

Lech Lecha **Go Forth Yourself**

Torah: Genesis 12:1-17:27

Haftarah: Isaiah 40:27-41:16

Brit Chadashah: Romans 4:1-25

Reading: Betty pp. 100, 101 & Ps. 110. Jewish Hero: Barnabas. Carrier: Amos

Passage: “ ***Therefore, my beloved, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the L-rd, because you know that in the L-rd, your work is not in vain.***”

(I Corinthians 15:58)

Over the next little while, our community will be experiencing quite a bit of turmoil as we explore where we will end up in a new location and it will not always be easy to remain calm and collected. But we need to remain steadfast. As I have prayed and sought the L-rd about the next chapter in our life as a congregation, I have wanted personal assurances from our King that He will continue to bless us and both provide for us and protect us. What I have received is not surprising. In our beloved Messiah, it will always be business as usual, because His plans for us have not changed and our response to the uncertainties of life will always be the same – to have faith and to walk in obedience to His Word.

It is going to take time and energy to get settled in to a new location, but our objectives as a congregation have not changed. We want to remain Sabbath powered and festival driven as we settle into a new location and grow in depth and numbers until we are generationally sustainable and can purchase our own facility.

We will have to adjust to a new location and build a good relationship with a new landlord, but we realize that through it all, we belong to our Messiah and to the kingdom which is still to come. As we move into another long, cold Canadian winter, we need to learn the meaning of being steadfast and immovable, because wherever we end up, our work in the L-rd will never be vain. He will always have our back, no matter which storms come our way.

In the past I have always described steadfast as redeemed stubbornness because we are firm in our commitment to see things from the L-rd's perspective and not let the uncertainties of life tell us how we should live. We need to be listening to the voice of His Word as we walk the straight and narrow as light and salt in our darkening world. We may not be able to be in control over what happens to us in this life, but we always want to remain under His control because walking with Him according to His Word is what life should always be about.

Changes are inevitable, but we need to see them as raw material that we can fashion and shape so that our lives reflect the power of the coming Kingdom and the love of the Messiah who has called us out of darkness and into His marvelous light. We need to renew our commitment not to be moved away from our walk with the King and this new set of challenges, should be seen as yet another opportunity to witness His care as we face uncertainty with boldness and courage. He has never let us down and in Him we have never been cornered and He has always provided us with a way of escape.

In this week's Torah portion, Abraham embarks on a new adventure, even though he is already a senior citizen and should have been looking forward to a quiet retirement.

He believed that what was promised was already his, even before he had the chance to lay eyes upon it. We are going to need that kind of faith so that none of us fall by the wayside or lose our way in the direction we are taking. It has been said that when a faith community changes locations that up to 20% of its people do not move with them and go elsewhere.

I do not want to have this happen with us and our leadership will do all that we can to help all of us make the transition and not get lost in the shuffle. We do have a unique ministry and our calling includes being a bridge between the Jewish community and the world of the Gentiles, because it is so easy to be misunderstood. Over the last little while, we have seen many new people wander through our community and as we move, we will be the ones doing the wandering and it is my prayer that none of us gets lost.

We have the unique opportunity to make new friends and to explain to them that the Gospel is the power of G-d to salvation, for the Jew first and also for the Gentile. We live in a world where the pace of change keeps accelerating and we are constantly being impacted by new technologies, but the battle ground has not changed, even as our world slips further and further into the darkness of sin and death.

In the Messiah, we need to be steadfast and unchangeable so that the sound of His voice, through His Word and His Spirit is always heard in our hearts and lives, over and above the deafening noise of the flesh, the world and the enemy. How well are you listening to His voice? We are either doing the work of the L-rd in our lives, or are being sucked back into the carnal agenda which the world is so good at promoting.

We are constantly being called to take the most amazing vacation and to buy the most amazing vehicle. We are invited to taste the most delicious food and take the most amazing supplements, as we get immediate relief from the aches and pain that are trying to slow us down. We are promised great wealth as we buy the winning lottery ticket and we are encouraged to clean our homes with the latest advances in both cleansers and gadgets.

We are the most informed society which has ever lived and yet our world is learning less and less about the spiritual realities of life, which matter more than the fading glory of this world which is on the verge of passing away. Our modern technology and the multimedia it has spawned, is nothing more than a mighty, galloping distraction, trying to prevent us from considering the wonders of the world which is to come.

Generation by generation, the people of our world have either drawn closer to that which really matters or we have grown better at ignoring the elephant which will never leave the room. Being politically correct often means being spiritually blind and our society is very good at portraying darkness as light and that which is bitter as if it were sweet. Our modern world is working overtime to brainwash each new generation into accepting what the Bible condemns as an abomination, as it tries to portray believers in the worst possible light.

As believers, we are constantly shamed and we are blamed and made to feel that our faith is evil and that our lifestyle is one of the main causes of all the troubles which our world has to face. Instead of being seen as the source of a solution for all that is damaging our ailing world, we are being portrayed as just another problem which our brave new world has to solve. But, as believers, we refuse to fall into the snare which is capturing the hearts and minds of this lost generation on an increasingly global scale.

