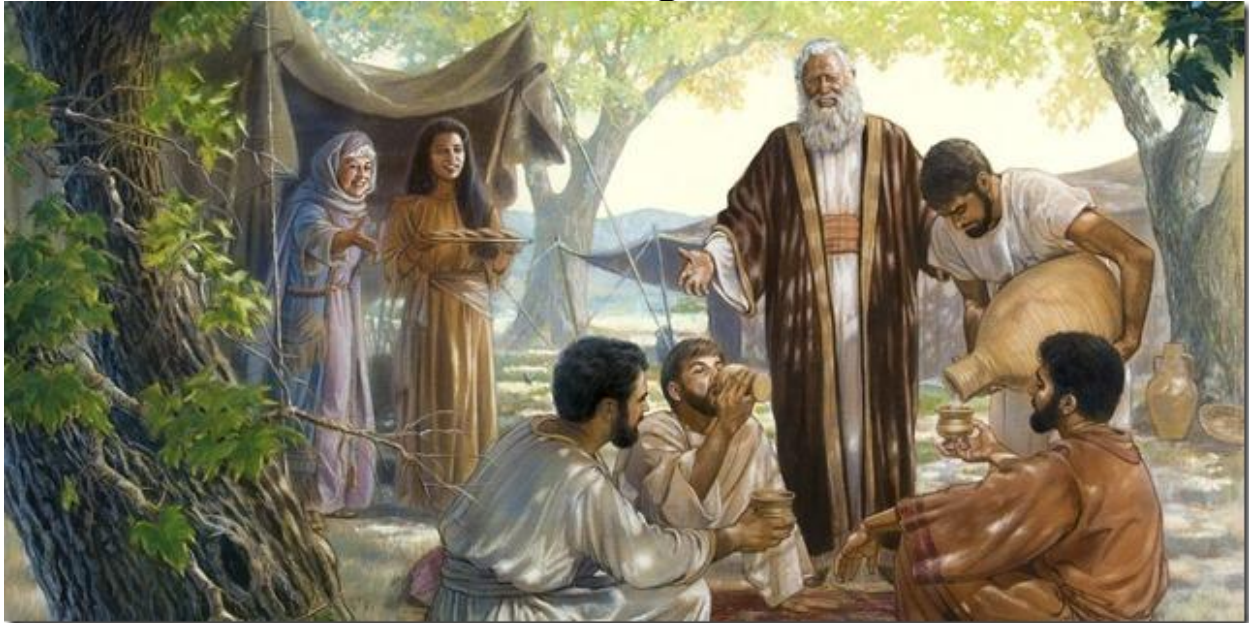


Beth Tephila Messianic Jewish Congregation

(Under same management for over 5779 years)

SHABBAT SERVICE

October 27th – 10:30 AM Lolo Community "Synagogue"
12:30 PM Oneg Shabbat



"And he took curds and milk and the calf, which he had prepared, and placed it before them..."

Parsha Va Yera -- Genesis 18 - 22

וַיֵּרָא אֵלָיו יְהוָה בְּאֶלְנֵי מַמְרֵא וְהוּא יֹשֵׁב פֶּתַח הָאֹהֶל בְּחֹם הַיּוֹם:

Vayera elav Adonai b'Elonei Mamre vehu yoshev petach-ha'ohel k'chom hayom.

"And the Lord appeared to him by the oaks of Mamre, while he was sitting at the tent door in the heat of the day."

Contrasts & Commonalities

In the Torah portion, **Va Yera**, "And He appeared," we observe contrasts and commonalities in the character and lives of God's people versus the lives of those with whom they come into contact. Some of God's people will "lose their blessing," resulting from making poor choices that remove themselves from God's "umbrella of protection." Others will find themselves included by extension in the blessings of God's people through no merit of their own doing. We will observe both unparalleled faith and obedience to God's commands and self-serving "bull-headedness".....even from the same individual. We will see God's grace and protective provision as well as His devastating judgment. We will see the results of miraculous faith in God's promises and the results of inserting "our plans" into God's promises for quicker results.

