

Genesis 12:1-4a

Now the LORD said to Abram,

‘Go
from your country
and your kindred
and your father’s house

to the land
that I will show you.

²I will make of you
a great nation,

and I will bless you,
and make your name great,
so that you will be a blessing.

³I will bless those
who bless you,

and the one
who curses you
I will curse;

and in you
all the families
of the earth
shall be blessed.^{r*}

⁴ So Abram went,
as the LORD had told him;
and Lot went with him.

John 3:1-17

Now there was a Pharisee
named Nicodemus,
a leader of the Jews.

²He came to Jesus by night
and said to him,

‘Rabbi,
we know that you are a teacher
who has come from God;
for no one can do
these signs that you do
apart from the presence of God.’

³Jesus answered him,

‘Very truly, I tell you,
no one can see
the kingdom of God
without being born from above.^{r*}

⁴Nicodemus said to him,

‘How can anyone be born
after having grown old?

Can one enter a second time
into the mother’s womb
and be born?’

⁵Jesus answered,

‘Very truly, I tell you,
no one can enter the kingdom of God
without being born of water and Spirit.

⁶What is born of the flesh is flesh,
and what is born of the Spirit is spirit.

⁷Do not be astonished that I said to you,
"You must be born from above."^{*}

⁸The wind blows where it chooses,
and you hear the sound of it,
but you do not know where it comes from
or where it goes.

So it is with everyone
who is born of the Spirit.'

⁹Nicodemus said to him,
'How can these things be?'

¹⁰Jesus answered him,
'Are you a teacher of Israel,
and yet you do not understand these things?

¹¹'Very truly, I tell you,
we speak of what we know
and testify to what we have seen;
yet you do not receive our testimony. ¹

¹²If I have told you about earthly things
and you do not believe,
how can you believe
if I tell you about heavenly things?

¹³No one has ascended into heaven
except the one
who descended from heaven,
the Son of Man.

¹⁴And just as
Moses lifted up the serpent
in the wilderness,

so must the Son of Man
be lifted up,

¹⁵that whoever believes in him
may have eternal life.

¹⁶'For God so loved the world
that he gave his only Son,
so that everyone who believes in him
may not perish
but may have eternal life.

¹⁷'Indeed,
God did not send the Son
into the world
to condemn the world,
but in order that
the world might be saved
through him.

Reading Torah this Week

Genesis 12 marks a change from myths to legends,
from universal stories of humankind, '*toledot*' of Adam, Noah
to particular peoples' stories: '*toledot*' of Avram-Yitzaak-Yaakov

Lech Lecha – get up and go
Avram in Haran, at the foot of the Tigris-Euphrates,
south end of Iraq, rooted with Terah – leaves

Avram is called, sent,
out of a land and a people, into a land and a people
with a first offer and promise, to be repeated and reframed

We're to read this in the first person:
'my father was a wandering Aramean, we were slaves in Egypt'
not to claim by 'reich, volk, land' – but by call and choice

What happens when others read it in the first person:
Jewish or Islamic people,
migrants, immigrants, refugees?

Moving from universal humanity to particular peoples,
is it a curse, of Noah's sons, of Babel's scattering,
the roots of genocidal warfare?

In what way is it a blessing,
for children of Avram, or for all nations who bless them,
and is this simply a Zionist land claim?

What's your existential root, your right to reside,
not based on birth, or on merit
but on call and choice?

Hear this in audio from 2022 podcast:

<http://www.hereticslikeus.com/2022/01/introducing-avram-genesis-12.html>

Reading Gospel this Week

John 3 is the first long Lent reading from the 4th gospel
Nicodemus coming to Jesus at night
best known for its 'born again' verse, 3:16

We prefer our bible in slogans, or verses,
resisting the harder work of hearing a voice whole,
and reducing the word to a binary code

genēthē anōthen – born from above
How does your translation render 3:3, 3:7,
or all the other 'born' combinations?

sarx – flesh, *pneuma* - spirit
what's our genesis, generation, conception, womb
what's our degeneration, or regeneration experience?

do the metaphors of wind and water,
temporal diction of 'again' or 'after old',
spatial imagery of 'above' or below,
categories of 'heavenly' or 'earthly'
work for you?

another can of worms: *pistis*
belief, faith, trust, work in response
reduced to 'assent to propositional truth'
or 'conversion choice'
what do your translations prefer?

God's out to 'save the world' – *cosmos*
what's your vision of John's Jesus-
Superman from Krypton? Alien invader?
are we just getting a lifeboat ticket to escape?

not to mention 'Snake on a Stick' (search the blogs...)