

How do I go on a Journey like Avram?

Baltimore, October 2023

1. Genesis 12:1

Hashem said to Avram, "Go forth from your land, from where you were born, and from your father's house, to the land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you; I will <u>make your name great</u> , and you shall be a blessing.	וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל-אַבְרָם לֵךְ לְךָ מֵאֶרֶץ וּמִמּוֹלַדְתְּךָ וּמִבֵּית אָבִיךָ אֶל-הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אֲרָאָךְ; וְאָנֹכִי לְגוֹי גָּדוֹל וְאַבְרָרְךָ וְאֶגְדַּלְתִּי שְׁמִי וְהָיָה בְרָכָה:
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Is Avram's name "becoming great" something god must help him with or a byproduct of his journey?

2. Rashi 12:1-2

Go Forth — for your own benefit, for your own good: there I will make of you a great nation whilst here you will not merit the privilege of having children (Rosh Hashanah 16b). Furthermore, <u>I shall make known your character throughout the world</u> (Midrash Tanchuma, Lech Lecha 3).	לך לך. להנאתך ולטובתך, שם אעשה לגוי גדול, כאן אי אתה זוכה לבנים, ועוד שאודיע טבעך בעולם.
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Avram following god's instruction is one of his 10 tests. Is going for himself a selfish endeavor?

3. Rashi 12:2

And I Will Make You A Great Nation – Since travelling is the cause of three things—it decreases (breaks up) family life, it reduces one's wealth and <u>lessens one's renown</u> , he therefore needed these three blessings: that God should promise him children, wealth and a great name (Genesis Rabbah 39:11).	ואעשה לגוי גדול. לפי שהדרך גורמת לשלישה דברים, ממעטת פריה ורביה וממעטת את הממון וממעטת את השם, לך הזקק לשלישה ברכות הללו, שהבטיחו על הבנים ועל הממון ועל השם.
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What are the downsides to leaving your homeland? Lasting negative impact or ephemeral?

What opportunities form when leaving home?

4. Midrash Tanchuma, Lech Lecha, 3

Rabbi Abin said: Abraham may be likened to a flask of oil that had been hidden away in a cemetery, the fragrance of which was unknown to anyone. What did they do with it? They removed it from the cemetery and carried it about from place to place until its fragrance became familiar throughout the world. This happened to Abraham. He dwelt among idolaters, and so the Holy One, blessed be He, commanded him: Get yourself out of your country, in order that I may make your nature known throughout the world.	אמר רבי אבין, משל לצלוחית של פליטון הנתונה בבית הקברות ולא היה אדם יודע ריחה. מה עשו? נטלוה וטלטלוה ממקום למקום והודיעו ריחה בעולם. כך היה אברהם דר בתוך עובדי עבודה זרה, אמר לו הקדוש ברוך הוא, לך לך מארץ ואני אודיע טבעך בעולם.
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How do Avram or others benefit from his character/nature becoming well-known?

5. Sfat Emet, Bereishit, Lech Lecha, 31

He states that the words "lech lecha [mean that] we are forever to be walkers toward that which God shows us, always through renewed perceptions. To be human is to be on the move. Anyone who stands still without renewal will immediately be overruled by nature/routine."	וז"ש לך לך לעולם צריך להיות מהלך אל אשר אראך, תמיד השגה חדשה. לכן נקרא האדם מהלך שכל שעומד בלי התחדשות מיד הטבע שולטת בו.
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Summary:

- 1) Avram's character will be forgotten, so god will reinforce/boost it so it becomes well-known. (Rashi)
- 2) Others benefit from Avram spreading his character, not just Avram. (Tanchuma)
- 3) It's incumbent for us all to go on a journey as well (incorporating the ideals of doing something that will benefit others). (Sfas Emes)