

Dear Chavraya,
The great African American poet, Langston Hughes, sings the journey of his people as a river:

I've known rivers ancient as the world and older than the
flow of human blood in human veins.
My soul has grown deep like the rivers.
I bathed in the Euphrates when dawns were young.
I built my hut near the Congo and it lulled me to sleep.
I looked upon the Nile and raised the pyramids above it.
I heard the singing of the Mississippi when Abe Lincoln
went down to New Orleans, and I've seen its muddy
bosom turn all golden in the sunset.
I've known rivers:
Ancient, dusky rivers.
My soul has grown deep like the rivers.

The journey of America grew deep this week, the journey of one person, the journey of one people, and so the journeys of all the peoples of this land. The Torah portion this week, *Parashat Lech L'cha*, is about journeys. It is about the journey of our people, and about the journey of each one of us. It is about leaving what has been and setting out on a new path. Avram and Sarai are told to go forth, *lech l'cha* - - *from your land, from your birthplace, and from your parental home*. They are not told of where to go, but only *to the land that I will show you*. The journey begins with the courage to take the first step. The journey of the Jewish people begins along the same river Euphrates of which Langston Hughes sings. In the unfolding of journeys, our two peoples met along the Nile where laboring under Pharaoh's lash "we raised the pyramids above it."

The journey of a people, the human journey itself, is the gathering together of the personal journey of each one. The journey of Avram and Sarai is recapitulated in each of our journeys. *Lech l'cha*, or addressed to Sarai, *L'chi lach*, is in the singular. While the phrase is a grammatical form that expresses the imperative, taken literally *lech l'cha* means *go to your self*. Emphasizing the individual journey that is reflected in the journey of our people, the Slonimer Rebbe offers powerful affirmation of the work that awaits each one of us in the journey of our lives. On the words *Lech l'cha*, the Slonimer teaches: *There is no person who is just like another person from the creation of the first human and onward. And there is not one person who is able to repair that which is for another to repair. Thus, there is to every person a unique purpose and task through which to bring repair during her or his lifetime.*

As there is to every thing a season and a time for every purpose under Heaven, so we sing, "turn, turn, turn," to the new journey that has begun and to the purpose and the task that is given to each one of us. The way of repair that is the unique purpose and task given to the life of Barak Obama should not in its brilliance blind, but illumine the way of repair that is given to every person as their own. The dramatic calling given to one person reminds us all that we are each in this world for a purpose that no one else can fulfill.

As we take the first steps of a new journey this week, going forth as Avram and Sarai from ancient ways to possibilities as yet unknown, may our souls grow deep like rivers and flow in common purpose from sea to shining sea.

Shabbat shalom,
Rabbi Victor