

#4 Vayera Genesis 18:1-22:24

By Moshe Schwab

While Praying:

- * We manufacture systems of ritual and belief. They are not necessarily what the Torah is based on.
- * These manufactured systems can be about almost anything. They are self interpreted ways of living and ritual.
- * People even inspect the letters of the Bible and think there is something special about them. They are thinking about everything except what they should be thinking of (keeping God's commandments).
- * One step at a time, we need to develop our lifestyle to look like how the Bible tells us to live. (We then begin looking like a person of light instead of a person of the world.)

Vayera means, “and He appeared.” This portion begins with Abraham greeting three men and offering them rest and food. One of the men says that Sarah will have a child at this time the next year and Sarah laughs. Then, one of the men is יהוה (YeHoVáh) and He asks why Sarah laughed. He says that there is nothing too hard for YeHoVáh (That would include God coming as a man and visiting Abraham.). The three men then set out for S'dom, but יהוה (YeHoVáh) stays with Abraham and reveals what He is about to do there. Abraham then intercedes for S'dom and begins asking יהוה (YeHoVáh) if He will spare them for only 50 righteous people. Abraham asks several times each time reducing the number and asking if יהוה (YeHoVáh) will spare the people there. יהוה (YeHoVáh) then leaves.

The two other men (angels) went to S'dom and Lot met them in town and invited them back to his house to eat and stay with him over night. The men of the town surrounded the house wanting to abuse the men who are actually angels. The angels pulled Lot back into the house and blinded the men outside the house. They then told Lot they were going to destroy S'dom for its evil. Lot and his family leave, urged on by the angels. S'dom and 'Amora are destroyed with brimstone and Lot's wife is made a pillar of salt because she looked back. Lot ends up having children from his daughters.

Abraham goes into the Negev and meets Avimelekh and Abraham tells Avimelekh that Sarah is his sister. Avimelekh takes Sarah as his wife, but is warned in a dream that Sarah is Abraham's wife. Avimelekh returns Sarah and also gives Abraham gifts to vindicate himself. In Avimelekh's dream God told him that Abraham is a prophet and that Abraham would pray for him. Abraham prays for him and he and his family are healed so that they can have children.

Yitz'chak was born when Abraham was 100 years old. After Yitz'chak is weaned, Sarah asks Abraham to send Hagar and Ishmael away. God tells Abraham to listen to Sarah. After Hagar was sent away Hagar initially becomes despondent, but an angel encouraged her and she found water. When Ishmael grew up, he found a wife from Egypt.

Then, Abraham and Avimelekh make an agreement. Abraham also gives Avimelekh 7 lambs as a witness for the well Abraham dug at Be'er Sheva. After this God tested Abraham and told Abraham to go to Mt. Moriah and offer up his son. After they got there just before Abraham was to offer up his son an angel stopped him and God provided a ram to sacrifice. The parashah ends with Abraham going back to Be'er Sheva and he also he finds out his brother Nachor had children.

In this portion there is an appearance of God, יהוה (YeHoVáh), as a man. We will see in future portions God appearing as a man. There is nothing too difficult for God. God also came as a man in the form of Yeshua to be a light for us. יהוה (YeHoVáh) eats and talks with Abraham and also tells Abraham that He is about to destroy S'dom. Abraham intercedes for S'dom, but S'dom and 'Amora are destroyed anyway for their wickedness. Abraham also prays for Avimelekh and his house is healed of infertility. It is often thought that prophets only give prophetic words, but God also uses prophets in healing ministry. God tests

Abraham and asks him to sacrifice his son, but God provides an alternate sacrifice. The account (the Akedah in Jewish tradition) is a picture of the future event of God giving His Son Yeshua as a sacrifice for our sin (see Isa. 53).

The Haftaráh for Vayera is 2 Kings 4:1-37. The Haftaráh for Vayera contains stories about Elisha. First he multiplies oil for a woman and her two sons to provide for them and then he heals a woman who is barren. When the woman's son dies, Elisha goes to her home and raises the child from the dead. In the Torah portion for today, God tells Avimelekh in a dream God that Abraham is a prophet and that Abraham would pray for him. Abraham prays for him and his family is healed so that they can have children. In this Haftaráh, we see another example of God using a prophet to heal others.

2 Kings 4:32-37 CJB

"When Elisha reached the house, there the child was, dead and laid on the bed. He went in, shut the door on the two of them and prayed to ADONAI. Then he got up on the bed and lay on top of the child, putting his mouth on his mouth, his eyes on his eyes and his hands on his hands. As he stretched himself out on the child, its flesh began to grow warm. Then he went down, walked around in the house awhile, went back up and stretched himself out on the child again. The child sneezed seven times, then opened his eyes. Elisha called Geichazi and said, "Call this Shunamit." So he called her; and when she came in to him, he said, "Pick up your son." She entered, fell at his feet and prostrated herself on the floor. Then she picked up her son and went out."

Yeshua was a prophet and a healer, and also our Messiah.

Matthew 8:16-17 CJB:

"When evening came, many people held in the power of demons were brought to him. He expelled the spirits with a word and healed all who were ill. This was done to fulfill what had been spoken through the prophet Yesha'yahu, 'He himself took our weaknesses and bore our diseases.'" (See Isaiah 53:4-5).

We manufacture systems of ritual, belief, and values for life. They are not often what the Torah is based on. We sometimes think only our ritual is from God, but there are many ways to have meetings where we can accomplish what the Bible wants us to do. We see Moshe having a meeting in Exodus 24:7 NKJV, "Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read in the hearing of the people. And they said, "All that the Lord has said we will do, and be obedient."

