



**#3 Lech Lecha Genesis 12:1-17:27
Torah Teaching 2022
by Moshe Schwab**

Keep God's commandments and live upright with focus.

I have a pair of binoculars and in order to use them properly, I have to use the knob in the middle to make what I am seeing clear. Recently, I was trying to see a cluster of stars with them and without adjusting them, the stars looked like a smudge of light in the sky, but when I got them in focus, wow, the cluster of stars was amazing.

Living out our lives without being deliberate in how we act and keep God's commandments is like going through life without focus. That is why it tells us in the book of Hebrews that we need to learn how to apply God's commandments. Hebrews 5:14 NKJV says, "But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." The best way to learn is to just start keeping God's commandments and we learn from keeping them.

For example, when we begin to do some work on Shabbat, we stop as soon as we realize that we are doing that. In that way, we form the habit of not working on Shabbat. Some commandments take more thought because they can be applied in several different ways. Leviticus 19:18 NKJV says, You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD."

Vengeance can take on different forms. We can hold onto anger, perhaps we treat the other person with contempt, we can be uncaring about the other person, we might make fun of them around others or say bad things about them behind their back. Of course, the worse kinds of vengeance can be detected in our actions toward the other person. How could you change how you treat those with whom you are angry?

Shaul talks about Leviticus 19:18 in Ephesians. Ephesians 4:31-32 NKJV says, "Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you." The New Testament portion has many helpful applications of the Torah in it. The second part of the verse in Leviticus tells us to love others as yourself. Begin to apply that in your relationships and learn ways to treat others right. Start with your family. Be mindful about what you do. Think of how you can be kind, considerate, and tender towards them.

No matter where we are or what we do, we can stay motivated spiritually.

I remember needing directions once and stopped to get directions. I was immediately aware that I was in a potentially dangerous situation. I did not want to call attention to myself, so I asked someone for help and immediately left. I thought about leaving right away, but God

gave me the courage to find out what I needed to know. I thank you Yěhōváh for all the times you have helped me through all the situations in life. God is always with us, so ask for His help. Psalms 145:18-20 NKJV says, "The LORD is near to all who call upon Him, to all who call upon Him in truth. He will fulfill the desire of those who fear Him; He also will hear their cry and save them. The LORD preserves all who love Him." Have a deep respect for God and pray to him. Keep God in your thoughts during the day.

Not only be strong spiritually, but be doubly strong.

As soon as you realize that you are doing something wrong, stop and change what you are doing or how you are doing something. Be totally committed to doing what is right. If what you have done involves someone else, you should say you are sorry and ask them to forgive you. In either case, when we sin we are accountable to God and you must also ask God to forgive you.

The best way to stay strong is to make every effort in the first place to think and do what is right. I had a godly friend who used to pause at times before he did something or said something. Take a moment to think and resist what is wrong and do what is right. You cannot always resolve situations that involve others because they must also have the same godly attitudes you, but you can make sure that you do what is right. Psalms 34:11-14 NKJV says, "I will teach you the fear of the LORD. Who is the man who desires life, and loves many days, that he may see good? Keep your tongue from evil, and your lips from speaking deceit. Depart from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it."

Always keep growing no matter what.

Everything in life is an opportunity to do what is right and bring goodness. If we are working, we can do a great job. If we are working with others, we can be the best worker and kind encourager. We can be the best father, mother, son, or daughter. Each of our efforts requires thoughtful attention and we need to practice life and form good habits.

Psalms 92:12-15 NKJV

The righteous shall flourish like a palm tree, He shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Those who are planted in the house of the LORD shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bear fruit in old age; they shall be fresh and flourishing, to declare that the LORD is upright; He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in Him.

Those who do what is right will flourish, bring good, and grow strong. Be rooted in God and even in old age, you will have joy. Yěhōváh our God does what is right and He is our Rock who can be trusted; He does nothing that is wrong. We can trust in Him and His word.

Torah Study

Lech Lecha means, "go forth yourself." The portion Lech Lecha begins with God telling Abram to leave Haran when he was 75 years old to go to the land that He would show Him; God would give the land of Canaan to his descendants. God has not yet changed Abram's name to Abraham. In the last portion, Abram leaves Ur with his wife Sarai and his cousin Lot and his father Terach. The Jewish writings tell us that Abram resisted idolatry and believed in the one

true God. The book of Jasher says he was raised for awhile with his believing relatives from the house of Noah. Noah supposedly died just before Abraham was born, but some writings say Noah was still alive.

