



#4 Vayera Genesis 18:1-22:24
Torah Study
by Moshe Schwab

Names

Messiah – English for Mashiach; anointed one; Christ in the Greek means to be smudged – anointed
 Moshe – Moses
 Shaul – Paul
 S’dom and Amora – Sodom and Gomorrah
 Yeshua – Jesus' real name
 Yĕhōvâh – God's real name forever (Exodus 3:15)
 Yitz'chak – Isaac
 Yochanan – John

Terms

Tanakh – Old Testament portion of Bible
 Torah – 1st 5 books of the Bible
 Torah portion – there are 54 portions of the Torah
 Vayera - 4th Torah portion

Vayera means, “and He appeared.” This portion begins with Abraham seeing God while he is sitting by his tent door after he is circumcised. We will talk a little about the ritual of male circumcision in our Torah study later. Some say that ritual is not necessary, but what if God commands a particular ritual? Life is full of rituals. Aren’t the rituals that God gives us as important as our own rituals?

I would like to begin today by talking about what we reflect to others in the way we live. Do others understand that we are committed to doing what is pure, right, and good? How does science tell us how our eyes work? People see light reflect off of us and the eye then interprets the reflection. Then our minds interpret what we see.

If we see someone with a smile, we often interpret that as a sign of satisfaction, peace, or joy. Years ago, when I worked in research, I was feeling a little stressed. I decided that I needed to do something about that, so I made a commitment to pray on my way to work every day. I got to work feeling relaxed and it reflected in how I related to others and how I appeared to others. One person even talked about me in a negative way and referred to me as “smiley.”

I was a little shocked by his assessment. I was extremely happy with how my life changed for the better and I decided to be even more committed to praying on my way to work. I did not care if others thought I was a little strange. I am not saying that it is okay to be obnoxious. We should care about the feelings of others, but what really irritated this person? Perhaps they could not believe that anyone could be happy. There is a spiritual element to life that should be reflected in our behavior.

Shaul explains that those who do not believe in the true God will not understand us. 1 Corinthians 2:14 NKJV says, “The natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him.” Unbelievers do not understand why we believe in God,

they do not understand our godly behaviors, and they do not understand the peace and other things we derive from our relationship with God.

Believers in God and the Messiah Yeshua experience good things in life and also good things as a result of the Holy Spirit. Galatians 5:22-23 NKJV says, "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law." Most people conceive of these things as good things. These are things we should work at in life. If we do not, we will be working against how God wants us to live. The Holy Spirit can enhance these things in the life of the believer. God's commandments and the gift of the Holy Spirit should produce these positive attributes.

The most likely scripture that Shaul is applying in Galatians 5:22-23 is Leviticus 19:18-19 NKJV which says, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD. You shall keep My statutes." How do you want to be treated? We want people to be kind, good, and respectful towards us. Being respectful often entails being patient and having some form of self-restraint in the way we treat others. We can easily see that the scriptures we just shared from Galatians are an application of Leviticus 19:18-19. There are a lot of scriptures in the New Testament portion that are applications of Leviticus 19:18-19.

Notice also that loving your neighbor is immediately followed by the command to keep God's commandments. The subject in Leviticus then changes after that, so we know that keeping God's commandments refers to loving others the way we want to be treated. For example, the 8th commandment tells us not to steal. When someone steals something from us, we sometimes feel as though they have taken something of us away from us. We often take it personally. I remember my dear sweet aunt being extremely upset over someone stealing a small amount of money from her. It seemed unwarranted on her part, but that is how she felt and that is what can happen when someone mistreats us like that.

The Bible even commands us not to covet, to desire, what others have. Wanting what others have can lead to stealing and even mistreating others. Some buy into the philosophy that those who have worked hard for what they have do not deserve what they have. They think that what they have should be taken from them. There are a number of philosophies that ascribe to this lie including communism. Of course, taking what others own is both coveting and stealing.