As we observe these contrasts and commonalities, let us remember that they are examples for us to know how to please God on His terms. Let us learn from the triumphs and mistakes of others, so that our lives will be pleasing to Him.



"And when he lifted up his eyes and looked, behold, three men were standing opposite him..."

Entertaining Angels

Hebrews 13:1-3 admonishes us to love fellow believers and to show God's kindness to strangers, ill-treated ones and even to prisoners. For in doing so, we might be entertaining angels without knowing it.

In **Chapter 18**, we find Abraham living near Hebron (originally called Kiriath Arba), where he had previously built an altar to God (**Genesis 13:18**), by the oaks of Mamre about 22 miles South of Jerusalem. Suddenly Abraham found himself in the presence of three "men." We will come to find out that one of these "men" is the Messiah; a theophany, the presence of Messiah in the Tanakh. [A theophany occurs when a man appears "out of thin air" for a particular purpose, something only God could do or cause to happen. He would be recognized as God and then vanish, when His task was finished.] Abraham was 99 years old and may have been recently been circumcised. He was evidently resting in the shade during the hottest part of the day as was the custom, when all of a sudden there were three "men" standing nearby. Realizing that these "men" were strangers, Abraham ran to greet them and to offer them hospitality. Running while recuperating from circumcision must have been painful for Abraham. Yet for Abraham **hospitality** meant putting aside caring for himself to care for others. In their culture, the minimum requirement of hospitality was that the host provide the stranger a cup of coffee. Abraham offered his guests much more. First he had water brought to wash their weary feet. Then he asked Sarah to make some fresh bread cakes for them. Then he ran to where his cattle were pastured and ordered that a choice calf be slaughtered and prepared for his guests along with curds and milk. [Again note the absence of kosher laws.] While they partook, he stood to serve them. Compare the attitude of Abraham towards unexpected visitors with that of many of us today. How many of us, while recovering from an operation, would jump up to serve an uninvited stranger, who showed up at our door? How many of us would have the audacity to ask our wives to stop what they were doing and quickly cook a meal "from scratch?" There were no canned goods, frozen foods or microwave ovens in Sarah's "kitchen." While we might treat unexpected strangers at our door like "**schnorrers**" (beggars or moochers, who might come to the back door for a handout), Abraham and Sarah treated them as guests, met their physical needs, and continued to serve them. What a witness for the "**chesed**" (covenantal loving-kindness) of their God!

While Abraham remained talking with his uninvited guests, he would eventually realize that these "men" were different from any other men he had known. The first clue might have been when one of the strangers knew the name of his wife. The next clue certainly would have been the prediction of one the guests that when he returned in a year, Sarah, who had already gone through menopause, would have a son. Sarah laughed to herself at the thought that she would be able to bear a child, even though God had thus previously informed them (Gen.17:19-21). Sarah denied that she had laughed, but "the Lord," who had heard her inward laugh, corrected her....another clue that this guest was not an ordinary man. As the "men" stood to leave, Abraham extended hospitality by walking along with them for awhile. The last and most revealing clue that Abraham was talking to Messiah, Himself, immediately followed. "...The Lord said, "Shall 'I' hide from Abraham what 'I' am about to do,..." and He repeated the Abrahamic covenant **told to Abraham only by God**. No simple stranger would have known that! The Lord told Abraham that the sin in Sodom and Gomorrah was great. Immediately, Abraham knew that he was speaking to God. Abraham went from being host to "men" to confronting God as an intercessor for the righteous ones in these two cities that he recognized were about to be destroyed by God. Abraham went from meeting the physical needs of strangers to negotiating with these strangers for the physical salvation of others in those two cities. In an age where we are told that it is best to "not get involved" in the situations of others, we should remember the picture of Abraham providing hospitality and intercession to strangers. Abraham also knew that his nephew Lot and Lot's family lived in Sodom and must have considered all of them to be righteous ones. Abraham must have figured that with Lot and his wife and two unmarried sons and two unmarried daughters along with his two married daughters and their husbands (Gen.19:14), there were at least ten righteous people in Sodom. Abraham tried to negotiate with God to reduce the number of righteous people necessary to save the city -- to the number he knew were in the family of Lot, whom he considered to be righteous because they were in Lot's family. **Contrast the intercession of Abraham**, who had pursued and defeated the captors of Lot and other citizens of Sodom, and who stood before God to negotiate for the welfare of the righteous ones of Sodom **with Noah**. There is no record of Noah making a physical effort or an appeal to God to save any people other than his immediate family. With Abraham we see a willingness to act on behalf of the welfare of others. Through the concern and actions of Abraham, others could be drawn to the God of Abraham. There is a comparison with the "great commission" of **Matthew 28:19-20**, where the disciples were told to go to "all the nations" to make disciples and to teach these nations to observe all Messiah commanded.



