

NEWS**Let's Pray together**

We pray every week for the Jewish Friendship Ministry.

I suggest our partners to pray on October 21 to 27, for Atailles Magalhães, who is the pastor of the Jewish Adventist Friendship Ministry in Manaus, Brazil.

Manaus is an interesting city, capital of Amazon, where a large Jewish population originally from Morocco live.

Let's pray that pastor Atailles Magalhães will continue the good relationships with the Jewish community as his predecessor did.

Article on Jewish-Adventist Friendship in London

The Jewish-Adventist Friendship Ministry in London has published two articles for the British Union Conference Review, which is called "Messenger". The first article is from Dominique Clem, leader of this ministry for the South England Conference, and it is about the Advisory held last July in Atlanta. And the second article was written by Richard Elofer: "Reaching your Jewish Friends." If you are interested to read this articles you can do it at http://adventist.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0005/81698/October-12-2018.pdf

**Jewish-Adventist Friendship European Advisory**

The Inter-European Division of the Seventh-day Adventists (EUD) have organized a Jewish Adventist Advisory for European countries. This Advisory was organized in Florence, Italy, one of the most beautiful city in Europe. Some people call this city the museum-city of Italy.

This advisory was held on the last week end of September 2018, on 28 through 30. The participants came from Italy, England, Germany, France, Romania, Austria, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Switzerland, and Spain. It was the first Advisory dedicated to Jewish-Adventist Friendship ministry in this part of Europe, and we hope that people have been motivated to train people to make friendship with Jews.

At the end of this advisory, a consensus statement was voted and sent to the office of the Inter-European Division. This Advisory was led by two representative of the EUD, Paolo Benini, Global Mission director, and Corrado Cozi, Communication director. Richard Elofer was also present to introduce people with the concept of friendship and comfort a word from Isaiah 40:1, which was the main topic of this meeting.

Consensus Statement voted at the Inter-European Advisory

1. We affirm the words of the prophet Isaiah: Comfort, comfort my people... (Isaiah 40:1), intending them to express our positive attitude towards the Jewish people, acknowledging the need for healing in our relationship, and affirming our conviction that they occupy a unique place in God's purposes.

2. We affirm our common heritage with Judaism, acknowledge our indebtedness to it, and aspire to relate to Jews in love, respect and openness.

3. We affirm that among Christians, Seventh-day Adventists have a unique relationship to the Jewish people. We share common truths, such as the significance of the Hebrew Scriptures for our spiritual nurture, and of biblical law for our ethical instruction. In particular we note the significance of the Sabbath for both groups. Further, our unique relationship is grounded in the conviction that the Jews occupy an unparalleled place in the divine-human relationship, a point affirmed by the New Testament in its referring to them as 'His people' (Romans 11:1-2).

4. We wish to encourage the Inter-European Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and particularly its Biblical Research Department to explore the exegetical and theological foundations for an authentic Adventist theology of relationship between Adventist and Jews in depth, as a matter of urgency, and in a spirit of unity. In particular, to address the traditional Adventist interpretation of Daniel 9:24-27; to study comprehensively Ellen White's statements concerning the place and role of Israel in God's salvation-history; and to investigate the potential impact of the Holocaust on Adventist biblical hermeneutics. Further, to investigate with an attitude of openness, how such study might influence future formulations of the Adventist relationship to Judaism.

5. We acknowledge that our aims cannot be achieved through theological discussion alone. Therefore, we wish to encourage initiatives that will enhance dialogue, friendship and mutual respect for each other's traditions.

6. We contemplate the future hoping for a willingness to learn from each other, anticipating a celebration of our common heritage, which will lead to our mutual spiritual enrichment, while honoring the God whom we both serve.

