



## Parshat Lech-Lecha: Heroism, Courage, Faith

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On October 17<sup>th</sup>, one of my heroes died. I first met Leo Martin z'l (may his memory be for a blessing) in December 2005, as I was asked to be a Madrich (counselor/educator) on the [March of the Living](#), a two-week program for high school students. Leo Martin was a survivor of the [Lodz Ghetto](#) and shared his story of survival during the Shoah with his children, grandchildren and thousands of others who were lucky enough to learn with him and travel with him back to Poland.

Leo was assigned to my group, which gave us the opportunity each week to hear his stories and learn from him. Leo's story of survival amazed us, but more than that was his compassion and caring for each of the teens in our group.

As it came time to travel together, Leo had to make the decision not to travel with our group due to health reasons. Through his commitment, however, he created the Friends of the March, a charitable organization that would see to it that students have the opportunity to go on the trip and hear the stories of our survivors.

While Leo stayed back, I had the opportunity in 2006 to travel with his son-in-law, Phil, and in 2008 with his other son-in-law, Scott. The stories that each of them were able to share with our group about their hero, their father-in-law, Leo, were amazing. We each received a copy of Leo's book entitled "My Survivor". When you travel with a survivor, with the stories of survivors, they become a part of your family. They become your survivor.

I was saddened this past week to hear about the passing of Leo, but was reminded of his strength, his courage, his lessons and his faith.

In this week's Parsha, Lech-Lecha, as well as last week's Parsha, Noach, we are taught of other men who had courage and faith. Noach is told by God to build a *Teiva* (often translated as an Ark). A *Teiva* is not a boat, commented the [Baal Shem Tov](#). A boat is a *Sephina*, or an *Oniah*. A boat has a sail, rudders, some type of navigational system. A *Teiva* does not.

The only other time in the entire Tanakh that the word *Teiva* is used is in reference to Moshe (his mother Yocheved places him in a *Teiva*, here often translated as a basket). In both cases, they were created in order to protect those inside. When Yocheved put Moshe in the *Teiva*, she had faith that God would direct the basket to safety. Noach also had faith in God. He loaded his entire family into the *Teiva* with no way for him to determine its destination.

In this week's Parsha, Avram (who is later re-named Avraham) places all of his faith in God. He is told

וַיֹּאמֶר יְיָ - וְהָאֵל אֲבְרָם לֵךְ לְךָ מֵאֶרֶץ וּמִמּוֹלַדְתְּךָ וּמִבֵּית אָבִיךָ אֶל הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אֹרְאָךְ:  
"And the Lord had said to Avram, Get out from your country, and from your family, and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you..."

Avram did not know where he was going. All he knew was that he was going to leave his world behind. This was true of Noach when he stepped onto that Ark and for Leo Martin on September 1, 1939 when Germany invaded Poland. None knew where they would end up, but all had faith in God.

While Noach settled on *Mt. Ararat* and Leo Martin settled in Miami, Florida, Avraham settled at *Elon Moreh*, in an area near *Shechem*. *Elon Moreh* appears in the *Tanakh* a few times (this is the first reference, as God says that this is the land that Avraham will give to his descendants, Yaakov purchases land there, Joseph is buried there, and finally the mountains of blessings and curses, *Gerizim* and *Ebal* are located there).

The word *Elon* is related to the word *Ilan*, an oak tree and the word *Moreh* is related to the Hebrew word, teacher. Why did a place have this name? What is its significance to our story?

A tree is a symbol of strength. It has deep roots (a deep history) and produces branches, leaves and seeds. A teacher imparts knowledge and inspiration. We must use our history in order to learn how to better live our lives.

When Noach gets off of the Ark he plants seeds. Noach gives us a new civilization, new branches with deep roots. Avraham is the first Jew, he provides us our entire identity. Leo Martin was a teacher. He taught of his past in order that we can teach others. I wish that more of us would have had the opportunity to learn from him.

Each man was a symbol of strength. Each, a man with deep faith, that they would be protected. And each man, a message to teach us today.

### **AS A FAMILY:**

- Discuss your family tree.
  - How did your family get to where you are today?
  - What brought your family to the Shabbat table at which you are sitting tonight?
  - What messages have you learned along the way?
  - What do you hope to teach future generations?

### **TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THIS WEEK'S PARSHA, TRY TO ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS:**

1. Why does God tell Abram to leave "your homeland, your birthplace, your father's house and go to the land that I will show you"? Why not simply- "Go to the land that I will show you"?
2. Why does Abram lie to Pharaoh about the identity of his wife?
3. About what did Abram and Lot argue?
4. What sign did God give Abram?
5. What was the relationship of Sarai and Hagar?
6. Why and how did God change Abram and Sarai's names?
7. How old were Abraham and Ishmael when they were circumcised?