E-khul-khul* "the house of joys." This southern Turkish city was also a center of commerce. This ought to tell you a few things about the culture Avram grew up in. He would have had access to knowledge of all kinds, from agriculture, business, and religion. Avram was no hick.

It was while living in Haran that God comes to Avram, whose spiritual connection to God prior to that time is unknown. The fact that his family kept to the centers of the worship of Sin, would indicate that Avram would have followed in their footsteps. Here we see even more the grace that God showed in revealing Himself to this gentile man and promising to make him into a great nation, which would bless the whole earth. It also shows that when God personally visits and speaks to a man, regardless of his previous religious beliefs and practices, He has a way of being very convincing.

God not only proved Himself to be at least a god worth paying attention to, but did so to the degree that Avram was willing to leave his family, his livelihood, his home, everything which was familiar and comfortable to him to go on the journey with his wife to a destination unknown. While we applaud Avram for his great faith in doing this, let's not forget about Sarai. As much faith as Avram had in God, was doubled by the loyalty Sarai had in her husband by following him. He spoke with God, she did not.

We see this kind of blind faith in other places in the Bible, all the way to the New Covenant. Take a look at the calling of Yeshua's disciples or talmidim.

*After Yochanan had been arrested, Yeshua came into the Galil proclaiming the Good News from God: "The time has come, God's Kingdom is near! Turn to God from your sins and believe the Good News!" As he walked beside Lake Kinneret, he saw Shim'on and Andrew, Shim'on's brother, casting a net into the lake; for they were fishermen. Yeshua said to them, "Come, follow me, and I will make you into fishers for men!" At once they left their nets and followed him. Going on a little farther, he saw Ya'akov Ben-Zavdai and Yochanan, his brother, in their boat, repairing their nets. Immediately he called them, and they left their father Zavdai in the boat*

*with the hired men and went after Yeshua. They entered K'far-Nachum, and on Shabbat Yeshua went into the synagogue and began teaching. [Mark 1:14-21]*

These men also had jobs and families, and Yeshua calls these men out of their life of comfortability into a life of the unknown. He simply says, "Follow me", and they drop everything and do exactly what He commands. We see why at the end of the passage. Yeshua was an established rabbi, teaching regularly in the synagogues. His invitation was an invitation to be something and do something better than what they were. In both Avram and the talmidim, the lure was hope.

In Hebrew, hope is *tikveh*. The letters are tav, kuf, vav, het. The word pictures show hope to be a sign which is something at the end which is secure, but which God will reveal to you. You may not know what it is, or how it will come about, but God gives you enough of what you need, by way of faith, to keep you moving forward toward the goodness He has Promised.

*Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. [Messianic Jews/Hebrews 11:1 (KJV)]*

Faith and hope are intertwined. Hope is the light at the end of the tunnel, but faith encompasses the actions we take to get there. Faith gives us further evidence of what God has promised us, which adds to our hope.

We see from Avram's journey that getting to the hope God set before him was not going to be easy. There would be trials and tribulations along the way, but each one would teach him and those who would come after him more about the truth and goodness of the God they were following. Let's take a look at a journey that one of God's greatest prophets took.

*Ach'av told Izevel everything Eliyahu had done and how he had put all the prophets to the sword. Then Izevel sent a messenger to say to Eliyahu, "May the gods do terrible things to me and worse ones besides if by this time tomorrow I haven't taken your life, just as you took theirs!" On seeing that, he got up and fled for his life. When he arrived in Be'er-Sheva, in Y'hudah, he left his servant there; but he himself went a day farther into the desert, until he came to a broom tree. He sat down under it and prayed for his own death. "Enough!" he said. "Now, Adonai, take my life. I'm no better than my ancestors." Then he lay down under the broom tree and went to sleep. Suddenly, an angel touched him and said to him, "Get up and eat!" He looked, and there by his head was a cake baked on the hot stones and a jug of water. He ate and drank, then lay down again. The angel came again, a second time, touched him and said, "Get up and eat, or the journey will be too much for you." He got up, ate and drank, and, on the strength of that meal, traveled forty days and nights until he reached Horev the mountain of God. There he went into a cave and spent the night. Then the word of Adonai came to him; he said to him, "What are you doing here, Eliyahu?" He answered, "I have been very zealous for Adonai the God of armies, because the people of Isra'el have abandoned your covenant, broken down your altars and killed your prophets with the sword. Now I'm the only one left, and they're coming after me to kill me too." He said, "Go outside,*