English Edition:
Richard-Amram Elofer

Russian Edition:
Alexandra Obrevko

French Edition:
Sabine Baris

Portuguese Edition:
Carlos Muniz

Dutch Edition:
Hubert Paulleta

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<https://wjafc.globalmissioncenters.org/>

Emails:

English: richard@elofer.com

Russian: sashok_l@mail.ru

French: sabinebaris@gmail.com

Portuguese: cdmuniz@gmail.com

Dutch: hpaulleta@hotmail.com



Richard-Amram Elofer
Editor



Hubert Paulleta
Deutch Translation



Sabine Baris
French Translation



Alexandra Obrevko
Russian Translation



Carlos Muniz
Portuguese Translation



Parasha for this Week

Lech-Lecha
לך-לך

Parasha Overview: Genesis 12:1-17:27

Lech-Lecha

Ten generations have passed since Noah. Man has descended spiritually. According to the Jewish tradition, it is in the year 1948 from Creation that Avram was born. By observing the world, Avram comes to recognize G-d's existence, and thus merits that G-d appear to him.

At the beginning of this week's Torah portion G-d tells Avram to leave his land, his relatives and his father's house and travel to an unknown land where G-d will make him into a great nation.

Avram leaves, taking with him his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, their servants, and those whom they converted to faith in G-d.

When they reach the land of Canaan, G-d appears to Avram and tells him that this is the land that He will give to his descendants.

A famine ensues and Avram is forced to relocate to Egypt to find food. Realizing that his wife's beauty would cause his death at the hand of the Egyptians, Avram asks her to say that she is his sister. Sarai is taken to Pharaoh, but G-d afflicts Pharaoh and his court with severe plagues and she is released unmolested.

Avram returns to *Eretz Yisrael* (Canaan) with much wealth given to him by the Egyptians.

During a quarrel over grazing rights between their shepherds, Avram decides to part ways with his nephew Lot.

Lot chooses to live in the rich but corrupt city of Sodom in the fertile plain of the Jordan. A war breaks out between the kings of the region and Sodom is defeated. Lot is taken captive.

Together with a handful of his converts, Avram rescues Lot, miraculously overpowering vastly superior forces, but Avram demurs from accepting any of the spoils of the battle.

In a prophetic covenant, G-d reveals to Avram that his offspring will be exiled to a strange land where they will be oppressed for 400 years, after which they will emerge with great wealth and return to *Eretz Yisrael*, their irrevocable inheritance.

Sarai is barren and gives Hagar, her Egyptian hand-maiden, to Avram in the hope that she will provide them with a child.

Hagar becomes arrogant when she discovers that she is pregnant. Sarai deals harshly with her, and Hagar flees.

On the instruction of an angel Hagar returns to Avram, and gives birth to Yishmael.

The weekly portion concludes with G-d commanding Avram to circumcise himself and his offspring throughout the generations as a Divine covenant. G-d changes Avram's name to Avraham, and Sarai's name to Sarah. Hashem promises Avraham a son, despite Avraham being ninety-nine years old and Sarah ninety.

On that day, Avraham circumcises himself, Yishmael and all his household.

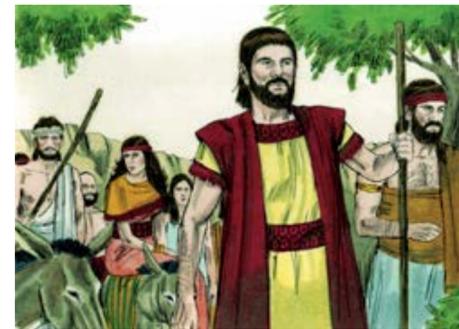
LECH-LECHA

The name of the parasha comes from the first verse of our section, "Then G-d said to Abram, 'Get going out [*Lech-Lecha*] from your land, and from your relatives, and from your father's house, to the land that I will show you.'" (Genesis 12:1 TLV). *Lech-Lecha* is an invitation to a spiritual journey. This expression *Lech-Lecha*, means *lech* "go" *lecha* "to you", "go to yourself". This is the command given to everybody at one time of his life. A command to consider entering a new life, a spiritual life in order to find G-d. Go-to-yourself means depart from your comfort zone, comfort life to an unknown journey, maybe an alien place in a spiritual journey in order to discover your true self and the purpose of G-d for you and your life. It is only when you will find the true purpose of your life, you will fulfill your mission on the earth.