We may face incredible, sophisticated opposition and it may appear that our faith is rapidly losing ground before the onslaught of secular humanism and the lies of evolutionary materialism. But we know that our work in the L-rd is not in vain and there is coming a day when all darkness shall be eclipsed by the light of our Messiah's everlasting kingdom.

I guess it all boils down to who and what you are listening to and to what has captured your attention. On one level, I am not looking forward to our coming move, but in the bigger picture, I do not want to see it as one more distraction, trying to get our eyes off the Kingdom and the righteousness of G-d. It does not really matter where we end up, it matters more how we walk through the uncertainties and all the potential spiritual detours which this life is so good at sending our way.

I trust that you are all praying that wherever we move to, we end up with the best location and that our move is executed with both efficiency and safety. This is just another step in our walk with the Messiah and He and His Kingdom are all that really matters, both in the short term and in the long term.

I have spoken with any number of pastors and have sent emails to many different churches and I have discovered how spiritually diverse our city really is. There are some pretty strange people out there and there are also many spiritual heroes who are doing a great job of sharing their faith with our dark and dying world.

As our time at St. Timothy's draws to a close, I want us to learn gratitude for all the L-rd has provided us with, so that we have been able to reach this point. I also want us to be constantly aware that the one who has guided our footsteps to this point, will continue to do so as we engage in the exciting quest to find a new place where we can hang up our community hat. We will need lots of time and energy to settle into a new place, but the L-rd is fully aware that we are merely frail dust and He will give us all that we need to succeed, no matter how much spiritual opposition we face.

We have been happy at St. Timothy's because we have seen how the L-rd has led us and blessed us, even when things have not always gone our way. I want to walk with the firm conviction that this same blessing will be with us every inch of the way as we find our new location. We should never see our move as a new problem we will have to figure out, because it is really just another opportunity for us to continue to see the goodness of the L-rd in the land of the living, as He leads us into another green pasture.

I am looking forward to checking out any number of possible new locations because I know the One in whom I have placed my faith and my trust. I am firmly convinced that He is looking out for our best interests. I may get tired sometimes and I may even occasionally struggle with discouragement, because I was so looking forward to a bit of a rest after the Fall Feasts. But as long as we rest in Him and in His Word, we really have nothing to worry about because we know that He has it covered, as we look forward to the next exciting chapter in the amazing life of our wonderful shul.

You see, it all depends on how we choose to look at things and how we choose to respond to things. This is because over and above all the hopes and the fears of all the years, we are already kingdom dwellers who are on a blessed pilgrimage through this life on our way to our Father's home in glory. We are not home yet, but we are getting there.

We may not always know where this wonderful journey will take us, but we can be sure that He will walk beside us every step of the way as surely as He did with our people as they wandered through the wilderness. He is the same G-d who hovered over them in a cloud by day and shone forth brightly as a pillar of fire at night.

He is also the same G-d who went before them to prepare for their eventual arrival in the land where the garden of Eden once stood. He is calling us to be steadfast and immovable because in Him and His promises, we are unstoppable and no weapon forged against us shall prosper. Despite all of our shortcomings and the nonsense that we sometimes get up to, we are His sheep and are even the apple of His eye and He will never abandon us or forsake us. This level of confidence needs to be where we live throughout the move.

He has wonderful things in store for us in this process and He never runs out of steam as He carries us on His wings like an eagle. We will walk and not be weary and we will run and not grow faint because, in Him, we can always renew our strength and find all the help we need in whatever troubles we wander through.

Our leadership will keep you posted with progress reports and I might even get some of you to tag along as we examine potential venues for our dynamic ministry to settle in to. With all He has helped us through in the past, you ain't seen nothing yet, when it comes to the blessings which He still has in store for us.

In my 47 years of walking with the L-rd, I remain constantly surprised with all the strange new ways the Messiah finds to bless me and to guide me through all the valleys which the lust of the eyes and the lust of the flesh and the pride of life has tried to stall me with.

It is going to be an uphill climb for many of us in the next few months but we need to realize that eyes have not seen and ears have not heard about all the wonderful things which are waiting for us at the end of the tunnel. Wherever it is that we land, we will be serving the same Messiah, according to the same wonderful Word as we are filled with the same wonderful Spirit.

So we need to encourage one another and prayer for this process as we wander through another year in the L-rd and see the coming of His Kingdom draw closer and closer. What will you be focusing on as we search for a new home? How well do you trust Him to get us another really good deal?

Don't give way to discouragement and learn to stay focused on the bigger picture and most importantly do not let the adversary cause you to wander away from the place where you belong, which is in our midst and as part of our community. We will need help to pack up things and transport them to our yet undisclosed future new location, but nothing has really changed and we remain in the same business, serving our Messiah with all of our hearts, all of our minds and certainly with all of our strength.

There is nothing more exciting or more fulfilling than walking with the L-rd and watching His protection and His provision come through for us, time and time again. Where He leads we will follow and that is one thing which will never change. Are you getting excited about where we will eventually end up? I am, because we serve a great G-d and He always has our best interests at heart. What are you letting Him do in your heart and in your life?