God's protection would be with Abram and God would bless the whole earth through Abram. Through Israel and God's believers, God has blessed the earth. The world has received evident witness of this blessing. The most prestigious award for contributions to the world is known as the Nobel Prize. Of the some 900 Nobel Prizes awarded since 1901, about 261 of those were given to Jews as of this writing.¹ At present, the approximate Jewish population is about .2% of the world population. So, some 29% of significant contributions to the world were given by a people group who represent an extremely small percentage of the world population. This is additional proof that the blessing given to Abraham has blessed the world. But let's not forget about the greatest Jew of all time, Yeshua Messiah.

*The entire world has witnessed the blessing given by God to Abraham.
It should lead people to accept the true God.*

Yeshua backed up who He is and did amazing things. Yochanan said, "And there are also many other things that Jesus did, which if they were written one by one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written;" John 21:25 NKJV. Matthew 8:16 NKJV says, "When evening had come, they brought to Him many who were demon-possessed. And He cast out the spirits with a word, and **healed all** who were sick." Yeshua demonstrated who He is. Yeshua also gave Himself for our sins.

The Bible says no one could do that without Yeshua allowing that (John 19:11). Yeshua did not become God. The Messiah is also God, Yud-Hey-Vav-Hey. Jeremiah 23:5-6 CJB says, "The days are coming," says ADONAI when I will raise a righteous Branch for David. He will reign as king and succeed, he will do what is just and right in the land. In his days Y'hudah will be saved, Isra'el will live in safety, and the name given to him will be ADONAI Tzidkenu [ADONAI our righteousness]. The word ADONAI is the exclusive name for God.

The Messiah is God. He was God who came as a man and is a fulfillment of the promise given to Adam and Eve earlier in Genesis 3:15 NKJV. The devil, "shall bruise His heel" refers to the suffering of the Messiah. The Messiah will, "shall bruise your head" refers to the victory over the devil through the Messiah.

God planned that the Messiah would give Himself. "All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all;" Isaiah 53:6 NKJV. Yeshua did not stay dead, but rose from the dead (Psalm 16:8-11). Yeshua is that Faithful One who rose from the dead. Some 500 people saw Him at the same time after He rose from the dead (1 Corinthians 15:3-6). Yeshua is now waiting for the end of times when He will return and reign as it says in Jeremiah.

We are to repent, accept Yeshua as the Messiah and receive the helper, the Holy Spirit that the Messiah has provided for us. Acts 2:38 says, "Repent, and let every one of you be

¹https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Jewish_Nobel_laureates

baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." Abraham also blessed the world with the Messiah!

After Abram gets to Canaan he goes to Egypt during a famine and tells Sarai to pretend to be his sister because he is afraid for his life. Pharaoh gives gifts to Abram for Sarai to be his wife, but after some plagues in Pharaoh's house, Pharaoh finds out that Sarai is Abram's wife and he sends him away with gifts. After they get back to Canaan, Abram becomes wealthy and there was some quarreling between Abram's and Lot's herdsmen. Lot goes off to the east to live, but he finds out that the men of Sodom are very evil. Lot went off to the east instead of staying with Abram, the person that God chose to bless the earth. There is a lesson in this. We should try to work things out with others. Also, Abram was chosen by God and we should honor and respect those that God chose to lead us.

God instructs Abram to walk through the land that God was giving him. Then, Lot and his family get taken away as war booty. Abram rescues Lot and as Abram returns, Melchizedek meets Abram, and Abram gives him 10% of the war booty and they have bread and wine together. According to the Jewish writings, Melchizedek is Shem – Abram's 7th great grandfather. Melchizedek means King of Righteousness; he was king of Salem which later became Jerusalem. Melchizedek, Shem, worshiped El Elyon, God most high. He had a prophetic school there. They probably knew each other from Abram's stay in the house of Noah. Shem blesses Abram. Abraham spends time learning about God from Shem when he gets to Canaan according to the ancient writings. They both most likely left Chaldee because of the unrighteous king Nimrod.