The consequence of this introspection and spiritual journey will be the blessings G-d gave to Abraham "My heart's desire is to make you into a great nation, to bless you, to make your name great so that you may be a blessing. My desire is to bless those who bless you, but whoever curses you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth will be blessed." (Genesis 12:2-3 TLV). G-d has in reserve the same blessings for us. If we accept G-d today not only we will bless, but our family and children but also our friends and environment. The blessings to Abraham is not limited to one generation but to everyone who will accept this covenant with G-d, that is why on only Abraham was blessed but every "family of the earth will be blessed" Jews and non Jews who accept this covenant.

G-D'S INSPIRATION

The Torah said "Then G-d appeared to Abram" (Genesis 12:7 TLV). We don't know how G-d spoke to Abraham in the verse 1, because it is just said "Then G-d said to Abram" but here in the verse 7 it is said that G-d appeared to Abram, it is the first time G-d appeared to a man to speak to him. This expression "G-d appeared" occurred 24 times in the *Tanakh*, the first time is to Abraham, the word used is from the verb "to see" that is why we conclude that Abraham received a vision of G-d. This text is a good indication about G-d inspiration of the Scriptures, it is not a subjective feeling or a voice within him, it is through a real vision that G-d appeared to the prophets and spoke to them. G-d has also chosen to appear and to speak to man in the promised land, in this land G-d's presence began to dwell again on earth.



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ABRAHAM AND LOT

The Torah affirms that after the difficult time of Abraham and Sarah in Egypt where Pharaoh wanted to marry Sarah, Abraham returned to the promised land, "So Abram went up from Egypt—he and his wife and everything that belonged to him, and Lot with him—to the Negev." (Genesis 13:1). The Negev is the southern part of Canaan, today the capital of the Negev is Beer Sheva. In fact the Negev is the border line with Egypt. However, this time he did not stay in the Negev but went towards the North, and established himself and his clan between Beth-El and Ai. "He proceeded by stages from the Negev as far as Beth-El—to the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Beth-El and Ai," (Genesis 13:3). Lot, Abraham nephew, was still with him, and since both of them were very rich, cohabitation was difficult. The text says poetically "so that the land could not support them living together, because their possessions were many, and they were not able to stay together." (Genesis 13:6). However, it seems that the issue was not only of pasture land but deeper than that. It was much more an issue of worldview, unity and mutual trust. It seems that only one thing counted for Lot's household, "profit," while in Abraham's household attention was given to spiritual and more exalted matters. Because of this different worldview and conflict between material and spiritual interest, they could not live together anymore; Lot needed more pasture land to make more profit, while Abraham used his wealth to feed the poor, to exercise hospitality, and to teach all people about G-d, the Creator of the universe.

Thus, Abraham should take a strong decision in order to shield his own people from Lot's influence. Rabbi Hirsch paraphrase what Abraham said to Lot: "look, my choice is limited. I cannot move to just any place where there happens to be surplus pasture land; I must seek isolation. But as for you—since you have dissociated yourself from my view of life, you have no need to be so particular in your choice. The entire land is open to you, G-d to the right or to the left, and I will remain here in my isolation." (Based on Genesis 13:8-9). The proposal pleased Lot. In fact, he had long been waiting for just such an opportunity. The wanderings in desolate regions were not acceptable to him. "Lot lifted up his eyes and saw that the whole area surrounding the Jordan was well watered in its en-

"Abram took his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, and all their belongings, as well as the people they had gathered, and they left, heading toward Canaan." (Genesis 12:5)

tirety (before G-d destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah)—like G-d's garden, like the land of Egypt—till you come to Zoar. So Lot chose for himself the whole area surrounding the Jordan. Lot journeyed to the east, and they separated from each other." (Genesis 13:10-11). He sought and found rich, lush land, where he would be safe from drought and famine, Lot let himself be guided only by what appealed to his eyes.