Shaul uses the commandments from the Old Testament portion to identify some of the sins that will keep people out of God's future kingdom and those who steal and covet what others have will not be in God's future kingdom. 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 NKJV, "Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, **nor thieves, nor covetous,** nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God." Shaul says, "Do not be deceived."

Other people may not understand us, but that should not keep us from keeping God's commandments like our eternal life depends on it. We should understand that there is no law against good behaviors. Because people develop false ideals or are taught false values as

though they are true, we end up with people, societies, and various religions or denominations that follow false ideals and outright lies. The Bible tells us to make the effort, to be diligent or study, so that we know and keep God's commandments. Deuteronomy 6:17-18 NKJV says, "You shall diligently keep the commandments of the LORD your God, His testimonies, and His statutes which He has commanded you. And you shall do what is right and good in the sight of the LORD."

2 Timothy 2:15 NKJV says, "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed." This appears to be a reference to Deuteronomy 6:17-18. Shaul says we are to be diligent to be approved to God, namely, in the sight of God. When we do what is right, we please God because keeping His commandments is the best way to live, they are "good." It is good practice to read the New Testament portion of the Bible with the idea that it is helping you to both keep the Old Testament commandments and apply them. There was no New Testament at the time. Their reference for life were God's commandments in the Old Testament portion. When the Bible says, "do what is good," it frequently means to keep God's commandments. Doing what is good in your own eyes is to not keep God's commandments, namely what a person instead thinks is good. Those who do not keep God's commandments are **not**, doing what is good in the sight of God.

Put yourself in the position for God's word to be effective in your life. Like the scripture says in Deuteronomy, we are to, "Diligently keep the commandments of the LORD your God." When I think of being diligent, I think of things like working at it, actively pursuing, or getting focused. Perhaps the following scriptures in Deuteronomy can help understand how we should proceed. Deuteronomy 6:6-7 NKJV says, "And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up."

What does it mean to have God's commands in our hearts. It is not to say that God knows my heart, but that do we know God's heart? Jeremiah 29:13 NKJV says, "You will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart." We are to seek God's heart for how we live and not live by our own heart. We are to be delighted to have God's law and keep His law. God's will for us is to keep His laws because they are what is best for us. Psalms 40:8 NKJV says, "I delight to do Your will, O my God, and Your law is within my heart." Deuteronomy 10:13 NKJV says, "Keep the commandments of the LORD and His statutes which I command you today for your good." God wants what is good for us.

We need to know God's laws so that we do not fail. In life, we need to know how to drive our car, cook our food, take care of ourselves, and so forth and so forth. We also need to know how to live right so we can do what is right. Psalms 37:31 NKJV says, "The law of his God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide." So, we need to be diligent to know God's laws so that we do not forget them.

Psalms 119:11-16 NKJV says,

Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You. Blessed are You, O LORD! Teach me Your statutes. With my lips I have declared all the judgments of Your mouth. I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies, as

much as in all riches. I will meditate on Your precepts, and contemplate Your ways. I will delight myself in Your statutes; I will not forget Your word.

1 Thessalonians 2:13 NKJV says, "As it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe." It is God's words in the Bible that can effectively work in you. Believe in God, His word, His commandments, and the Messiah Yeshua.

Do not be confused by worldly rules, the norms of society, idealism, or so-called logical arguments. Haven't we all fallen for some tricky logic only to find out it was not true. I remember that years ago people were buying pet rocks. I am not kidding. Someone thought it was a good idea to sell rocks as pets. I suppose you won't get any bad behaviors out of a rock. It just sits where you put it.

The ideas that people have are as many as there are people. Ecclesiastes 1:9 NKJV says, "That which has been is what will be, that which is done is what will be done, and there is nothing new under the sun." The same is true for YouTube. People come up with an idea and post it on YouTube. Some are legitimate ideas, but others are just to get peoples' attention. I know of someone who likes to post things on YouTube just to see if people will respond to his nonsense. Some ideologies like communism have caused terrible atrocities to occur. Communism is an evil system of government and countries that are similar to it are often also engaged in various forms of evil.