The scriptures are to be read so that we can make a decision to follow them. We can accomplish this through a study on the Torah portion, special subject teachings, or other scripture based teaching. The biblical concept appears to be to teach the scriptures so that we can obey God. Shaul tells Timothy to read the scriptures to the people, "Until I come, pay attention to the public reading of the Scriptures;" 1 Timothy 4:13; there was no New Testament at the time so they were teaching the Tanakh, the Old Testament portion scriptures.

At our meetings, it is appropriate to also include singing, giving words from God, prayer time, and fellowship, and eating together. It says about the early believers in Acts 2:46-47 NKJV, "So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people." These things are a common thing for Jews to do on Shabbat, so we should understand this is what they were doing together on Shabbat.

Also, in 1 Corinthians 14:26 NKJV it says, "Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification."

Shaul goes on to say we need to have limitations on our activities and do things orderly. We can have reasonable time for each of these things. I have been at meetings that go on forever and while these can be turn out to be great meetings, a lot of that time could have been spent in personal study and prayer instead squandering everyone's time. Some say we are to have unorganized spontaneous meetings, but that is not what Shaul teaches.

There are some venues where the leader is expected to give 4 hour teachings. It is difficult to remember all that is taught in a 40 minute teaching let alone 4 hour teachings. Remember, the purpose of our teaching is to help people to make the decision to follow God like Moshe did in Exodus where he read the Torah.

Our manufactured systems don't accomplish what they are supposed to. It says in Jeremiah 2:13 NKJV, "For My people have committed two evils: they have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and hewn themselves cisterns — broken cisterns that can hold no water." People develop systems of living that are not based on the scriptures. These are baseless and leave us barren and dry spiritually.

We can choose the basis for our lives from almost anything. People even inspect the letters of the Bible and think there is something special about them. They are thinking about everything except what they should be thinking of. Yeshua said the people of His times were missing the point by searching for hidden meanings. "You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me." John 5:39 NKJV. I know of people who have stopped reading the Bible and just look for special information in the letters of the Bible. They have become totally off base.

While special insights can sometimes be important and can also be fun, basing our faith on addictive, tantalizing, and mysterious meanings and information aren't the true meat of the Bible. Shaul said to Timothy, "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers;" 2 Timothy 4:3 NKJV.

We can go around and around the scriptures, but never get to the point. We can digress and philosophize all we want, but God wants us to learn sound doctrine and live by His commandments. It's not all that hard. We sometimes make it harder than we need to. One step at a time, we need to develop our lifestyle to look like how the Bible tells us to live. We then begin looking like a person of light instead of a person of the world.

What do people of the world look like?

They replace a biblical belief system with their own.

They apply Greek thought and philosophy to life.

They replace a Hebraic way of thought with their own culture.

They explain away the Bible and what it says by using theology or humanism.

They are not led by God and do things their own way.

They are not a people who demonstrate God's light by how they live.

People are often led by theological arguments instead of God. God is not too complicated for us to follow Him. "For this mitzvah which I am giving you today is not too hard for you, it is not beyond your reach;" Deuteronomy 30:11 CJB. God's commandments are not too difficult. It is when we start making up things that they become difficult; that's the problem. "You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you;" Deuteronomy 4:2 NKJV.

What are we to look like?

We are to have a biblical belief system.

We should have a Hebraic or Jewish biblical way of thought.

We should read and keep God's commandments.

We are to have a fear of God and respect God.

We should resist explaining away the Jewish biblical understanding of the Bible.

We are to also be led by God and the Holy Spirit instead of our own desires or lust.

We are to be a people of light, love, faith, holiness, loving God and others, being faithful to keep God's commandments, learning and growing, and be filled with the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

2 Timothy 3:16 NKJV says, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." There was no New Testament; this is about the Tanakh, the Old Testament portion. We are to learn doctrine and correct how we do things by applying the laws from the Tanakh in an appropriate way so we can live right (righteous).

Galatians 5:22-24 NKJV are great scriptures about how we are to live, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires." We are to get rid of lust and worldly desires because we belong to the Messiah and not to the world; we are to have the fruit of the Holy Spirit in our lives. We do this by first keeping God's commandments. Then we need to resist unloving attitudes, impatience, unkindness, and not having peace and joy etcetera so that the Holy Spirit can work in us through the Holy Spirit.

What an amazing calling and opportunity we have. Moshe said, "See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil, in that I command you today to love the Lord your God, to walk in His ways, and to keep His commandments, His statutes, and His judgments, that you may live and multiply; and the Lord your God will bless;" Deuteronomy 30:15:16 NKJV. God has blessed us with a way to live and with the Holy Spirit to help us through the Messiah Yeshua.

Amazingly, God went to visit Abraham as a man to let him know that he was going to keep His promise. Yitz'chak (Isaac) was born when Abraham was 100 years old. God is real and He cares about us. Yeshua the Messiah is God (Jeremiah 23:5-6)¹ and came as a man to help us and to give us the Holy Spirit. Don't manufacture your own system to live by, but do things God's way. Learn and grow in the Lord and be blessed. Man can manufacture endless ways to live by, but God's ways are best. Think about doing things God's way. Take one step at a time and develop a good and right lifestyle.

¹ "'Behold, the days are coming,' says the Lord, 'That I will raise to David a Branch of righteousness; a King shall reign and prosper, and execute judgment and righteousness in the earth. In His days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell safely; now this is His name by which He will be called: THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.'" Jeremiah 23:5-6 NKJV. It says that **a man** from the line of David will sometime come to rule. **He will be called God**; the word LORD is the exclusive name for God, Yehováh (יהוה).