*and stand on the mountain before Adonai"; and right then and there, Adonai went past. A mighty blast of wind tore the mountains apart and broke the rocks in pieces before Adonai, but Adonai was not in the wind. After the wind came an earthquake, but Adonai was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake, fire broke out; but Adonai was not in the fire. And after the fire came a quiet, subdued voice. When Eliyahu heard it, he covered his face with his cloak, stepped out and stood at the entrance to the cave. Then a voice came to him and said, "What are you doing here, Eliyahu?" He answered, "I have been very zealous for Adonai the God of armies; because the people of Isra'el have abandoned your covenant, broken down your altars and killed your prophets with the sword. Now I'm the only one left, and they're after me to kill me too." Adonai said to him, "Go back by way of the Dammesek Desert. When you get there, anoint Haza'el to be king over Aram. [M'lakhim Alef/1Kings 19:1-15]*

To the casual observer, this passage is a bit confusing. For the Torah excavator willing to dig a little deeper, however, the passage is still a bit perplexing. There may be multiple ways of understanding these verses, but here is how I understand them. This great prophet of God is on the run, and scared for his life, despite the great display of faith earlier with the prophets of Ba'al. The angel of the Lord makes provision to allow him to go to the place he sees as a refuge. Then Eliyahu is asked a rhetorical question. "Why are you here?" God knew why he was there, but wanted Eliyahu to admit why he was there rather than relying on God to be his refuge. Rather than responding verbally to Eliyahu's fears, he shows him a vision of great and horrifying natural events. This was a similar situation to Iyov/Job, but God did respond verbally. God showed Eliyahu that in the great, dramatic, death threatening events he experienced God was not there. However, in the midst of all that, if he listened for a much more subdued, quiet voice, that would be where he would find God. In finding God, he would find refuge and strength. After showing him this, God asks a second time, "Why are you here." Eliyahu gives the same response, showing that he had not yet understood what God was teaching him. Again, God does not respond, but simply gives him a new mission, which would send him back to danger. Soon enough, Eliyahu would understand the truth in the vision. What is ironic is that despite his fears, Eliyahu was a prophet that not only was never killed, but never died at all.

*Your word is a lamp for my foot and light on my path. [Tehellim/Psalms 119:105]*

God has a journey for each of us. It is not an easy journey, and the surroundings are very dark. Faith keeps us moving forward to the hope that is within us, however knowing where and how to take the next step is the challenge. This is where the Word of God comes in. Torah teaches us how to get to the Kingdom and how to live when we get there. As we follow Torah and commune with God in prayer, He communicates to us His will. It is in the quietness of the sanctuary we build in the chaos of our lives where we find God. He is not in the troubles, but protects us either from them or in the midst of them.

*I will follow the path of integrity; when will you come to me? I will run my life with a sincere heart inside my own house. [Tehellim/Psalms 101:2]*

Avram travelled from Haran, where the “house of joy” was found, to the land of Kena’an, where Avram first camped in Beit-El, “the house of God”. As we leave the comforts of our world behind to seek first the Kingdom of God, we may not know exactly what we will find when we get there, but we too, will be able to rest in the house of God.

In troubled times, we may lose many things, but one thing nobody or nothing can take from us is the hope that lies within us. There are many unknowns in our service to the King, but that which is hidden from us is in full view and control of the One we serve. What we do not understand does not need to be understood, or He would reveal it to us. We must maintain our faith in our Shepherd who will lead us through the dark valleys and give us rest in His holy mountain.

*My adversaries' taunts make me feel as if my bones were crushed, as they ask me all day long, 'Where is your God?' " My soul, why are you so downcast? Why are you groaning inside me? Hope in God, since I will praise him again for being my Savior and God. [Tehellim/Psalm 42:11]*