The Evils of Communism and Autocratic rule.

Communism is a political and economic ideology that sees no differences between people. Everything in its society is owned by everyone. There is no private property and what the society owns is divided by the citizens as needed. Autocratic rule is when someone imposes their own will on the people. This can be any form of dictatorship including religious dictatorships.

First, the Bible says we are not to move a landmark, so we know the biblical model is to have private property. Also, the Bible teaches that people are to be paid, there is to be no mistreatment of those who work for you, and there is to be no dishonesty in weights and measures. The Bible also teaches that stealing is wrong. There are books written on the biblical model and the United States established itself at least in part on a biblical model. A more biblical model has led to a prosperous and free society. The Bible says we are created in God's image and therefore a biblical model values each person, their personal belongings, and a person's contribution to society.

In contrast, those in communist countries lack incentive to create wealth so they turn their countries into poor countries that are ruled by force. Stalin, who led communist Russia, killed some 20 million people to impose his classless society. Both Communism and autocratic societies must continue to impose themselves on the people through indoctrination and violence in order to maintain their society. For example, I know of a story about a lack of food in one city in Russia, so the government went into the countryside and took the food of a small rural community and left the people there to starve. People essentially give up their lives to the state in which there are massive human rights violations. Some 100 million people were killed by the communist regime in China. Other communist countries also do the same

to impose their government on the people.

It should be noted that any society that adopts some of the beliefs of communism can impose terrible suffering on its people. Socialism, dictatorships, monarchies, and autocratic rule of any type can often produce some of these same atrocities. A good monarch or dictator can lead to a prosperous society, but for the most part, most of these types of societies have imposed an environment that produces terrible atrocities on its people.

Watch what ideas and ideals are leading you. A classless society may sound good, but it is not a biblical model. Be thoughtful in what you support. A society that imposes itself on the people often takes away freedom, will take away your ability to follow God the way we are supposed to, and only serves the state. Those that do not believe in God will also be victims of a government such as this. Isaiah 5:20-21 NKJV says, "Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!"

By putting God and His commandments first, we can have a God centered life that produces good and not evil. Psalms 31:19 NKJV says, "Oh, how great is Your goodness, which You have laid up for those who fear You, which You have prepared for those who trust in You." Those who have a deep respect for God follow His commandment and produces good things. God told Joshua that His commandments will make his country prosperous. God knows what is best for mankind.

Joshua 1:7-8 NKJV says,

Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go. This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.

Have joy in life through truth and decide you would rather be at peace through God. Do not let the world take away your joy.

False ideology,

Do not focus on making issues more important than God. Do not make man-made ideologies more important than the truth of God's word. While there are important issues in life, we need to be bolted to a godly direction in life through God's word and commandments.

God can give us joy and man wonderful things by following Him. Psalms 16:11 NKJV says, "You will show me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore." Even when we experience difficult situations, we can have comfort through our God. Psalms 94:19 NKJV says, "In the multitude of my anxieties within me, Your comforts delight my soul."

God's ways can prosper us because they are good ways. God has given us light, understanding, through His commandments. Psalms 118:24-27 NKJV says, "This is the day

the LORD has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it. Save now, I pray, O LORD; O LORD, I pray, send now prosperity. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD! We have blessed you from the house of the LORD. God is the LORD, and He has given us light."

This next scripture takes place on Rosh Hashanah which is a feast day and a day of rest. Nehemiah 8:9-10 NKJV says, "This day is holy to the LORD your God; do not mourn nor weep. For all the people wept, when they heard the words of the Law. Then he said to them, 'Go your way, eat the fat, drink the sweet, and send portions to those for whom nothing is prepared; for this day is holy to our Lord. Do not sorrow, for the joy of the LORD is your strength.'" God's ways bring joy and doing things His way instead of the made-up ways of mankind can give us both joy and strength in life.