וַיִּהְיֶה הַמָּטָר עַל-סְדוֹם וְעַל-עֲמֹרָה אֵשׁ מֵאֵת יְהוָה מִן-הַשָּׁמַיִם:

Va'**Adonai** himtir al-Sedom v'al-Amorah gofrit va'esh me'et **Adonai** min-hashamayim.

"Then the **Lord** rained on Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire **from the Lord** out of heaven..."

"But his wife from behind him looked back; and she became a pillar of salt."

God Rescues Lot, But Destroys Sodom

We remember from Genesis 13 that Abram allowed his nephew, Lot, to choose from all the land, the place where he would settle. Lot chose the Valley of the Jordan because the land appeared to be the best - "like the garden of the Lord"- and settled in the cities of the valley as far as Sodom. However, as is often the case, what appears from a human perspective to be "the best" is

not the best from God's perspective. "Now the men of Sodom were wicked exceedingly and sinners against the Lord" (Gen.13:13). The Lord told Abraham (Gen.18:20) that the outcry of Sodom and Gomorrah was great and their sin was exceedingly grave. In **Chapter 19**, the two angels made their way to the city gate of Sodom. They approach Lot, who is sitting by the gate of the city. This is where public business is done. Therefore Lot must be either a businessman or have a high position such as being a judge in the city. When Lot saw the strangers approach, he, like Abraham, showed hospitality and strongly urged the strangers to eat with his family and spend the night at his house. Without telling the strangers about the evil men of the city, Lot took these strangers into his home to keep them safe. However, word of these visitors became public knowledge, and the men of Sodom surrounded Lot's house. They demanded that the visitors be turned over to them to have sex with them. Lot tried to reason with the men of the city, even offering his two virgin daughters to them, but was unsuccessful. While Lot is called "righteous" in 2nd Peter 2:7-8 and did offer hospitality and safety to the strangers, it is obvious that the men of Sodom changed Lot more than Lot effected their lives. It was then that the visiting angels took control, rescuing Lot and blinding the homosexual men, so that Lot and his family could escape the city. However, it was only reluctantly that Lot agreed to leave after it was agreed that he could go to the small town Zoar. He was told to 1) escape for your life; 2) do not look behind you; 3) do not stay anywhere in the valley (except he was allowed to go to Zoar). Interestingly, Lot was told to hurry because the angel could not do anything until Lot was safe. Illustrated is what I call: God's principle of protection by extension. Because God keeps His promises, those who are attached to the person or people protected by God's promise are also protected. "God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when He overthrew the cities in which Lot lived" (19:29). We observe that similarly there was no flood until Noah and his family were provided for by God. God provides for His righteous ones (notice, we're not talking about perfect ones...Lot was far from perfect), while exercising judgment on those perpetrating evil.

Then the "Lord rained on Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven" (vs. 24). [By the way, how many "Lords" ("Adonai") are seen here? This is another incidence showing the plurality of the Godhead.] Lot's wife disobeyed and looked back, becoming a pillar of salt. The "look" described here means a longing look or prolonged gaze, as if longing for what was left behind. (When one leaves a sinful situation, one should never longingly look back, secretly wishing to return to that situation.) Messiah uses this event, as a comparison of the events preceding judgment in the days of Noah and in the days of Lot, when people were going about their "normal" evil deeds and were unaware that God was about to bring judgment for their wickedness, warning those, who are on the path to safety to not look back towards their former lives. They should remember Lot's wife. Whoever seeks to keep his life shall lose it, and whoever loses his life shall preserve it" Luke 17:21-33).

