

Jenna Behan

Lech L'cha

Emanuel Synagogue

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Shabbat Shalom!

“Go forth from your native land and from your father’s house to the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation, I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you and curse he that curses you; and all the families of the earth shall bless themselves by you “(Genesis 12.9). The beginning of this week’s parsha, Lech L’cha is based on those words of G-d. To begin the portion, G-d tells Avram to leave the land that he has lived in for 75 years and the land that his father and grandfather had lived in. To do this, Avram has to put a great deal of faith in god. This was the start of a whole new life for Avram and Sarai and also it was the start of a whole new religion, monotheism.

I remember a time that was exactly three years ago when I had to have faith and take a chance. I had just come from a long hard soccer practice, I was exhausted and the rest of my team was going home. My dad wanted to drag me to our town’s travel basketball team tryouts. I was not prepared to go to the tryouts because it was unknown to me and I did not know anyone that was going to tryout. My dad said “go, or I think that you will regret it,” in other words, “lech lecha.” I went. Through this basketball team, I met some of my best friends and it has helped me grow into a better person. It taught me to work hard and to take responsibility for myself and for my teammates. These lessons have helped me prepare to become a bat mitzvah today. At the time, I thought that it was the worst idea in the world, but now, I don’t know what my life would be like without

it. There is a Midrash on this portion that relates to my take on lech lecha very well. Rabbi Mei ha shi-loah said "Go forth to find your authentic self, to learn who you are meant to be." I think that this is what my dad was thinking when he made me try out for the team. Today is an important day and a lech lecha moment. Now that I am a bat mitzvah, I am going to be learning and discovering who I am. This will be a wild ride with ups and down. It will be interesting and fun as I continue to discover who I truly am meant to be.

When Avram leaves his homeland and departs for the land of Canaan, he leaves much of the things that were familiar to him. He is entering a whole new world of knowledge and wonder, whether or not he realizes it, because G-d gave him that chance. G-d gives Avram the gift of a chance. This is like my bat mitzvah project. I am collecting gently used shoes as part of the Soles for Souls effort. In some countries, a public education is free except for the cost of shoes. I am trying to give these children the chance to have a good, educated life. For many families in these countries, one pair of shoes is much too much to ask. Most of us take shoes and an education for granted, but these kids go around barefoot all day. When it comes time for school many of them do not have a single pair of shoes, preventing them from going to school. This incredible worldwide project has donated over 10 million pairs of shoes, meaning that over 10 million more children have a better, educated life. Soles for Souls donates to over 125 countries in the world, including Kenya, Thailand, Nepal and, believe it or not, the United States. Anyone can help deserving children enter their new world of knowledge with a pair of old shoes. This may save the child's life, and this is exactly what becoming a bat mitzvah means to me. Now that I am an adult in the Jewish community, I have the full responsibility to act and be a better

person. Becoming a bat mitzvah is a milestone in my life as a Jew, but I will never stop learning.

To conclude my dvar torah, I would like to thank all the people that helped me make this day possible. First I would like to thank the entire Emanuel community and all of my friends for support. I would not be able to do any of the things I did today without my bat mitzvah teacher, Rhonda Holtman; thank you Rhonda. You rock! Thank you to my sister, for putting up with me when I get angry and believing in me for the whole ride. Lastly I would like to thank my mom and dad. I know I do not say this enough but I love you. Thank you for everything that you do for me. Please turn to page 69 in the big red book.