Torah Study

We cover different portions or sections of the Torah because that method of study was given us by the prophets, probably Nehemiah. Gentile believers were to learn and keep the Torah according to the Bible. This scripture is in the context of Gentiles learning to be believers through the weekly sections of the Torah. Acts 15:21 NKJV, "For Moses has had throughout many generations those who preach him in every city, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath."

Vayera means, "and He appeared." This portion begins with Abraham seeing God while he is sitting by his tent door after he is circumcised. Perhaps Abraham was committing his ways to God while he was dealing with the effects of his circumcision. We must all commit ourselves to God at times in our lives. It is at these times we align ourselves with God and we decide to meet God on His terms.

The Question of Circumcision.

Circumcision was to be a sign to Abraham and his descendants of God's eternal covenant. Abraham was not Jewish. Some say that circumcision is only a Jewish commandment, but it was meant for all believers. Shaul (Paul) teaches circumcision. Galatians 5:11 NKJV says, "I still preach circumcision, why do I still suffer persecution?" Let me explain what is going on in the New Testament portion. The Torah teaches us to save lives; also, Yeshua taught us we are to save lives and in Luke 14:5 NKJV He says, "Which of you, having a donkey or an ox that has fallen into a pit, will not immediately pull him out on the Sabbath day?" Yeshua is quoting the Old Testament portion (see Deuteronomy 22:4). Saving a life supersedes a commandment in the Torah. It is okay to break a commandment to save a life. Be careful with this concept. Some people make up excuses not to keep the Torah and that is a sin. For more information on this, see our more detailed information on circumcision in the previous Torah portion, Lech Lecha.

After Abraham has this vision of Yĕhōvâh, he then he lifts up his head and there are three men nearby and he offers them rest and food. He also has a vision of God in Genesis 15:1 NKJV which says, "After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision." God has not walked away from His creation and left us on our own as some say. At this time, I would like to talk more about this.

God still speaks to believers.

People throughout the Old Testament portion have visions and hear from God. For example, God told Noah to build an ark. People in the gospels, and other sections of the New Testament continue to hear from God. Then along comes a man-made idea that God is not involved in the world or with believers. Why would God stop speaking to mankind. Are we too good for that? We need to carefully weigh what God is telling us when we hear from God. God will never tell us to not keep His commandments. We have several teachings online that can help you with this. See our Devine Healing class on our website.

Abraham responds in a generous way according to the Bible. He has just had a vision of Yěhōváh. He was looking down when he had the vision. Then he looks up and sees three men. We should note that the way he responds was probably a typical way for him to respond though. Lot entertains two angels when he meets them. Lot, Abraham's nephew, probably learned to be a generous and kind person from Abraham.

Do not do what the pagans do.

Also, Abraham serves the men dairy with meat. Some have trouble with this because they have learned that it is wrong to eat dairy with meat. Often, they will explain away what the Bible says here. It may be a good idea not to combine dairy with meat because it slows down digestion, but the Bible does not explicitly say we are not to eat dairy with meat. The Canaanites did a fertility ritual by boiling a goat in its mother's milk. Israel was not to do that. Even if that was repeated in the Bible, it does not mean something other than what it says. Israel was not to do the despicable acts that the Canaanites did. We are to be careful not to do things the pagans do.

Deuteronomy 12:30-32 NKJV says,

Take heed to yourself that you are not ensnared to follow them, after they are destroyed from before you, and that you do not inquire after their gods, saying, 'How did these nations serve their gods? I also will do likewise.' You shall not worship the LORD your God in that way; for every abomination to the LORD which He hates they have done to their gods; for they burn even their sons and daughters in the fire to their gods. Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it.

When Abraham looks up and sees the three men, we find out that these are not just angels, but one of them is Yěhōváh. We understand this as a preincarnate appearance of the Messiah Yeshua. Also, when Abraham washes their feet, it is not just as a courtesy, but Arabs worship the dust of their feet. So perhaps he was making sure that no idols entered his house.

