

Life's Detours

Genesis, Chapter 12

1. And the L-rd said to Abram, "Go to yourself, from your land and from your birthplace and from your father's house, to the Land that I will show you.
2. And I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you, and I will aggrandize your name, and [you shall] be a blessing.
9. And Abram traveled, continually traveling southward.
10. And there was a famine in the Land, and Abram descended to Egypt to sojourn there because the famine was severe in the Land.

Genesis, Chapter 13

1. And Abram came up from Egypt, he and his wife and all that was his, and Lot with him, to the south.
2. And Abram was very heavy with cattle, with silver, and with gold.

Go to yourself, from your land and from your birthplace and from your father's house (12:1)

Rashi

Go for your own benefit and for your own good. I will make of you a great nation, for here you will not merit the privilege of having children and there you will. And there you will become famous [so that you will be able to carry out your spiritual mission.]

Nachmanides

The Torah expresses Abraham's test in ascending degrees of difficulty. It is hard for someone to leave his homeland, even harder to leave his extended family and hardest of all to leave his parents.

The Chassidic Masters

"From your land": from your will (*eretz*, the Hebrew word for land, is etymologically related to the word *ratzon*--will).
 "From your birthplace": from your emotional and behavioral self (which is the product of a person's environment).
 "From your father's house": from your intellect. (In the terminology of Kabbalah, the intellect is referred to as the father within man, since it is the progenitor of, and authority over, his feelings and



פרק יב

י. וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל
 אַבְרָם לֵךְ לְךָ מֵאֶרֶץ
 וּמְמוֹלַתְךָ וּמִבֵּית
 אָבִיךָ אֶל הָאָרֶץ

אֲשֶׁר אֶרְאֶךָ :

ב. וַאֲעֹשֶׂךָ לְגוֹי גָדוֹל וְאַבְרָכְךָ וְאַגְדִּלְךָ שְׁמֶךָ
 וְהָיָה בְרָכָה :

ט. וַיֵּסַע אַבְרָם הַלֹּךְ וְנֹסֵעַ הַנְּגִבָה :

י. וַיְהִי רָעַב בְּאֶרֶץ וַיֵּרֵד אַבְרָם מִצְרַיִם לְגֹר
 שָׁם כִּי כָבֵד הָרָעַב בְּאֶרֶץ :

פרק יג

א. וַיַּעַל אַבְרָם מִמִּצְרַיִם הוּא וְאִשְׁתּוֹ וְכָל
 אֲשֶׁר לוֹ וְלוֹט עִמּוֹ הַנְּגִבָה :

ב. וַאֲבָרָם כָּבֵד מְאֹד בְּמִקְנֵהוּ בַּבְּסֹף וּבְזָהָב :

behavior patterns).

And there was a famine in the Land (12:10)

Midrash

This is another test of Abraham's faith. Immediately after he settled in the new homeland where G-d had promised him every manner of blessing, there was a famine, whereupon G-d commanded him to leave the Land and move to Egypt. Though this seemed to be a direct contradiction to G-d's glowing promises, Abraham's faith did not waver.

Ramban

Whatever happened to the Patriarchs is a portent for the children. The Torah relates at length their journeys because they serve as lessons for the future.

Heavy with cattle, with silver, and with gold (13:2)

Zohar

Abraham's descent to Egypt led to the subsequent exile of the Jewish people from there and Abraham's ensuing ascent from Egypt made possible the Jewish people's subsequent exodus and elevation. Similarly, since Abraham left Egypt "heavily laden with livestock, silver and gold," the Jewish people would leave Egypt with great wealth.

SUMMARY

- **Go to yourself:** go beyond your limits to access your authentic, higher self.
- **Your land** (eretz): your inborn will and natural desires (ratzon).
- **Your birthplace:** the influence of your environment, your home and society.
- **Your father's house:** your rational self.
- **To the Land that I will show you:** a self free of all that defines and confines the human. This is the spark of G-dliness, the core of one's soul that has infinite potential.
- In our journey toward self-transformation, apparent regressions are an integral part of the process.
- Lech Lecha: a never ending journey to access our infinite G-dly potential.

