

## Lech L'cha: A Journey Ancient and New

תֵּרַח עוֹבֵד צִלָּמִים הָיָה. Terah was an idol maker.

Once he traveled to another place and left his son, Abraham, to sell the idols. This is what would happen: Someone would come wanting to buy an idol and Abraham would say to him: “How old are you?” The buyer would say, “I’m 50.” Or, “I’m 60.” Abraham would reply: “Such a pity that a 60 year old is looking to bow down to an idol that is a day old.” The buyer would be embarrassed and leave.

One time a woman came bearing a flour offering. She said to Abraham: “Offer this before the idols.” Abraham picked up a walking stick and smashed all of the idols but the biggest one and then put the stick into the hand of that statue.

When his father returned and saw the damage, he said to Abraham: “Who did all of this?” Abraham said: “There’s no sense in keeping it from you. A woman came with a flour offering and asked me to please offer it to the idols. I brought them the offering and then one said: ‘I’m eating first,’ and another idol said: ‘I’m eating first.’ Then the biggest of the idols got up, picked up a walking stick, and smashed all of the other idols.”

Terah said: “Why are you trying to fool me? Are they living beings?!” Abraham replied:

וְלֹא יִשְׁמְעוּ אָזְנוֹיָךְ מֶה שֶׁפִּיךְ אוֹמֵר! “Don’t your ears hear what your mouth is saying?!”

Genesis Rabbah 38:13 (The story is told in Aramaic except for the first and last lines in Hebrew)

אֲנַחְנוּ כְּלָנוּ בְּנֵי אַבְרָהָם  
אֲבָל אֲנַחְנוּ גַם הַנִּכְדִּים שֶׁל תֵּרַח, אָבִי אַבְרָהָם.  
וְעַכְשָׁיו אוֹלֵי הַגִּיעַ זְמַן הַנִּכְדִּים לַעֲשׂוֹת  
לְאַבְיָהֶם מֶה שֶׁהוּא עָשָׂה לְאָבִיו,  
שֶׁשָּׁבַר אֶת תֵּרַפָּיו וְאֶלִּילָיו, אֶת דָּתוֹ וְאֶמוּנָתוֹ.  
אֲבָל גַּם זֹאת תִּהְיֶה הַתְחֵלַת דָּת חֲדָשָׁה.

We are all children of Abraham  
but we are also the grandchildren of Terah, Abraham’s father.  
And now, perhaps, the time has come for the grandchildren to do  
to their father what he did to his father  
when he broke his statues and idols, his religion and faith.  
But this, too, will be the beginning of a new religion.

Yehuda Amichai, from Patuah, Sagur, Patuah  
Translated by Rabbi Steven Sager