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1. Question of Ramban: why at beginning story Noah, Torah tells us he was ISH TZADDIK, and with Abraham it begins only with Lech Lecha and no comment as to his righteousness.
2. Sfass Emess answers: difference is, contrarily, to credit of Abraham. Noah was a Tzaddik - a pious person, and never developed any further. Chazal: that he was commanded to build Ark for 120 years as method of educating, awakening his people, exerting his leadership. But he failed - built it for himself and his family, and that's all. G-d had given him a great gift and the opportunity to use it - the gift of leadership, spiritual leadership. But he relinquished it. And that it, in the eyes of the Torah, was a major crime. The fact that he had the potentiality for leadership was not to his credit - potentiality is not a real thing (Jewish journalist recently: potentially, every potato is a latke). And when it is there but not realized - then man has not fulfilled his obligations either to G-d or fellow-man
3. With Abraham, however, the Torah means to tell us that he surpassed the stage of mere Tzaddik. For, says the Sfass Emess, the call of Lech Lecha was not given to Abraham alone. It was given to all men who had the spirit, the energy, the ability. GO! get out of the rut, transcend your own shortcomings and take your people with you. That call of Lech Lecha is given to every man who has the capacity to achieve great things for his fellows. If he is a good fellow by and for himself, then he is merely a Tzaddik - he is only a Noah not an Abraham. The greatness of Abr lay in that he responded to that challenge and was not satisfied with personal piety, but led his society to greatness.
4. Our Rabbis noticed that difference in the characters ~~of~~ and destinies of these two Biblical characters in the description of their religious natures by Torah. Noah :ES HA'ELOKIM HISHALECH NOACH...with G-d, himself, not overly anxious to do more than what he regarded as his share. But Abr:HISHALECH LEFANAY.. before G-d, a pioneer of the spirit, a trail-blazer and not only a blaze-trailer. The one makes for passing mediocrity, the other for unexcelled greatness.
5. That call of Lech Lecha , of spritual progress, religious growth, of leadership, is, as Sfass Emess says, a call that goes out to all of us. To those of us who cannot by nature be leaders, that means that we are to outgrow our own limitations in every way possible for us. We are to get out of the rut of daily aimlessness. It means we must learn to be dissatisfied with ourselves and strive for greater achievements. A

And for those of us whom G-d has endowed with the ability to lead, it meant that the call of Lech Lecha is a sacred obligation: it is CHOVAH, not RESHUS; leadership is not a privilege but a clear duty which we dare not shrug off when time and circumstances call upon us to give of this G-dly talent.

Of course, it is a difficult task. Of course all Jewish leaders were reluctant to accept great leadership. From Moses thru Isaiah thru Jeremiah thru Hillel thru the Vilno Gaon there was great hesitation. But the final outcome was never in doubt. Imagine what would have been the fate of Israel had Moses refused to exert himself. No, you needn't do much imagining. Just look at the great potential of Orthodoxy today and the achievements of it which, while notable, are far behind what they could be. It is because our leaders - both lay and rabbinic - will not lead. There is no doubt in my mind that the greatest mind any branch of Judaism has, the greatest thinker, philosopher.....is in our ranks. Yet he refuses to lead, to write, to exert his titanic influence.

That criticism holds true for lay leadership. Ask any practicing Rabbi today greatest difficulty - getting lay leaders to do the job that they must do if we are to have any kind of growth and progress. You cannot expect a man of 75 IQ to be a scholar, but if a man of 150 IQ refuses to be so, he is delinquent in his duties. So with leadership - there is no argument with those who are not born with the knack for... but.....

6. Baal Shem - Tzaddik in peltz (and fire)....

7. Actually, the Tzaddik in peltz is one who commits a crime - yes, a crime. For by default he shows his disregard and unconcern fellow-man.....Rabenu Tam. God to Noah: no humans...Ark with animals...if you refuse to lead humans, follow the beasts!

8. This then is the call of Lech Lecha - it goes out to all men, particularly those who have the talents of the Abrahams - that of leading the TZOAN KOF SHIM, the sacred flock of Israel

9. When that opportunity is turned down - then it is an act of cruelty punishable by beastliness. If it is accepted, despite the difficulties that inhere in it, then, as Rashi...LE'TOVASCHA ULE'HANAASCHA . . . the benefits accrue not only to those who follow but also to those who lead. For then the spirit and the soul of the man whom G-d has so blessed is enriched by his sympathy, the idealism and the compassion that a true dedicated and spiritual leader must learn if he is to succeed.