After this, God again promises Abram that he would have many descendants, tells him about their enslavement in Egypt, and tells him that that his descendants will inherit Canaan. After sunset God makes a covenant with Abram and gives him the specific territory boundaries of the land He was giving Him. Abram still does not have children, so Sarai gives him her servant. Abram has a child by Hagar when he was 86 and they name him Yishma'el.

We should note that God intended people to marry and have children and not to be driven by desire. The Bible says that sexual relations outside of a man and a woman in marriage is wrong. Revelation 21:8 NKJV says, "But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone."

When Abram is ninety-nine years old, God tells Abram to walk in His presence and have a pure heart. God changes Abram's name to Abraham and reaffirms an everlasting covenant with him. Abram means exalted father and Abraham means father of multitudes. God tells him that circumcision was to be a sign to Abraham and his descendants of God's eternal covenant.

Some say that circumcision is only a Jewish commandment, but it was meant for all believers. Shaul (Paul) teaches circumcision, "I still preach circumcision, why do I still suffer persecution?" Galatians 5:11 NKJV. Let me explain what is going on in the New Testament portion. The Torah teaches us to save lives; also, Yeshua taught us we are to save lives and

in Luke 14:5 NKJV He says, "Which of you, having a donkey or an ox that has fallen into a pit, will not immediately pull him out on the Sabbath day?" Yeshua is quoting the Old Testament portion (see Deuteronomy 22:4). Saving a life supersedes a commandment in the Torah. It is okay to break a commandment to save a life. Be careful with this concept. Some people make up excuses not to keep the Torah and that is a sin.

Since adult circumcision is dangerous, it should not be done according to the Torah. **Some were disobeying the Torah** and saying adults must be circumcised. They were putting peoples' lives in jeopardy by requiring adult circumcision. That is the reason for the tension involving circumcision in the New Testament portion. Gentiles were accepting the Messiah and they were being wrongly told by some to be circumcised. We see references to this in Shaul's letters and since some do not understand the Jewish context, they teach wrong doctrine. Circumcising babies is still to be done according to Shaul; it is a sign for believers. He taught circumcision. Also, the Holy Spirit is a sign for believers in the Messiah Yeshua in this present age.

God changes Sarai's name to Sarah and God says he will bless her and make her the mother of nations. Sarai means princess and Sarah means noblewoman. God tells Abraham that his son Yishma'el will have twelve sons, but Isaac will be heir to God's covenant. The portion ends with Abraham having all the men in his household circumcised.

Of particular note in this portion, God tells Abraham to walk in His presence – perhaps this is referring to the time in the Garden when Adam and Eve walked in the presence of God, but we see true believers walking with God. The believers in the past like Noah walked with God. Although believers in the true God no longer lived in the Garden, they could still acknowledge God's presence, live in His presence, and walk with God. New Testament believers often do not understand that the Old Testament believers also could talk to God and God could speak to them. Since many of them do not believe in the Bible properly and its correct context, their wrong circular theology creates a false belief system.

Believers in Yeshua not only have the opportunity to walk in God's presence, but have His presence in them through the gift of the Holy Spirit. This is truly a coveted honor for us. The Holy Spirit is our helper to keep God's commandments and is with us to help us in life. "If you love Me, keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever." John 14:15-16 NKJV. Yeshua said that God's commandments help us, and the Holy Spirit is another helper to help us follow God's commandments and to help us do what is right, in particular, without adding extra made up laws.

Abraham and his family are called "Hebrews." They were not from around there so the people who lived there named them for where they were from, namely Hebrew foreigners. The rabbis made up a meaning (through an acronym of the word Hebrew). They say the word Hebrew means those who have crossed over. Some mistakenly think that the word Hebraic has a better meaning than the word Jew. The word "Jew" comes from Judah which means praise. What is better? Crossed over from the pagan land of the East or "praise." Shaul says we are to be God's people of praise, not pagans who crossed over from the East. Ephesians

1:14 NKJV says, "Thus bring him praise commensurate with his glory."

The Bible says in Deuteronomy 26:5 that after Passover, we are to declare our humble pagan roots; we were Arameans who came from the east; in other words, our roots were pagan. It is an act of humility. We are to give thanks for the amazing opportunity to be God's people. When we give thanks around the time of Passover, we should consider how good God has been to us. God has given us the opportunity to live right through His commandments and the Holy Spirit that is given through the Messiah Yeshua.