LOT ASSOCIATED WITH SODOM

Now the text introduces to us the people of Sodom, "But the people of Sodom were evil—very great sinners against G-d." (Genesis 13:13). The people of Sodom were in communal life and in human relationships "evil and sinners." According to the Bible there is no person who does not sin occasionally, However, a person is considered a *Chatah*, sinner if sin is a fixed part of his character and is always sinning. So the people of Sodom were in communal life, "evil" inflicting destruction and ruin and they were sinners, their actions lacked all moral principle. Their sins were oriented on spiritual matters, their sins were "against G-d." Their relationships with G-d were disastrous, the degeneracy exceeded all bounds. Looking at human relationships, we discover that evil is kept within limits. Even among thieves, there is a certain amount of respect and honesty to one another. But in an evil society, everyone deludes himself into believing that he harms only himself and his own welfare, for which he is responsible only to Heaven. According to Rabbi Hirsch the Hebrew word *Chatah* (sin) can be explained as an act where the moral will has retreated, and the deed is done without thought, without moral or spiritual guidance; it is an act performed under the control of the senses. On the opposite the clever person is in possession of all his faculties and has presence of mind; his spir-

"He then took [Abram] outside and said, 'Look at the sky and count the stars. See if you can count them.' [G-d] then said to him, 'That is how [numerous] your descendants will be.'" (Genesis 15:5)

it has not "wrapped itself up" but is in full control of the body.

"After Lot separated himself from him, G-d had said to Abram, 'lift up your eyes,'" (Genesis 13:14). This was a spiritual and personal separation, not just a spatial separation. It was bitter experience for Abraham, since Lot was the second generation of believer, and Abraham was childless, he hoped that Lot would be the one who would have children and would continue his mission. Now Lot has departed from him and preferred to be associated with Sodom and Gomorrah.

THE PROPER FUNCTION OF A LEADER

Abraham's original name was Abram. Just before appointing him patriarch of Israel, G-d changed his name to Abraham. "No longer will your name be Abram, but your name will be Abraham, because I make you the father of a multitude of nations." (Genesis 17:5). Abram is an amalgam of two Hebrew words: *av*, which means "father," and *ram*, which means "exalted." Rabbi Lazer Gurkow explains: "By adding the Hebrew letter *hei* to the middle of Abraham's name, G-d taught Abraham the proper function of a leader. The letter *hei* represents the Hebrew words *hamon goyim*, 'multitudes of nations.' G-d seemed to be saying: 'If you want to be a patriarch, you cannot seclude yourself in the ivory tower and divorce yourself from the multitudes. You have to stop being an Abram, a father exalted and aloof from his children, and be an Abraham, one who mingles with the multitudes.'" He fed the hungry and housed the poor, taught the students and educated the masses. Indeed, a brief review of Abraham's lifestyle will show that he was an outgoing teacher. According to the Jewish tradition Abraham sparked a revolutionary religious movement that transformed ancient Mesopotamia. Before Abraham, Mesopotamia was a stronghold of idolatry and pagan worship. Abraham organized mass lectures and held public debates. He converted all the people of his clan, Eliezer of Damascus, his servant who went to choose a wife for Isaac is a good example of Abraham's teaching and preaching and his convincing influence.

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APOSTOLIC WRITINGS

Mark 10:28-40

W e still have strong parallels between the parasha *Lech-Lecha* and this text of the *Besorah* of Mark. G-d appeared to Abraham and ask him to leave his father's house and to go to an unknown country. "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house." (Genesis 12:1). In this portion of the *Besorah* of Mark it is Shim'on-Peter who affirms that he and his friends are in the situation of Abraham: "Peter began to say to Him, 'Look, we've left everything to follow You!'" (Mark 10:28). Following Yeshua Ben Yoseph of Natzereth as the *Masbiach* is always risky. One cannot expect anything in return from his neighbors or family members because, especially among Jews, since Yeshua is not popular among them.

The parasha said that Abraham will be blessed because of his obedience to the Torah, his trust in G-d and his renouncement to a comfortable life of the big city of Ur: "I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you..." (Genesis 12:2-3). However, as we know, Abraham was ready to go even without any of these promises and blessings, he trusted G-d.

