

Dear Chavraya,

With this week's Torah portion, *Parashat Lech L'chah*, beginning with chapter 12 in *B'reishit* / Genesis, the Jewish journey begins. The first eleven chapters of the Torah are entirely universal history. The story of creation and of the flood and re-creation is about the world and all people. The first covenant that God makes with people is the rainbow covenant of peace, made between God and Noach. From out of that universal source, aware of others and of the world around us, our own journey begins.

As Avram and Sarai are told, *Lech L'chah*, go forth, God offers a blessing, the signature of which is, *vehiyeh b'racha* / *Be a Blessing*. What does it mean to be a blessing? As for our ancestors, so for each one of us, God has faith and confidence in us, that we can go forth into the world and be a blessing. Torah offers guidance, shedding light upon the path, but it is only in the journey, in the living of life and being among people that we come to understand what it means to live as a blessing.

Offering a powerful challenge, the Slonimer Rebbe says, *If in this world a Jew learns Torah, and prays, and engages in good deeds, but does not fulfill the particular task of repair for which she or he was brought into the world, then upon ascending to the upper world, they will ask him or her, 'what did you do in this world?'*. The ways of Torah, and of prayer, and of good deeds are part of what it means to be a blessing, but each one of us also has a particular task and calling which only we can fulfill. As Avram and Sarai set forth on their journey to discover their own way of blessing and the task of repair given to them, so it is for each one of us who follow in their footsteps to discover our own. On this Shabbos of *Lech L'chah*, of going forth, what does it mean to you to be a blessing in the world?

Shabbat shalom,
Rabbi Victor