

Step Outside the Forecast

Aryeh Leib Thorne Toren · 22 October 2026

Lech Lecha 5787: the night Avram was told to stop reading the stars and start counting them

Last week the world was remade under a bow in the cloud. This week one man is called out of the world he knew: "Go to yourself, from your land, from your birthplace and from your father's house, to the land which I will show you" (Bereishit 12:1).

The parsha is full of roads: down to Egypt and back, north to Dan after the four kings, out to the stars, into the covenant between the pieces, and at last into the covenant of milah and a new name. One small scene in the middle holds the rest together. It happens at night, outside a tent.

The forecast

Avram has everything except the one thing he wants. He has won a war. He has turned down the king of Sodom's wealth, "neither from a thread to a shoe strap" (14:23). G-d has told him, "Fear not, Abram; I am your Shield; your reward is exceedingly great" (15:1).

And Avram answers with the honesty of a tired man: "what will You give me, since I am going childless?" (15:2). "Behold, You have given me no seed" (15:3).

Rashi, on that verse, gives Avram's logic in a few words: "So of what avail is all that You will give me?" A great reward, and no one to hand it to.

Go out of your astrology

Then: "And He took him outside, and He said, 'Please look heavenward and count the stars, if you are able to count them.' And He said to him, 'So will be your seed'" (15:5).

Rashi first gives the plain meaning: G-d took him out of his tent to see the stars. Then he gives the midrash, from the Gemara in Nedarim (32a) and Bereishit Rabbah. G-d said to him, "Go out of your astrology," for you have seen in the signs that you are not destined to have a son. "Indeed, Abram will have no son, but Abraham will have a son. Similarly, Sarai will not give birth, but Sarah will give birth. I will give you another name, and your destiny will change."

Avram had read the sky correctly. The forecast was accurate, for Avram. What G-d tells him is not that the stars are wrong. He tells him that he is about to become someone the stars did not account for.

Rashi offers one more reading: G-d "lifted him above the stars," which is why the verse says *habet*, a word for looking down from above. Avram isn't only told to ignore the forecast. He is placed above it.

And he believed

"And he believed in the Lord, and He accounted it to him as righteousness" (15:6). Rashi notes that here, unlike with the land a few verses later, Avram "did not request of Him a sign."

The promise came at night, to an old man with no child. The new name wouldn't come until Avram was ninety-nine (17:1): "you shall no longer be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham" (17:5). Between the night of the stars and the morning of the new name there is a long stretch of waiting, with nothing to show for it but faith.

The haftarah answers that stretch. Yeshayahu speaks to a people that has decided its future is already written: "Why do you say, O Jacob, why declare, O Israel, 'My way is hid from π ', my cause is ignored by my G-d'?" (Yeshayahu 40:27). And he answers: "they who trust in π ' shall renew their strength as eagles grow new plumes: they shall run and not grow weary, they shall march and not grow faint" (40:31). "Fear not, for I am with you" (41:10).

For a country reading the forecasts

This Shabbat falls three days before Israel votes. For weeks the country has read the sky: seat projections, threshold math, coalition maps. Those numbers are real work, and some of them will turn out right.

But Lech Lecha gives a Jew a different place to stand while the numbers come in. The Torah doesn't tell Avram the forecast is a lie. It tells him the forecast describes Avram, and that G-d is about to make him Avraham. A people is not its polls. A person isn't the reading of his chart. *Ein mazal l'Yisrael*: Israel is not bound by a constellation (Shabbat 156a).

This isn't a promise about any list or any outcome. Avraham's descendants went down to Egypt anyway, exactly as the covenant between the pieces foretold, and they came out anyway. It's a statement about who writes the end of the story. On Tuesday we'll vote and count, as a free people should. On Shabbat we step outside the tent and look up, and we remember that the One who counts the stars also counts us.

For the table

When G-d told Avram to count the stars "if you are able," He knew Avram couldn't. Perhaps that was the point. Some promises are kept by learning to live with numbers you can't finish counting.

A question for the table: what "forecast" about yourself, your family or your people have you been treating as fixed, and what would it mean to step outside the tent?

A second question: Avram believed before he saw any change, and it was "accounted to him as righteousness." When have you trusted before the evidence came in?

Shabbat shalom.

Sources checked on 22 Oct 2026 (Chabad.org Chumash with Rashi, Judaica Press, for Bereishit 12:1, 14:23, 15:1–6 and Rashi on 15:3, 15:5 and 15:6; Sefaria JPS for Bereishit 17:1–5 and Yeshayahu 40:27–31 and 41:10). The Nedarim 32a and Bereishit Rabbah 44 references are as cited in Rashi. Shabbat 156a is cited by name only. The election date is a civic calendar fact and is named only as timing.

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