A great promise was given to the twelve talmidim (disciples) who followed Yeshua and left everything behind: "Amen, I tell you," Yeshua replied, "there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or property, for My sake and for the sake of the Good News, who will not receive a hundred times as much now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and property, along with persecutions; and in the *olam haba*, eternal life." (Mark 10:29-30 TLV). This promise was a reality for both, Abraham and Yeshua's talmidim. Abraham who left the house of his father with just few servants and Lot, was really blessed, and very soon had a group of about one thousand people following him. This group was so big that it was necessary to split it in two. Lot in one side and Abraham on the other side. In the same way, even though the disciples lost their relatives, and friends, they found "homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children..."

In the upper room in Acts 1, they were 120 people meeting together and in Acts 2, Shim'on and his friends immersed 3,000 new believers who followed Yeshua too.

And as Yeshua said it, these new "brothers, sisters, mothers, children..." were accompanied with "persecutions." We know that all the disciples died martyrs of the Roman Empire.

The next parallel between *Lech-Lecha* and Mark is the journey of Abraham from Haran to the Negev, from the North to the South: "And Abram journeyed on, still going toward the Negev." (Genesis 12:9). Yeshua and his disciples traveled to Jerusa-

lem, from the North (Galilee) to the South (Judea): "They were on the way going up to Jerusalem, and Yeshua was going ahead of them." (Mark 10:32). Those travels were never easy. Abraham traveled to a new country inhabited by people who were not ready to give him space. According to the Torah and the tradition he passed through many trials and difficulties. The journeys of Yeshua and his talmidim were not easy too, they encounters many opponents and oppositions, that is why Yeshua started to tell them that this opposition will lead to his death: "He said, 'Look, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be handed over to the ruling *kobanim* and the Torah scholars. They will condemn Him to death and hand Him over to the Gentiles. They will mock Him and spit on Him, scourge Him and kill Him. Yet after three days, He will rise again!" (Mark 10:33-34).

The next parallel between the two texts is the encountering of Abraham with Melchizedek in the Torah, and the dialogue between Yeshua and "Jacob and John, the sons of Zebedee" in the *Besorah*. Abraham had to fight five kings of powerful cities in Canaan, however, Abraham came back victorious and was blessed by King Melchizedek "Then Melchizedek, king of Salem, brought out bread and wine—he was a priest of *El Elyon*. He blessed him and said, 'Blessed be Abram by *El Elyon*, Creator of heaven and earth, and blessed be *El Elyon*..." (Genesis 14:18-20). What is at stake here? Not only to fight and to have victory, but also the power over G-d's people. Melchizedek was not an ordinary man, he was the high priest of G-d, he was king of the city of Jerusalem (Salem) and according to his name, was a king of righteousness (*Melki-Tsedek*). G-d's people should be the descendants of Melchizedek. But G-d has made the choice of Abraham. Through this encounter Melchizedek was meetings the future kings of Israel and leaders of G-d's people who were potentially in Abraham. That is why in this text of the *Besorah* we see that some of the *talmidim* of Yeshua were requesting this power in the future kingdom of Yeshua, Jacob (James) and John said to him, "Let us sit, one on Your right and one on Your left, in Your glory." (Mark 10:37). Power over G-d's people. It is clear, that they did not understand the spiritual nature of the new kingdom, human power will not be necessary anymore, that is why Yeshua answered: "You don't know what you're asking!" (Mark 10:38). They still have many things to learn.

The conclusion of this text is: "to sit on My right or left is not Mine to grant—it is for those for whom it has been prepared" (Mark 10:40). A preparation is necessary for the kingdom of G-d.

Haftara

Isaiah 40:27-41:16

The book of Isaiah is a very beautiful text. This prophet was a real poet and our text of this week is a wonderful poem.

"Have you not known? Have you not heard? The G-d is the everlasting G-d, the Creator of the ends of the earth." (Isaiah 40:28).

The G-d of Israel is an everlasting G-d with an everlasting love for his children. He call Israel his servant, the chosen, and He called Abraham his friend.

