



Becoming a New Person, 2020
(A teaching to accompany the Torah portion Lech Lecha)
by Moshe Schwab

While Praying:

- * Reach for God; start your spiritual journey.
- * Learn how to walk with God to His glory.
- * What is inside us; do we find God at the center of our lives or something else?
- * Make your life clean spiritually; be part of God's righteous people.

Can you imagine being Abraham back in his day and being told to go to a land that he knew little about. Before we go somewhere, we often research where we are going and know what to expect when we get there. I remember the first time I went to Germany. I bought a train pass to get me where I needed to go while I was there, but there was still huge amounts of uncertainty for me. I had to be paged to make connections with my friends in Nuremberg. In Friedrichshafen, I was on the wrong side of the train station and my friends had to come back for me. I can't imagine what Abraham had to do to get where he needed to go. For all things in life, we are on a journey of sorts with lots of unknowns, and it is the same thing for our spiritual journey.

Reach for God; start your spiritual journey.

Perhaps, you've begun a spiritual journey of your own. We all have to start somewhere. Perhaps at one time you said a prayer and that began your spiritual journey. The prayer wasn't the end of your journey; it was only the beginning. A big inning in baseball might be the clincher for a baseball game, but our spiritual lives depend on our continued commitment each and every day.

Our spiritual growth is an intentional and mindful process. It differs for everyone because we are all different. We all must start our journey wherever we are at. Our inner self sees our need for this turning towards God in very different levels of intensity. Beginning the process and continuing this process throughout our lives is important for our continued spiritual growth. Shaul said in Ephesians 4:11-13 NKJV, "And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."

As holy separated ones (saints), our goal is to be perfect. Shaul says a little further on, "Be

imitators of God as dear children and walk in love;" Ephesians 5:1-2 NKJV. God is good and perfect; so we are to set high standards.

Learn how to walk with God to His glory.

We are in the process of returning to our true selves that God created; to the true God who desires a connection and relationship with us. We are making changes in how we live and think. It is God's will that His creation be an honor and glory to Him. Psalms 72:19 NKJV says, "Blessed be His glorious name forever! And let the whole earth be filled with His glory." We are changing from being a person of the world to a new citizenship; to joining those who want to be God's people; to being true children of God who give God the glory by how we live.

We are no longer citizens seeking a dead earthly nature. We are to seek to be a glory to God. "And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world;" Ephesians 2:1-2 NKJV. Shaul then says that we are not aliens to God's promises; we are to live separated holy lives (saints) with God as our Father and King. "Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God;" Ephesians 2:19 NKJV. Seek to be to the glory of God and let nothing else rule us.

What is inside us; do we find God at the center of our lives or something else?

Yeshua tells the spiritual leaders of His time that they look okay on the outside, but on the inside, they don't look so good. Yeshua said, "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness;" Matthew 23:27-28 NKJV.

Is God at the Center of our Lives or Something Else?

The same is true today. People say they are okay and doing well, but they don't live right. They may say they live right, but their values change like the wind so they are no more than hypocrites who look good on the outside like those tombs full of dead men's bones. There is a right way and a wrong way to live. We know that doing certain things brings pain to others and there are destructive actions that bring offense into the world. In contrast there are good ways to live. Good ways bring good into the present. God knows best because He is God; so doing things His way brings the goodness of God into our lives and the world.

We leave our former lives of hypocrisy behind; our lives are turned upside down with a new culture and different view of life and how we are to relate with others. Everything we do then comes out of our new life and we struggle to leave what is worldly and summon strength to move forward to "rebirth;" to being a new person. We die to the old self and become new in Messiah through our faith in Yeshua. In Ephesians 4:22-24 NKJV it says, "That you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was

created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness." We are to make the effort to be a new person.¹

We are to live a life that is truly right; a life set apart holy for our God and King. We seek to live the kingdom life under the authority of the King and we have put off rebellion towards our King.

Make your life clean spiritually; be part of God's righteous people.

Yeshua said the spiritual leaders were unclean spiritually; their inner lives were disgusting; "full of dead man's bones." Yeshua said they practiced lawlessness (*anomia*); they didn't keep the Torah. *Nomia* was the Greek word used by the ancient Rabbis for the Old Testament law. *Anomia* then is to not keep the Old Testament law. Again, there was no New Testament at the time. Not keeping the Torah is disgusting to Yeshua.

Decide you will do things God's way and not your own way.

Instead of doing things your own way, do them God's way. Do what is right; that's what righteousness means. "He who follows righteousness and mercy finds life, righteousness, and honor;" Proverbs 21:21 NKJV. God loves those who live holy lives apart from sin (saints). "For the LORD loves justice, and does not forsake His saints; they are preserved forever;" Psalms 37:28 NKJV. God sees us and our King will hear us. Psalms 34:15 says, "The eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their cry." Seek God and keep His commandments. Do what His word says and don't sin. Psalm 119:10-12 NKJV says, "With my whole heart I have sought You; Oh, let me not wander from Your commandments! Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You. Blessed are You, O LORD! Teach me Your statutes;" Psalms 119:10-12

Every success builds our new direction and gives us reason to continue to pursue change. We are on a journey, a pilgrimage; a new walk or way of life. We are to engage and continue in godly behaviors and keep God's commandments; we continue on in our journey; until the ultimate end of our journey, our walk culminates in the new heaven and earth and the new Jerusalem where God will wipe away all sorrow and He will be our God and King.

Revelation 21:4-5 NKJV says, "'And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.' Then He who sat on the throne said, 'Behold, I make all things new.' And He said to me, 'Write, for these words are true and faithful.'" God is true and faithful, and we will be in the new kingdom if we remain faithful just like Abraham and all those who are faithful towards God. I look forward to meeting Abraham in the future kingdom. Yeshua said, "And I say to you that many will come from east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven;" Matthew 8:11 NKJV.

¹ Some teachers go through a nonsensical theological diatribe on we are no good and can't do what God tells us. Clearly here it says we are responsible to make the effort to do what is right. Watch out for man-made philosophies.