One of the men says that Sarah will have a child at this time the next year and Sarah laughs. The man who is God, Yě-hō-váh, which is the exclusive name for God, asks Sarah why she laughed and says that there is nothing too hard for Yě-hō-váh. God seems to change Sarah's words. Perhaps God only rephrased her words in a more positive way. We do this in life at times to be more encouraging towards others. It is a good way to save a person's face. Saving face means to save a person's honor or respect. We do not lie but avoid negative speech. Instead of saying the food is good, we might say the food is okay.

Note when some Jews read the name Yĕhōváh, they say Hashem which means "the name." Instead of using God's name that is used over 6,200 times in the Old Testament portion, they dishonor God and call God, "It." They are practicing a false man-made religious practice. Yĕhōváh is God's real name. It is okay to call Yĕhōváh God in our society. But we need to understand that His real name is Yĕhōváh and that it is okay to use God's real name.

Also, I should make the point that Abraham's generosity in hospitality is an example for us. Shaul perhaps is thinking about Abraham when he tells us in Romans 12:12-13 NKJV, "Rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer; distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality." Saints are not dead people as some believe, but people who follow God and His commandments. We are to help the saints who are in need it says. We are to pursue hospitality. Also in Hebrews 13:1-2 NKJV it says, "Let brotherly love continue. Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some have unwittingly entertained angels." Again, this scripture probably has its roots from the Torah. In Abraham's case, he gave hospitality to two angels and God. Teachings about Abraham are important teachings and were part of the lifestyle of the Jewish people in Yeshua's time. All the early believers were Jewish, and we need to understand the Bible in its Jewish context.

God can come as a man; Genesis 18:14 NKJV says, "Is anything too hard for the LORD?" God appeared as a man to Abraham and God says, "Is anything too hard for the LORD?" He eats and talks with him. Some say God cannot come as a man, but that is not true. The Bible tells us that God will appear as both King and God. Jeremiah 23:5-6 NKJV says, "'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.'" The word "LORD" is Yud-Hey-Vav-Hey, the exclusive name for God, pronounced as Yĕhōváh. This clearly says that God will come as a man and be God. God also came in the form of a man as Yeshua our Messiah some 2,000 years ago. We understand these appearances of Yeshua in the Old Testament portion to be pre-incarnate appearances of Yeshua.

Yeshua gave believers the Holy Spirit to help us. Because He is God, He gave us both the law and the Holy Spirit. John 14:15-17 NKJV, "If you love Me, keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever — the Spirit of truth." He rose from the dead and went into the heavens until some future time to return as King as it says in Jeremiah 23:5-6. In 1 Corinthians 15:6 NKJV it says, "After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once." When Yeshua comes again as King, it will be evident who He is, and everyone will believe. In the meantime, we are to believe in Him and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Do not be caught waiting in unbelief.

Then Abraham walks with the two angels and God for some of the way as they set out for S'dom. Yĕ-hō-váh stays with Abraham and reveals what He is about to do S'dom because God has chosen him to be a blessing to the nations.

Being chosen.

After Abraham makes a commitment to follow the true God, God chooses him to be a blessing to the nations. We know that God knows what will happen but apparently waits to bring it to pass until the moment God chooses. Some people think they are automatically chosen but God chooses people who will keep His commandments. Genesis 26:5 NKJV says, "Abraham obeyed My voice and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws."

Also, those who keep His commandments and accept the Messiah Yeshua are those who will be in the future kingdom of God. In other words, Abraham's obedience is a picture of those who will be chosen to be in God's future kingdom. In the New Testament portion, Shaul warns those who live in sin; they will not be in God's future kingdom. Shaul says, "Do not be deceived."

Abraham then intercedes for S'dom and begins asking Yě-hō-váh if He will spare them for only 50 righteous people. Abraham asks several times each time reducing the number and asking if Yě-hō-váh will spare the people there. Yě-hō-váh leaves Abraham in Genesis 18:33. Later, the text alludes to Abraham's intentions for sparing S'dom. God remembered Abraham and spares Lot and his immediate family (see Genesis 19:29). God did not forget but considered Abraham's feelings for Lot. Strong's Dictionary says that the Hebrew word for remember can also be translated as "mindful" at times.

