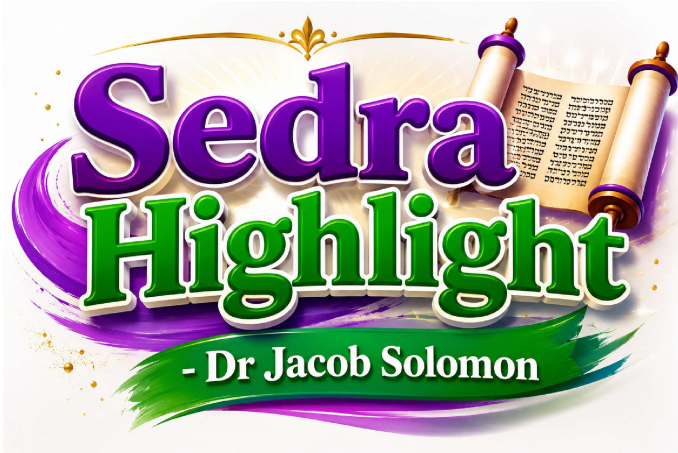




LECH L'CHA

G-d said to Avram: 'Go for yourself... to the land that I shall show you' (12:1).

Coloured gold, black, and white, the painted lady butterfly starts life in Central Africa. Unlike most creatures existing in the confines of their own locality, this insect goes through life flying in one direction, towards its destiny in Northern Europe. No-one knows precisely how its compass works and how it finds the way, but we do know that particular butterfly never gets there. Its life is too short. It reproduces, it dies on the way, and it leaves the young to carry on. That cycle continues over about six generations, crossing the Sahara, North Africa, the Mediterranean, and Europe on its way towards the Arctic. Scientists have identified this phenomenon, calling it multigenerational migration.

Like the painted lady butterfly, Am Yisrael goes toward its destination. Like the painted lady butterfly, every generation - including our own - is a segment of the chain. Without that

part, the chain breaks and no journey continues. But unlike the painted lady butterfly, we have a choice: "You shall choose life so that you and your future generations should live... by following His directions" (D'varim 30:19-20), and we do that through loyalty to the teachings of the Torah. Follow the compass direction by choosing correctly will, the Torah promises us, ensure a safe and prosperous journey. Think you know better with all idolatry and all the pernicious isms that have been coming and going from generation to generation, and you will suffer the inevitable consequences.

Our journey started with one lonely man and his household. He didn't fit in with the rest of civilization settled in their own communities after G-d scattered them across the face of the earth. He left the urbane and complex city life of Ur Kasdim as a pastoral nomad for the uncertainty of Charan. There, G-d appeared to him without compass in hand. Lech L'cha to the land that I will show you; the compass will appear in due course.

Avraham Avinu's journey, this and the next two parashiot tell us, was not only about travel, although it comes in: we can trace his steps. He was not sitting in the tourist-detached bubble of the air-conditioned bus. He got out of the bus and interacted deeply with G-d and also with the local societies on the way.

He made the journey his own, as G-d told him: Lech L'cha go on your own journey. He treated the local people with dignity and respect, as when he purchased the family burial ground from the Hittites. He took responsibility in helping the locals as he met them. He saved S'dom and four other local settlements from the bullying international powers spread through the Near East. Later, he challenged G-d on their behalf, pleading with Him to give them another chance. He also needed to be in the right company to do his work and sometimes that indeed meant his own company, so he tactfully sent Lot, the unsuitable hanger-on, on his way.

G-d didn't tell him about the final destination and what would happen there. He just finished up with V'NIVR'CHU V'CHA KOL MISH-P'CHOT HAADAMA: the whole of humanity will be blessed as a result of your travels. It is your journey, though it will impact many, very many. And that his destiny would, like the butterfly's, be multi-generational: the land will go to your descendants, after some 400 years...

So with the iconic words Lech L'cha, the journey of Am Yisrael starts on its far more complex multigenerational journey. No one lives through it from start to finish. The way continues towards its ultimate role in the Creation as Am Segula and all that it implies. Fairly early on, the Sheva

Mitzvot B'nei No'ach become more numerous to Avraham's descendants. They eventually merge into the much larger and more exclusive entity: MA'AMAD HAR SINAI, the ASERET HADIBROT, the TARYAG MITZVOT. The journey carries on with challenges, failures, disasters, triumphs, real progress, apparent but illusionary progress, ignoring the Torah-powered compass, nose-diving into disaster, soaring into better times and yet more plunging, struggling to tread water, pitching up and then... who knows what comes next? As part of Klal Yisrael, we very find ourselves riding our own multigenerational roller-coaster and, more constructively, extending its tracks.

And it isn't yet finished. It is a journey in progress. We ourselves are on it, as capacity of successors. Our work is to look at Lech L'cha and see the human and spiritual achievements of Avraham Avinu. Then, of the following generations, their achievements, their failings, and what happened among our own people and beyond. And where we stand now. In KIYUM MITZOT, BEIN ADAM LAMAKOM and BEIN ADAM L'CHAVEIRO. And how we interact with societies - our own and others - and in the spirit of Avraham Avinu take pro-active leadership. What this means right now is not necessarily the same as a generation or a millennium ago, although it is powered with the

derech eretz that precedes the Torah, the Torah itself, and use of judgement of where to best proactively take part, whether at the family, community, local, national, or international levels. These challenges which power our forward journey apply to us as both individuals and communities. It is our duty, like Avraham Avinu, to identify them and activate for them, doing what it takes. Every individual and BAYIT NE'EMAN B'YISRAEL counts. And keeping an eye on the compass direction at the same time. 🌿📖

I write this piece in honour of Shabbat Chatan for my eldest child, Yehonatan, on his IYH forthcoming marriage to Elisheva Gur. May it be a fulfilling b'racha for them and for both families!