In the Bible, we confess our pagan roots as an act of humility (see Deuteronomy 26:5). We have so much to be thankful for. We could still be living in sin, but thanks be to our God who has delivered us from our pagan roots and made us His people through His commandments and the Messiah Yeshua.

Also, some mistakenly take the Jewish concept of humility out of context and say there is nothing good about us and we are all sinners. Shaul quotes Psalm 14 in Romans 3:23. Psalm 14 is about unbelievers. Psalms 14:4 CJB says, "Don't they ever learn, all those evildoers, who eat up my people as if eating bread and never call on ADONAI?" Shaul uses Psalm 14 in order to produce humility towards God. He wants them to accept the Messiah. Also, in no way are we to live in sin. This is just another example of theology making up man-made doctrine. Remember, idols are also man-made?

Abraham endured many tests to his faith and remained faithful. God's promises to Abraham came as a result of Abraham's faithfulness. We should understand that we too will face testing in life and we should remain strong and faithful towards God. Abraham left his home land because God told him to go the land of Canaan. That required some risk.

He also believed that God would provide a son for him and Sarah even though he had doubts at times. This should remind us to get back on our feet when we fail. We do not stay on the ground and crawl around like a baby. We ask for forgiveness and get back up and stand strong in God's commandments. Deuteronomy 8:2 NKJV says, "And you shall remember that the LORD your God led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you and test you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not." Do not stay down; get up and walk. Show God you will keep His commandments.

The Haftarah for Lech Lecha is Isaiah 40:27-41:16. In Isaiah, just before this portion begins, it talks about how great God is compared to the nations. In Isaiah 40:15 it says, "The nations are like a drop in a bucket, they count like a grain of dust on the scales." CJB. In this portion God asks Israel why they complain; God does not grow weary and His ways cannot be understood. He strengthens the weak; those that hope in Him will be renewed. God is over all and is the victorious God of Israel. He will bring them from the ends of the earth and their enemies will be destroyed. God will help them so Israel will have joy in the Lord.

Isaiah 40:28-29 NKJV says, "Have you not known? Have you not heard? The everlasting God, the LORD, The Creator of the ends of the earth, Neither faints nor is weary. His understanding is unsearchable. He gives power to the weak, And to those who have no might

He increases strength."

Our God gave our father Abraham help, strength, and blessings; and God will help us too. We join in the blessings of Abraham and the believing line through the Messiah Yeshua. Shaul said in Galatians 3:14 NKJV, "That the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus." God can do what He says he will do; after all, He is God. And God will fulfill all that He has promised.

Commandments and Implied Commandments in this Portion

Mankind is not allowed to curse those who follow the true God. They will be cursed for doing so. We should also understand that God will also judge every person at the end of time. Those who mistreat believers will suffer the consequences for eternity. God has blessed Abraham and his believing line and all believers who associate with him. Believers in the Messiah become part of the believing line of God's people. Genesis 12:3, 17:26-27; Luke 17:1-4; Galatians 3:14; Ephesians 2:19

We are to obey God when He speaks to us. Genesis 12:4

We are to protect life. Abraham was concerned for his life, so he lied to protect his life. Genesis 12:11-12; Deuteronomy 22:4

We are to work out things peaceably with others as much as we are able. Genesis 13:8-9

It is okay to protect ourselves and others from murder and greed, especially fellow believers. Genesis 14:14-16

We are to do a blessing with bread and wine. Believers in the Messiah are to do a remembrance ceremony with bread and wine. Genesis 14:18; Matthew 26:26-27

We are allowed to take back our losses from those who illegally took them. Genesis 14:16

We are not to take advantage of others even though we have the power to do so. Genesis 14:22-24

God has given specific land to the believing line of Abraham that was passed down from Isaac to Jacob. It has been given to them for eternity. Genesis 15:18-21, 17:9, 17:21

Believers are to circumcise their children on the eighth day. It is an everlasting agreement, a covenant. Covenant is a word that describes an agreement. It is still valid. Genesis 17:11-13; Galatians 5:11

God will bless our prayers at His discretion. Genesis 17:20