Completing **Chapter 19**, Lot's daughters worry that they will have no one to marry them. So they commit incest with their father after getting him drunk. To them are born children, who will father the nations of the Moabites and the Ammonites; two nations that were a continuing snare to the Israelites.

Lot pursued wealth and went from living in a tent neighboring his uncle, Abraham, to living in a house in Sodom. Fleeing Sodom, Lot lived in a cave in the mountains overlooking Zoar. He had lost all his wealth, his wife, and some of his family, who stayed behind in Sodom. He pursued "the best," but it wasn't God's best.

Chapter 20 shows us that Abraham, whose faith in God was "reckoned (accounted) to him as righteousness," still had some trust issues with God....just like the rest of us. Abraham went to live in Gerar, which is about 10 miles South of Gaza. Abraham told Abimelech, the king of Gerar, the same story about Sarah being his sister that he had told Pharaoh in **Chapter 12**. The king takes Sarah, and again God rescues Sarah and restores her to Abraham. Abraham tries to justify himself in verse 12, saying that Sarah really was his sister and became his wife. Clearly, though, Abraham's story about Sarah being his sister was meant to deceive the King. Clearly, Abraham had not learned his lesson with his lie to Pharaoh. God's principle of protection would have protected both him and Sarah

because it would be through them that their promised child, Isaac, would come. So we might say that

Abraham had Perfect Faith....except when he didn't.....Just like all of us.

Chapter 21 records the birth of Isaac. Sarah gives God the credit for this supernatural birth saying, "God has made laughter for me;..."(vs.6). Then several years later, when Isaac was weaned, Sarah asked Abraham to send away Hagar and Ishmael. God tells Abraham to do so because his descendents will come through Isaac. Yet because of God's promises to protect and make fruitful Ishmael in Chapters 16 & 17, God keeps Hagar safe and leads her away from the land promised to Isaac.



The Binding of Isaac

Although God's promises to Abraham would come through the line of Isaac, God tells Abraham in **Chapter 22** to "Take now your son, **your only son**, whom you love, **Isaac**, and go to the land of Moriah; and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains..." How could God's promises

to Abraham be fulfilled if Isaac was to die? **This is a good example of what we should do when God doesn't seem to make sense: We obey!**

That is exactly what Abraham does. Notice that this time he doesn't attempt to intercede or to negotiate with God as he did when Lot's family was in peril, even though the one in jeopardy was his son, Isaac. Although there is the hint that Abraham believed God will let him keep Isaac. He said to his servant, ..."**we will worship and return to you**" (vs.5). He said to Isaac, who inquired, "Behold the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" Abraham answered, "My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering..." (Genesis 22:7-8). "God will provide" - this is Abraham's sole comment in the midst of what must have been great anxiety. God does indeed provide a ram as an offering in the place of Isaac. "Abraham therefore names the place **Adonai Yireh**, The-Lord-Will-Provide; 'as it is said to this day, In the Mount of the Lord it shall be provided.'" (22:14).

The Lord is our ultimate source and overseer, the King over every aspect of our lives. There is a time to wrestle with the tough questions of spiritual life, but there is also a time when the only issue is God's sovereignty. Often, it's in the midst of our greatest trials that we must affirm this truth most clearly.

So we see that God provided a substitute sacrifice for Abraham, after Abraham fully exercised his faith in doing God's will. "...Because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son, indeed I will greatly bless you..." (vs.17). As a result of his obedience, God again reiterated the Abrahamic covenant in verses 17 & 18, adding "and your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies." **How does our obedience to God stack up in comparison with the obedience of Abraham? Abraham loved God with perfect faith....except when he didn't do so....just like many of us!**

SHABBAT SHALOM

DryBones Scary Halloween Joke