Here we have the link between the Parasha and this Haftarah, both of them are about Abraham who left his home to respond to the calling of G-d.

"But you, Israel, my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen, the offspring of Abraham, my friend; you whom I took from the ends of the earth, and called from its farthest corners, saying to you, "You are my servant,

I have chosen you and not cast you off"; do not fear, for I am with you, do not be afraid, for I am your G-d;

I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my victorious right hand. (Isaiah 41:8-9)

G-d is our protection, there is nothing to fear when we are with the Almighty. Abraham left his home, and was protected during all his life even if he was traveling to an unknown country.

Fear not, for I am with you, Be not frightened, for I am your G-d; I strengthen you and I help you, I uphold you with My victorious right hand (Isaiah 41:10)

STORIES AND TRADITIONS

LOVE YOUR G-D WITH ALL YOUR HEART

According to the Jewish tradition, Abraham was tested ten times, and ten times he succeeded the tests. A true test of one's faith in G-d comes if one is forced to choose between serving G-d and dying. Those who sacrifice their lives for G-d are accorded the highest honor in Jewish legacy. Among those who did so was Rabbi Chaninah. He was among the ten martyrs tortured by the Roman Emperor Hadrian for their continued faith in G-d. All ten chose to remain faithful and died *al Kiddush G-d* (sanctifying the name of G-d). Though the emperor had forbidden all forms of Torah study, Rabbi Chaninah persisted in delving into G-d's holy books. He was caught with the Torah in his Hands and was condemned to death by fire. To compound the torture, the Roman authorities put wool padding in front of his heart to prolong the agony of his burning, and wrapped the parchment of the Torah around him. As he died, Rabbi Chaninah was asked what he saw. He replied, "I see parchment burning, but I see the letters on it ascending to heaven." The words of the Torah went to the everlasting life, Rabbi Chaninah had in his heart the promise of the resurrection, but the Roman Empire eventually crumbled. (Avodah Zarah 18a).



CIRCUMCISION

The Roman governor, Turnus Rufus, once asked Rabbi Akiva to explain the reason for the Jewish law requiring circumcision. "Don't you thereby presume" asked the governor, "that the Creator's work is incomplete and requires improvement?"

Rabbi Akiva had his wife bake a nice loaf of bread made of fine flour, oil and spices. He brought the loaf of bread along with some kernels of wheat to the governor Turnus Rufus. "Tell me," said Rabbi Akiva, "which is the superior—the grain or the bread?"

"The bread of course," replied Turnus Rufus. "It would seem that you also feel that the work of man is greater than the Creator's. When the Almighty created the universe, He left it up to man to perfect. He provides the grain, and man bakes the bread. He provides the produce, the fruits and vegetables, and man improves it with cooking and spices. By performing a brith Mila (circumcision) on a child, we are, in a sense, perfecting the Creator's work."

THE PROMISE LAND

Hashem led Abraham to the land of Canaan, which later, as *Eretz Israel*, became the homeland for the Jewish people. Not everyone had the trust in Hashem that Abraham displayed, to live in Hashem's chosen land, even though life there might not be as comfortable as it was elsewhere.

Yet, there were some who strove to journey to *Eretz Israel*. Among them was Rabbi Yehudah Halevi, the great Jewish philosopher and poet. He was fifty years old when he decided to make the difficult and dangerous trek to the Holy Land. After much hardship, he finally arrived at the gates of Jerusalem. He immediately tore his garments, removed his shoes, and bowed to kiss the holy soil. As he was doing so, a Turk rode over on his horse and trampled this great *tzaddik* to death. Yet Rabbi Yehudah Halevi died where he had wished, on the holy ground of *Eretz Israel*.

Inspirational Corner

It is the love of money that the word of G-d denounces as the root of all evil. Money itself is the gift of G-d to men, to be used with fidelity in His service. G-d blessed Abraham, and made him rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold. And the Bible states, as an evidence of divine favor, that G-d gave David, Solomon, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, very much riches and honor. (CS 139)