

## WHAT MATTERS IN THE CLUTTER

### A Devotional Meditation on Lech Lecha (Go Forth)

Genesis 12:1-17:27; Isaiah 40:27-41:16; 1 Kings 19:11-18;  
Proverbs 29:18; Hosea 4:6; Zechariah 4:10; Luke 19:41-44; 1 Corinthians 2:14-16

Albert J. McCarn

November 7, 2024

An enduring irony of human history is that we miss the great events because our attention is captured by the big events. In American history, for example, the British Parliament and King George III were so caught up in absorbing the Canadian territories they acquired through war with France that they failed to consider that their colonial policies might create a permanent rift with their American subjects. The colonists' protests of the Stamp Act in 1765 marked the beginning of that rift. Few at the time understood that, within twenty years, the independence of the United States would be a reality. Even the most visionary observers probably never anticipated that independence would one day lead to American prominence in and even dominance of world affairs. Such is the case with small beginnings. Few recognize them as significant, and some despise them, but those who inquire of the Lord will understand in time.



*The Political Cartoon for the Year. United States, 1775. Cartoon shows George III and Lord Mansfield, seated on an open chaise drawn by horses labeled "Obstinacy" and "Pride," about to lead Britain into an abyss represented by the war with the American colonies. ([Library of Congress #97514880](#)).*

This is a biblical principle. God tells us of this when he says, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge" (Hosea 4:6), and "Where there is no prophetic vision people cast off restraint" (Proverbs 29:18). Messiah Yeshua spoke pointedly about it in his lament over Jerusalem:

And when he drew near and saw the city, he wept over it, saying, "Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. For the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up a barricade around you and surround you and hem you in on every side and tear you down to the ground, you and your children within you. And they will not leave one stone upon another in you, because you did not know the time of your visitation."

Luke 19:41-44 ESV

As Yeshua spoke these words, the people of Judea were preparing for the Passover celebration, and beyond that had little expectation that their lives would change. Factions among the Jewish people were busy either appeasing the Roman occupying power, collaborating with it, or opposing it. Only a handful of people among the Jews, and fewer still among the Gentiles, recognized that God was intervening in human affairs through the advent of his Messiah. It would be many years before Yeshua's disciples could look

back and see how the small beginnings of his ministry would shake the whole world and advance God's plan of redemption.

God moves constantly in and around and through us, but his presence is so subtle and quiet that we miss it. We expect great, obvious moves of God, like seas dividing, manna raining from heaven, and mass revival, but while looking for those theatrical displays of divine intervention, we often miss what he is doing right in front of us. Perhaps we should review the lesson Elijah taught us: that God speaks more often in a still, small voice, than in great things like earthquakes, windstorms, and wildfires. Only those attuned to his voice can hear him. Paul explains that this way:

The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. The spiritual person judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one. "For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ.

1 Corinthians 2:14-16 ESV

The *mind of Christ* means a connection to the consciousness of God our Father. That kind of connection has been available since the dawn of time, but few have sought it out, and fewer still received it. Now it is available for the asking, thanks to the atoning work of Messiah Yeshua, but it still has to be cultivated and exercised to be effective as our Redeemer intends.

This is another lesson we learn from the life of Abraham, the father of our faith. In his day, as in ours, events great and small captured the attention of people, but few could discern how those events worked into God's plan of redemption for the world. Few people even realized that there was one God above all gods. That's the whole point of why God called Abraham out of his homeland in Mesopotamia.

At the distance of 4,000 years, we now can see how the Almighty directed Abraham's steps through encounters with the superpowers of the day. His family escaped the clutches of Babylon's ruler, Nimrod, and set out to answer God's call to go to a new land. Along the way, they stopped in territory that belonged to Hittite Empire, and for a while sojourned in Egypt. Those three empires contended with one another for control over Canaan, the land God had promised to Abraham and his descendants. They paid little attention to this solitary family, except when it became personal, as when Egypt's Pharaoh suffered God's judgment for abducting Abraham's wife, Sarah.

The regional powers in Canaan likewise paid little attention to this immigrant Hebrew family, except when they directly impacted their economic prospects. That's why Abraham's nephew, Lot, became part of Sodom's wicked society, and why Abraham could gain allies among the Amorite elites of Canaan. Still, no one would have suspected that the real work God was doing was through that Hebrew family. They were more interested in the activities of the rich and powerful, as when the kings of Abraham's old homeland invaded Canaan and defeated the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Perhaps the common people viewed the Mesopotamian invasion as liberation from the tyranny of Sodom, and relief from the meddling of the Egyptians and Hittites in their affairs. No one would have expected that God would intervene by having Abraham and

his allies attack the victorious Mesopotamian armies and, against all odds, defeat them. The only one who noticed was Melchizedek, the king of Salem, who praised God and blessed Abraham, his chosen deliverer.

The story ended there for most of Abraham's contemporaries. After encountering the Almighty through brief association with his agent, they went back to their ordinary lives. That's why we don't remember their names or anything they did. We do remember Melchizedek, though. We also remember people who took to heart the godly lessons Abraham taught by example. They came into the story much later, and they stand out as the ones who survived God's judgment by attaching themselves to his people and their God. That would be people like Rahab, the harlot of Jericho, Uriah, the Hittite warrior servant of King David, and the entire population of the Hivite city of Gibeon. We don't think of such people as having the mind of Christ, but we should think of them as having a measure of spiritual discernment. That's how they could see beyond the clutter of big events, and recognize the truly great events where God was at work.