

someone is to one day be consumed by God's wrath; it is God's job to exercise it—**not ours!** While it may be difficult to serve one's enemies and demonstrate kindness to them (cf. Proverbs 25:22; Romans 12:20), it is most imperative for born again Believers to be tempered by the Holy Spirit, and completely turn one's enemies over to the will of the Lord.

Ideally, we should strive as best as we can to be at peace with all (Romans 12:18), but sometimes this peace may only be an armistice, where we are not active in fighting an adversary, opponent, or competitor. Do you have the strength and confidence in the Lord, and in what Messiah Yeshua has accomplished, to really give all of your foes over to Him? Or, are you still insecure in Him so that you need to actively go and fight your enemies? **Walk by faith, and seek the path of peace.** Just like Noah, persevere and place your trust in our Heavenly Father's words to you. Be concerned about accomplishing His purposes for your life, and avoid unnecessary fights and conflicts!

Lekh-Lekha לך-לך

Get yourself out “Go Forth and Receive Blessings”

Genesis 12:1-17:27

Isaiah 40:27-41:16

Perhaps one of the most often quoted and well known Torah passages, about the unique relationship between the Eternal Creator and Abraham—often considered to be the “father of faith” (cf. Romans 4:11-16)—is found in the opening passage of the *parashah* we are considering this week:

“Now the LORD said to Abram, **‘Go forth from your country, and from your relatives and from your father's house, to the land which I will show you; and I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; and so you shall be a blessing; and I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.’** So Abram went forth as the LORD had spoken to him; and Lot went with him. Now Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran” (Genesis 12:1-4).

Here in the command to “Go forth,” Abram is called out of the relative luxury of Ur, as he is one who was firmly embedded in the local culture with his extended family. We get the impression that he was a well-to-do businessman, living in a city adjacent to the lower Euphrates River (modern-day Iraq) as it flowed into the Persian Gulf.

Without any apparent or recorded hesitation, Abram was commanded by the Holy One to leave his home and relocate to a more remote location, at the age of seventy-five **and** without a physical heir to his estate. When we encounter God's request as Bible readers, we think that this must have been met with some skepticism, or at least curiosity. Yet, Abraham responded obediently, and for the next century from the Torah's record (cf. Genesis 25:7), it is abundantly clear that Abram/Abraham was a unique man whose impact

upon the future generations of those who have sought the Creator **is immeasurable in human terms.**

Great lessons for God's people today can be appropriated as we read about and significantly consider the exemplary life exhibited by Abraham. Throughout his experiences with God, he was asked to simply follow Him, and step out in complete and total trust and faith. Unlike those of later times, who had the collective wisdom and communal history of hearing about how the Lord had interacted with their people in the past, Abraham was having to chart unknown territory. God simply interjected Himself into Abraham's life, and he had to place his total confidence into this unseen Deity. The Holy One was undoubtedly testing Abraham's heart to confirm that he was going to be entirely loyal to Him. His wholehearted belief in the words and promises of God is summarized in how his trust (Heb. verb *aman*, אָמַן) was considered to be righteousness:

“Then he believed in the LORD; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness. And He said to him, ‘I am the LORD who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to possess it’” (Genesis 15:6-7).

This critical juncture in Abraham's life describes that he absolutely believed in the Almighty and took Him at His word. His confidence to recognize that the Creator had his best intentions in mind, in transplanting him from his home country to a relatively unknown and unseen Promised Land, had to be immense. It is not like when any of us has to move from one city to another city, or one region to another region, when already we have a fairly good idea about the place we are relocating to. *Abraham knew nothing about where he was going, except what God had told him.* He heard the voice of the Lord and believed without any hesitation.

Time and again throughout the course of history, followers of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob have had to respond to whether or not they are truly going to serve Him. They face various tests and trials permitted by Him, as they are forced to demonstrate their loyalty and obedience to the Lord and His ways. The examples of how this works are seen throughout the Scriptures, and are too numerous to list—but just about everyone who has expressed a belief in God has had to go through some kind of testing at one point or another in their life. The challenge for each of us is **to simply pass the tests**, just like Abraham—because having to repeat a test because of unbelief, or even disobedience, is never something that anyone wants to do. Therefore, it is critical for God's people to develop an inherent faith component that gains encouragement and fortitude from examples like that of Abraham.

In Genesis chs. 15&16 we read about how Abram's trusted servant Eliezer of Damascus will not be his heir,¹⁴ the agreement struck with God between the animal pieces,¹⁵ the cohabitation with Hagar giving birth to Ishmael,¹⁶ and God's announcement that Sarah will give birth to a son.¹⁷ Genesis 17:1-8 summarizes what has become known as the Abrahamic Covenant, including God's promises to multiply Abraham's seed, making him fruitful, and giving Him the Land of Canaan for perpetuity:

“Now when Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, ‘I am God Almighty; walk before Me, and be blameless. I will establish My

¹⁴ Genesis 15:1-6.

¹⁵ Genesis 15:7-21.