The two other men, the angels, went to S'dom and Lot met them in town and invited them back to his house to eat and stay overnight. The men of the town surrounded the house wanting to abuse the angels sexually. 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 immediate family leave, urged on by the angels several times, but his daughters' husbands refuse to leave. We warn people to do what is right and keep God's commandments, but they do not listen, and it is very sad. God does not and we do not wish the lake of fire on anyone, but they bring it on themselves because they refuse to listen to God. Revelation 21:8 NKJV says, "The cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone." Also see 2 Peter 3:9 NKJV; God does not want anyone to go to hell, "But that all should come to repentance." S'dom and 'Amora are destroyed with brimstone and Lot's wife is made a pillar of salt because she looked back. Perhaps she was thinking about her daughters she left behind in S'dom.

Lot ends up having children from his other daughters. His daughters got him drunk, and this again reveals the problems with drinking too much alcohol. God did not destroy S'dom until they reached the city of Zoar. Perhaps Lot and his daughters were not welcome in Zoar and Lot's daughters thought they could not have children any other way. The Torah forbids incest for any reason and what they did was wrong.

Why did God destroy S'dom?

Some people think that Sodom was destroyed because of how it treated strangers or for their

sexual sin. Most probably it was for the same reason God brought the flood on mankind. Genesis 6:5 NKJV says, "Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that **every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually**. It probably was not any one sin but that the entire community had evil intentions and acted on them. In evil countries like those of Communism or evil autocratic nations, even the children inform on their parents and are commensurate in the murder of their parents or also of others. So, it is probable that the entire community of Sodom was evil.

It was just two portions ago that the world was destroyed for its wickedness by the Flood. In today's portion, S'dom and 'Amora are destroyed for their wickedness. In the New Testament portion, Kefa talks about God helping those who do what is right and the impending judgment for the wicked. The world needs God's commandments because it needs the help of an all-knowing and good God for life. Those who do not follow God's good commandments are self-willed. They bring destruction and pain into the world. Mankind needs God's commandments.

2 Peter 2:4-10 NKJV:

For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment; and did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, one of eight people, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly; and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them to destruction, making them an example to those who afterward would live ungodly; and delivered righteous Lot, who was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds) — then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment, and especially those who walk according to the flesh in the lust of uncleanness and despise authority. They are presumptuous, self-willed."

We may have to live among ungodly people, but we do not have to live like them; do not live like them. Sadly, they will end up in the Lake of Fire (see Revelation 21:8). It says God will help us to live right. If God reminds you that something is wrong through the Holy Spirit; do not do it. God wants us to succeed.

Then Abraham goes into the Negev and meets Avimelekh. Abraham tells Avimelekh that Sarah is his sister. He does this because he is unsure if Avimelekh fears God and that he will do what is right (see Genesis 20:11). Fearing God is a good thing because we give God the respect He deserves, and we then do what is right. After all, God is the creator. Proverbs 9:10 NKJV says, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding." It is wise to follow God's commandments because He knows what is best for us.

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, and Sarah is 90. Yitz'chak means laughter and probably is connected with Sarah's laughter within herself. God in the appearance of a man tells Sarah she laughed. We may think our thoughts and actions are not known, but God knows all. We cannot hide from an all-knowing God. 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 became despondent, but an angel encouraged her, and she found water. When Ishmael grew up, he found a wife from Egypt.

We live in a time of testing because our situations can tempt us and because there is a preponderance of evil in the world. God wants us to be successful and will help us. Will we be faithful believers? Abraham was a great man of faith and was an example to us. Here are some of the tests that Abraham faced:

- He lived in an idolatrous land, and he remained faithful to God.
- God told him to go to Canaan and he went.
- There was a famine after he got to Canaan and God provided for him.
- Sarah is taken twice but God restores her to him.
- Lot is taken and Abraham fights to get him back.
- He is told that his descendants will go into captivity.
- He is circumcised at 100 and only then has a child through Sarah.
- Sarah is infertile until she is 90.
- He had to send Ishmael away because of tensions.
- He went to sacrifice Isaac, but God provided a sacrifice.

