

PARASHAT LECH-LECHA

Genesis 12:1–17:27

Parashat Lech-Lecha begins with the story of Abram leaving his birthplace in Haran. God promises the land of Canaan to Abram and his descendants. Because of a famine in the land, Abram takes his family to Egypt. While there, the pharaoh orders Abram's wife, Sarai, to live in his palace. Plagues come upon Egypt as punishment for what Pharaoh has done, and Sarai is restored to Abram. Returning to Canaan, Abram and his brother's son, Lot, divide the land in order to prevent any disagreements between them. Later, Lot is attacked and taken hostage by enemy kings. Abram rescues him and his family. Because Abram and Sarai have trouble conceiving a child, Sarai, in the custom of ancient times, invites her maidservant, Hagar, to have a child with Abram. When Hagar becomes pregnant, she begins to abuse Sarai, who responds by chasing away Hagar. An angel tells Hagar to return, and she bears a son whom Abram names Ishmael. As this Torah portion concludes, Abram is instructed to circumcise himself and Ishmael. Abram is told that the circumcision of all males at eight days of age will be a sign of God's covenant with him and his people forever.
