Instead of yes, a verb

It is my favorite word in this week's Torah reading. It might even be my favorite word in the whole Torah (although I refuse to commit to one). It is a moment of quiet, revolutionary human agency.

Rebecca is a woman of clear conviction. When Abraham's servant chooses her to marry Isaac, her family requests a delay. In an unusual act of deference for the ancient world, her mother and brother leave the choice entirely to her:

וַיִּקְרְאוּ לְרִבְקָה וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלֶיהָ הֲתֵלְכִי עִם־הָאִישׁ הַזֶּה וַתֹּאמֶר אֵלֵךְ׃

They called Rebecca and said to her, "Will you go with this man?" And she said, "Elech: I will go." (Genesis 24:58)

Consulting a woman about her marriage was hardly the norm in the ancient Near East—even Isaac was not asked for his consent. Offered a simple question, Rebecca does not just nod. She answers with an active verb of movement and purpose: *Elech* (*I will go*).

Rashi captures the steel in her response: **מֵעַצְמִי, וְאַף אִם אֵינָכֶם רוֹצִים — "***I will go of my own accord, even if you do not want it.***"** *Elech*—literally, *I will walk*—is a word that should be emblazoned on a t-shirt, a pair of hiking shoes, or atop a desk at work. It is a bold statement: *I am taking my own course.*

Talmud scholar Professor Judith Hauptman notes that in this single word, Rebecca takes ownership of both her personal destiny and the future of the Jewish people. Professor Hauptman places Rebecca on par with Abraham, who left his family in response to God's command (*Lech Lecha* --"Go forth"). But where Abraham moved by divine decree, Rebecca acts out of pure volition, recognizing the weight of the moment and embracing it..

> *When she answers 'yes, I will go,' she is saying that she sees the future unfolding of Jewish history and the role she is being asked to play in it.*

This same readiness for action can be seen generations later in the Book of Ruth. When binding her fate to Naomi, Ruth uses the exact same word:**כִּי אֶל־אֲשֶׁר תֵּלְכִי אֵלֵךְ**׃"*For wherever you go, I will go."* (Ruth 1:16) For both women, *Elech* is not just about physical movement; it is an act of radical trust and courage.

It's also an idea that can push us through hard times. *Gam ki elech*—"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me." (Psalm 23:4) Saying *Elech* represents a refusal to be paralyzed by fear. The act of walking itself becomes the assertion of faith.

Rebecca teaches us that fulfilling our purpose-- or walking tall through life- does not require complete certainty or a fully mapped-out road. It simply requires the courage to own our agency, step into the unknown, and say: *Elech*— ready or not, I will go.