We also need to remain faithful in all the tests we face and do. Deuteronomy 8:2 NKJV says, "And you shall remember that the LORD your God led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you and test you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not." We will also encounter testing in our situations; stand strong and pass your times of testing.

Then, Abraham and Avimelekh made an agreement. When they start their talks, Avimelekh seems to accuse Abraham of being a liar. Abraham refuses to be emotionally upset and works out an agreement but does tell Avimelekh that Avimelech's servants took Abraham's well. Abraham gives Avimelekh 7 lambs as a witness for the well Abraham dug at Be'er Sheva. Abraham is an example to us in many ways. He refuses to have hurt feelings.

Control your feelings to bring about good.

We have control over our feelings and can turn things around for good by our response. For example, if someone takes issue with something I said, I often first apologize and then explain myself. We cannot always work things out because some people have evil intentions. Just as Abraham was a person of peace, we can be a people of peace. Shaul perhaps has Abraham in mind when he shares this scripture. Romans 12:17-18 NKJV says, "Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men." We are to also treat others the way we want to be treated.

After this, God tested Abraham and told Abraham to go to Mount Moriah and offer up his son. Tradition says that Mount Moriah is where the 1st and 2nd Temples were located and that is where the Dome of the Rock now stands. Some believe the Temples were located in a different place. The Jews certainly have it in their power to put a Temple where possibly the Temples stood, but perhaps they are keeping the correct location secret. After Abraham and Isaac got to Mount Moriah, just before Abraham was to offer up his son an angel stopped him, and God provided a ram to sacrifice.

The account is called the Akedah in Jewish tradition and is a picture of the Messiah Yeshua giving Himself for our sins. God did not have a man give himself, but Yeshua as God came as a man. God provided a sacrifice for our sins through Yeshua. Isaiah 53:6 NKJV says, "All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." The Messiah, Christ means to be anointed, is the final sacrifice for sin. Hebrews 9:28 NKJV says, "So Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation." This parashah ends with Abraham going back to Be'er Sheva and he also finds out his brother Nachor had children.

Shaul and the binding of Isaac.

When Shaul says he is bound to go to Jerusalem, it comes from the binding of Isaac. He is thinking about how Isaac allowed himself to be bound and give himself. The rabbis teach Isaac was a grown man and he did this willingly. Theology sometimes says that Shaul disobeyed God because people prophesied that he would be in for trouble when he got to Jerusalem. Like Isaac was bound, Shaul was bound to go to Jerusalem and God provided a way out for Shaul and even sent him to where he wanted to go (Romans 15:30-32), just like Isaac was spared! Remember, the biblical context is Jewish not some made-up theology. That is why we need to understand the Bible in its original meaning and not something made up.

The Haftarah for Vayera is 2 Kings 4:1-37. The Haftarah 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 this Haftarah, we see another example of God using a prophet to heal others.

The Holy Spirit and its associated evidences.

In this portion, Abraham (who is a prophet) prays for Avimelekh and Avimelekh's household is healed of infertility. In the Haftarah, the prophet Elisha raises a boy from the dead. Yeshua was a prophet and a healer, and also our Messiah. Most think that a prophetic person only gives words from God, but we also see prophetic people healing others. As believers in the Messiah, God gives us the gift of the Holy Spirit and the associated evidences include prophecy and healing.

In the New Testament portion, there are evidences or gifts associated with the Holy Spirit. Shaul gives a list of gifts (where he calls them evidences) of the Holy Spirit in 1 Corinthians 12. Remember, lists in Jewish thought are often representative and are not all inclusive. Shaul

also gives other lists in Romans 12 and Ephesians 4 (where he calls them gifts). Prophets are listed in Ephesians 4 and gifts of healing are in 1 Corinthians 12:9. It should be remembered that spiritual gifts are very important, but they are only part of what the Bible teaches us. We are to believe in the whole Bible.