¹⁶ Genesis 16:1-6.

¹⁷ Genesis 16:7-16.

covenant between Me and you, And I will multiply you exceedingly.’ Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him, saying, ‘As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, and you will be the father of a multitude of nations. No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I will make you the father of a multitude of nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make nations of you, and kings will come forth from you. **I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants after you.** I will give to you and to your descendants after you, the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.”

Genesis 17 is doubtlessly loaded with so many things to digest, that all I can do is stand amazed at its future implications for the generations that followed! When we study the life experiences of Abraham, and the others who came after him, I am greatly encouraged that I am doing the right thing when I consider *what the Torah teaches me about faith*. The author of Hebrews later asserts how Believers in the Messiah of Israel have a tremendous cloud of witnesses behind them in history, whose previous life examples are to serve as a testimony of how we are to continue the legacy they began:

“Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Yeshua, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart” (Hebrews 12:1-3).

The life of faith is not often something easy for any generation to demonstrate. Even today, knowing that the Savior has come and has been sacrificed for human sins, each of us still has to step out in total confidence and place ourselves in the Lord’s hands. As important as it is to live forth the proper actions of faith, it is ultimately our belief in Yeshua’s accomplished work at Golgotha (Calvary) that ultimately reckons us righteous:

“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Messiah died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life” (Romans 5:8-10).

When the Sages considered an appropriate Haftarah selection for this Torah reading, they focused on some words from the Prophet Isaiah. Here, in another often known and beloved passage, Isaiah speaks about how God provides strength and vigor to those mortals who look to Him for deliverance. God’s people are to wait upon Him, as they seek after Him for provision and steadfastness:

“Why do you say, O Jacob, and assert, O Israel, ‘My way is hidden from the LORD, And the justice due me escapes the notice of my God’? Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth does not become weary or tired. His understanding is inscrutable. He gives strength to the weary, and to *him who* lacks might He increases power. Though youths grow weary and tired, and vigorous young men stumble badly, yet those who wait for the LORD will gain new strength; they will mount up *with* wings like eagles, they will run and not get tired, they will walk and not become weary” (Isaiah 40:27-31).

I find this to be a beautiful passage, which gives those pursuing God hope that there is a way and a time for everything! May we be found trusting, faithful, and patient when we need to *go forth* in order to receive the blessings of our faith and obedience to Him. Perhaps more importantly, may we be able to pass on a positive legacy to those who come after us, **that they should likewise seek the Lord in all things.**

V'yeira וִיֵּרָא He appeared “Difficult and Hesitant Questions”

Genesis 18:1-22:24
2 Kings 4:1-37 (A); 4:1-23 (S)

This week's Torah portion, *V'yeira*, gives us yet another peek into the exemplary life of the Patriarch Abraham. Strong emphasis is placed on how he conducted his life and handled some of the major challenges among the people he encountered. In our reading, we see how the Lord appeared to Abraham in the form of three men, announcing to him how Sarah will have a son,¹⁸ and we are informed from this episode how hospitality is a hallmark of Abraham's character. Abraham has such an intimate relationship with God, that he feels comfortable enough to implore Him for mercy for any righteous inhabitants living among the perversion found in Sodom and Gomorrah.¹⁹ After the judgment issued upon Sodom and Gomorrah,²⁰ Abraham's migrations in the Negev desert and ultimate settling in Beersheba are chronicled, with details about his interactions with Abimelech.²¹ During this time, we are told about the birth of Isaac and his circumcision on the eighth day,²² Sarah's laughing reaction to the birth,²³ and Sarah's issues with Hagar the mother of Ishmael.²⁴

One of the most significant scenes witnessed in *V'yeira* is the binding of Isaac (Genesis 22:1-18), commonly called the *aqedah* (עֶקְדָה)²⁵ in Jewish theology. This is often highlighted by commentators because it is probably the most trying test issued to Abraham by God. Believers in the Messiah of Israel obviously make a connection between Abraham's willingness to offer up Isaac, and our Heavenly Father offering up His only Son, Yeshua, for the sin of humanity (cf. Hebrews 11:19). As you can imagine, there are some important things that you can meditate and reflect upon as you study the Torah this week.

These various scenes are certainly instructional, as we should focus our attention on Abraham's life experiences, and consider to what degree we are affected or influenced by them. One particular issue encountered in *V'yeira* this week is a bit providential, as we read about the figure of Lot and the Divine judgment enacted upon Sodom and Gomorrah.

¹⁸ Genesis 18:1-16.

¹⁹ Genesis 18:17-33.

²⁰ Genesis 19:1-29.

²¹ Genesis 20:1-18; 21:22-34.

²² Genesis 21:1-8.

²³ Genesis 21:6-7.

²⁴ Genesis 21:9-21.

²⁵ Cf. Marcus Jastrow, *Dictionary of the Targumim, Talmud Bavli, Talmud Yerushalmi, and Midrashic Literature* (New York: Judaica Treasury, 2004), 1105.