

THE LIGHTHOUSE FELLOWSHIP

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Let us take a quick look through this week's Torah portion to look for its major themes. To do so, it will be most helpful to make an outline. For each bullet, give a short title summarizing the thrust of the passage. Make the titles of your outlines as short as possible. Don't try to include too much detail when describing the most significant theme/topic of an outline bullet. This will force you to look for the most general words/phrases to describe the main point. Also, try to keep your answers to the following questions as short as possible.

- Genesis 12:1-3—Abram's call. What is/are the major theme(s) of these verses? Note, the Holy One will do three specific things for Abram:
 - 1) He will show him a special land,
 - 2) He will make his descendants into a great nation,
 - 3) He will surround Abram with blessings. Now let's see how often the themes of land and descendants recurs throughout our sidra.
- Genesis 12:4-9—Abram's arrival in Canaan. What is the major theme of these verses? Note how often the word land is used in these few verses. It is a general principle that the theme of a passage is often related to repeated words.
- Genesis 12:10-20—Abram's descent to and ascent from Egypt. Although the primary theme of this story pertains to events in Egypt, how is this passage related to the theme of the land of Canaan?
- Genesis 13:1-18—Abram and Lot part ways. Why did they have to part ways? ¹¹As you can see, the theme of the land has reappeared again. What is/are the major theme(s) of Genesis 13:14-18? Note how Genesis 13:14-15 and Genesis 13:17-18 are all about the land!
- Genesis 14:1-24—The war of the kings.

THE LIGHTHOUSE FELLOWSHIP

- Genesis 15:1-21—The covenant with Abram. What is the major theme of these verses?
- Genesis 16:1-16—Ishmael and Hagar. What is the major theme of these verses?
- Genesis 17:1-27—The covenant of circumcision. What is the major theme of these verses? It seems as if the theme of descendants has slowly replaced the theme of land as we progress through the sidra.

In general, Genesis 12:1-13:18 seems to focus on the theme of the land. Genesis 15:1-21 seems to give equal time to both themes of land and descendants. Genesis 16:1-17:27 seems to focus on the theme of descendants. As you can see, land and descendants have become the dominant themes of this sidra. These two themes will continue to dominate the remainder of the book of Genesis. Therefore, we must always keep them in mind as we try to interpret the narratives of this book. Remember, this book is primarily about a land for the future descendants/nation of Abram. As we continue to study the book of Genesis, allow these two themes to guide your interpretation

Questions about the Bible Reading:

1. What does lekh-lekha mean? (Gen. 12:1)
2. What was Abram's father's name?
3. Where was Abram originally from?
4. Who was Sarai?
5. Who was Lot?
6. Where did God tell Abram to go? (12:1)
7. What did God promise Abram for his obedience? (Gen. 12:2)
8. How old was Abram when he began his journey to the land? (12:4)
9. Who were the "souls Abram made in Haran" (12:5)

THE LIGHTHOUSE FELLOWSHIP

Why does the Torah say that Lot “went with Abram” and then says “Abram took Lot” and set out to go to the land of Canaan? (12:4-5)

10. Who came along with Abram?

11. Where was the first place God appeared to Abram? (12:6-7)

Answers:

1. It means go out (or walk) for yourself... No one can make you walk the steps of faith, you must chose for yourself.
2. Terach ben Serug, a descendant from the patriarch Shem. Terach died in the city of Charan when Abram was 75.
3. Ur Kasdim i.e., “Ur of the Chaldees,” located in the eastern part of the “fertile crescent,” in the city state of Sumer during the Bronze Age. Gen. 11:27-28 names it as the birthplace of Abram’s brother Haran, and the point of departure of Terah’s household. Later it is identified as the place of Abram’s origin (Gen. 15:7).
4. Abram’s half-sister (the daughter of Terach and an unknown woman). The Talmud states (Berachot 13a) that at first she was a princess to her people (i.e., , “my princess”), but later she became a princess to the whole world (i.e., ,without the restrictive “my”). Sarah comes from the verb sarar meaning to rule or reign.
5. Lot was the son of Abram’s brother Haran. Haran died while the family still lived in Ur of the Kasdim. From Lot would come the Moabites and the Ammonites.
6. Wherever God would show him, but the LORD did not tell him the exact location before he set out.
7. God would make him a great nation and would bless Abram and make his name great so that he would be a blessing. God promised to bless those who blessed Abraham, but to curse the one who treated him lightly, for in him would all the families of the earth be blessed.
8. He was seventy five years old when he left Charan after the death of his father..
9. The Hebrew phrase “souls Abram made in Haran” refers to people who converted based on Abram’s preaching at Haran.
10. At first Abram tested Lot, but when he was convinced of Lot’s faith in the vision, he made him a part of the community of faith making the pilgrimage...
11. His wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, and the many converts Abraham had made while in Charan.
12. At Shechem, before an “oak of Moreh,” God appeared to Abram (before this, Abram simply heard the voice of the LORD but God did not appear before him). Because of this, Abram built an altar to mark the occasion.