1 Corinthians 12:7-11 NKJV:

"Moreover, to each person is given the particular manifestation of the Spirit that will be for the common good. To one, through the Spirit, is given a word of wisdom; to another, a word of knowledge, in accordance with the same Spirit; to another, faith, by the same Spirit; and to another, gifts of healing, by the one Spirit; to another, the working of miracles; to another, prophecy; to another, the ability to judge between spirits; to another, the ability to speak in different kinds of tongues; and to yet another, the ability to interpret tongues. One and the same Spirit is at work in all these things, distributing to each person as he chooses."

Finally.

The exclusive name for God, Yĕhōváh, is used in this portion as God appears to Abram as a man. S'dom and Amora are destroyed for their sin. They are still there as a reminder that God hates sin and the harm it causes. For example, people say it is okay to commit sexual sin. Back around 2016, I read that 31 million people had died from the HIV, Aids virus, which in part has been spread mostly by homosexual men. It has been generally accepted that they are the principal carriers of this mostly sexually transmitted disease. It is said that one of every four homosexual men have this deadly disease at present and their continued sin continues to spread disease and death.

God does not like sin because of the harm it brings. So be careful how you view this terrible sin that has killed so many. Are you being complicit with the deaths of all those millions by your beliefs? He will judge those who accept sin the Bible says. Again, we need to be frequently reminded what Revelation 21:8 NKJV says, "But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone." This should bother people, but in our godless and compromising society in the United States, people ignore these awful consequences for the sin they do and accept. We do not wish anything bad on anyone. They bring these consequences on themselves.

Abraham is a prophet, and he prays for Avimelech, and he is healed. Yitzchak is born and Abraham was going to sacrifice him, but an angel stopped him. The rabbis teach that Isaac was grown up and was willing to give himself. God providing a sacrifice is a prophetic picture of the Messiah Yeshua in the future, who willingly gave Himself for our sin. We see that God did miracles and healings in the Old Testament portion; He continues to do the same in our era. Malachi 3:6 NKJV says, "For I am the LORD, I do not change."

Commandments, Implied Commandments, Permissions, and other Concepts. (We can also understand commandments are being implied from other scriptures in the Bible. There are other possible concepts than what is shared here.)

Believers in the true God are to get visions, words, and information from Yĕhōváh. Genesis 18:1.

We are to be hospitable towards others. Genesis 18:3-5; Romans 12:12-13.

God can do what He wants; nothing is too hard for God. Genesis 18:11-14.

God knows our secret thoughts and God can choose to judge us on our intentions. Genesis 18:12-13. Also, note Genesis 6:5 NKJV, "Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that **every intent of the thoughts** of his heart was only evil continually." We are judged by what we act on, but we will also be judged by our intentions because we will do those things if the opportunity arises.

God may intervene to destroy those who are evil. Genesis 18:20

It is advantageous to make agreements with good people and even sometimes to avert future evil situations. Genesis 20:6, 21:22-23, 32

We must be willing to be patient in order to understand what God is telling us. It is possible that God knew that Abraham would misunderstand Him (or take God literally) and so produce this picture of the Messiah Yeshua giving Himself for us. God stopped Abraham. God did not require a human sacrifice and human sacrifice is wrong and those committing murder in this way will go to hell (murderers will go to "the lake which burns with fire and brimstone;" Revelation 21:8 NKJV) Yeshua as God allowed himself to die and then rose from the dead. He came to deliver us from the devil and sin, and give us the Holy Spirit. Genesis 22:12-15; Acts 2:38-39; 1 John 3:8.

It should be noted that those who go on suicide missions to hurt or kill others is a form of human sacrifice. Suicide is murdering yourself. They are murdering themselves with the intention of murdering others.

In closing, let us say the Aaronic Blessing from Numbers 6:24-26:

Yĕ-hō-váh bless you and keep you.

Yĕ-hō-váh make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you.

Yĕ-hō-váh lift up His face upon you, and give to you peace. Amen.

Thank you for being with us today.