

**PREGNANT EMPTINESS -
A MIDRASH ON THE MOMENTS BEFORE LEKH LEKHA**

by

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Terah took his son Abram, his grandson Lot, and his daughter-in-law, Sarai, and he left Ur Kasdim, and he traveled toward the land of Canaan. They came as far as Haran, and settled there. Terah was 205 years old when he died in Haran. (Gen. 11: 31-32)

It's chilly sitting here under the stars. Even with the vastness of the desert night sky, I feel so alone. So small. In the deepest place of my heart, I know my G!d is there - somewhere, afar. But tonight in this strange land of Haran, that is so little comfort. So little comfort.

I don't understand how all this happened, so quickly. Everything once familiar is gone. Dad is dead; my brother Haran, he died so young, didn't even get to raise his own son. I miss *Ur Kasdim*, its familiar sounds, smells, our old home. All the family - gone! No news. Now, it's just the three of us, grief stricken, sad, lost.

At moments I want to scream out, "Terah ben Nahor, why did you get us all into this mess? Why did we have to leave everything that was comfortable back home, in search of this unknown land Canaan? For what? And then you died! How could you do that to us?" But I don't think he really wanted to die. I guess there is "*a time to live, a time to die*" and Dad's time was up.

So often throughout the day I think of my father. I miss him so much. That last conversation we had together keeps re-playing in my mind. "Avram," he said, "I don't understand your G!ds, your ways are so different than mine. But I am proud of you, proud to see you following your G!ds just as I followed my G!d's. I forgive you for wrecking havoc in my idol studio when you were younger." Of course, I had to correct him, and tell him it was one G!d, not gods. But he smiled with a twinkle in his eye, knowing he was riling me once more. That was our closure, a tender teasing moment. I knew he loved me, in spite of all that had happened over the years. I am glad he lived long enough for there to be healing between us.

I hear Lot yelling in his sleep, more night terrors. Poor kid! It was my father's idea to bring him along with us, Dad was like a father to him. Lot has been so traumatized by death. He doesn't let on, but I see it in that distant look in his eyes. Sometimes I try to reach him, I tell him a story about my father, or my brother Haran - his father - but he shrugs it off, disinterested. When I am around him I want to cry. Is it my grief? Or his?

I miss my brother Haran even more now that Dad is dead. I wish we could talk. Even if he was the younger one, I remember how I could always confide in him. He would listen when I was upset about something or other that happened between Dad and I. When he was older we would laugh, making fun of how Dad would grumble at both of us. Whenever I see Lot, I see Haran's face. I want to hug him, but stop myself. I wish I could reach him. At times, he is like a son to Sarai and I, but he is becoming a man, he is in his

own world. I looked at him closely today, he seems so lost, distant. What's going to happen to him? We will need to find him a wife soon.

Sarai sleeps quietly in her tent. Poor woman, she is so beautiful, but I see her aging each day. This infertility has taken its toll. There is such a big empty hole between us. We don't even look each other in the eye. A numbing silence crevices through my body when she walks by. How did this happen? How did we get to this point? What is she thinking? Does she hate me? I wonder. I am so sad, angry that G!d has not blessed us with children. Why? Why us? This has been going on so long. I hardly even want to visit her tent any more, the passion is dying out. I sense she feels the same way. I saw her praying in her tent early this morning as the sun rose, I could see tears streaming down her cheeks. For me, it's almost impossible to keep praying to a G!d who has not answered our prayers. How long will this continue?

I just don't understand the intensity of all that is happening to our family. Everything seems to have fallen apart. I feel rudderless, lost. Life feels so empty...

It was not that long ago, when we first left Ur for Canaan. We were on the threshold of something new. I trusted my father's vision, and believed G!d was with us. I felt the call to a new destiny. Terah was following the passions of his heart. Sarai and I were in love, and we had faith our family life was about to begin. We were all starting over and bringing Lot into a new life. We had the audacity of hope.

Now, stuck here in Haran, surrounded by these shadows of death, infertility, loss... I don't know any more. Sometimes I think we should all go back home. But we've come this far, can we really go back to the old?

In quiet moments I sense there is something important I am supposed to do, something that calls from deep within, or perhaps from that most distant star off in the heavens. But is it a dream, some delusional fantasy I have that this solitary man Avram ben Terah can leave my imprint in the world? Or will I simply die, like any other desert nomad, and be buried in the shifting desert sands, cast away to the wind?

I am so weary. Tonight, under these stars I need to sit with this emptiness, and listen, listen deeply. Perhaps if I can hold onto the audacity of hope, perhaps my G!d can show me the next step on this journey.

Adonai said to Abram: Leave your land, your birthplace, and your father's house and go to the land I will show you. I promise to make your descendents into a great nation. I will bless them and make them great. You shall become a blessing. (Gen. 12:1-2).

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