

Abraham Uses A Personal Imputer

A Message on Scripture Portions for *Torah* Portion *Lekh L'kha*

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Scripture Portions: Torah – Genesis 12:1 - 17:27; Haftarah – Isaiah 40:27 - 41:16;

New Covenant – Romans 4:1-17

At the end *Torah* portion *Noach*, we find the genealogy of the descendants of Noah through the line of Shem. The next to the last descendant of Shem in this genealogy was *Terakh* or Terah. *Terakh* lived in Ur of the Chaldees, but decided to leave and take with him his son *Avram*, *Avram's* wife *Sarai*, and *Avram's* nephew *Lot*. They settle in *Kharan*, where *Terakh* dies.

This week's portion picks up with the Lord telling *Avram*, (Abram in the English), to *Lekh L'kha*, (get yourself out) of *Kharan*, and to take his wife and nephew and to go to the land that the Lord would show him. Tonight's *Torah* portion goes from Genesis 12:1 through Genesis 17:27. Abram's call is followed by a 7-fold promise from the Lord found in Genesis 12:2-3.

He will make *Avram* a great nation. He will bless *Avram*. He will make *Avram's* name great. He will make him a blessing. He will bless those that bless *Avram* and curse anyone who curses him. In *Avram*, all the families of the Earth will be blessed. God promises, without condition, to bless Abram and his descendants.

And it is with *Avram* (exalted father), who will become *Avraham* (father of a multitude), that God will establish His covenant. He has already made a covenant with Adam representing all of humanity, and He has also made a covenant with *Noakh*, once again representing all of humanity. But now God is going to choose a specific individual and make a covenant with him and his future offspring to create a special nation chosen to reveal the goodness of God. This nation will come by way of Abram's wife, *Sarai*, who up until now has been barren, but will be able to bear a child, but at the time of the child's conception, will be well beyond her natural child-bearing years. For the rest of this message, I will speak of Abram and *Sarai* primarily using their covenant names, Abraham and Sarah.

Is Abraham an important figure to the Jews? You bet. We call him *Avraham Avinu*, which means Abraham our Father. That is how *Sha'ul* (Paul) refers to him in Romans 4:1. Is Abraham an important figure to non-Jews also? You bet. In Romans 4:17, Abraham is described as the Father of the nations. That is what his name means – father of many nations. We find Abraham being mentioned 69 times in the New Covenant Scriptures. But I would suggest that if we want to understand the references to Abraham in the New Covenant Scriptures, we first must get to know the Abraham of the Hebrew Scriptures.

In Genesis 12:5, we find Abraham, Sarah, and Lot entering the land of Canaan (*Kena'an*) and in Genesis 12:7, God tells Abraham, “To your descendants, I will give this land.” God, in His sovereignty, promises the land of Canaan to Abraham and his descendants. But because of a famine, Abraham and his family continue to the South to Egypt. While in Egypt, Abraham’s wealth will increase significantly, as Pharaoh, thinking that Sarah is Abraham’s sister, gives him all sorts of animals and servants in his efforts to woo Sarah. When Pharaoh finds out that Sarah is Abraham’s wife, he tells Abraham to go away.

So they return to Canaan, where they find that Lot’s and Abraham’s herdsmen are quarreling over the same land for their livestock to graze. Abraham decides to divide the land, giving Lot first choice. Lot chooses the fertile plain of the Jordan to the East, setting up his tent near the city of Sodom. After Lot moves away, the Lord tells Abraham in Genesis 12:14-15 that all of the land that he can see to the North, South, East and West will belong to him and his descendants forever.

Lot is later taken captive by some of the nearby Kings and his Uncle Abraham has to come to his rescue. Upon Abraham’s return to Canaan, he receives a blessing from *Malchi-Tzedek*, king of *Shalem*. *Malchi-Tzedek* is described in Genesis 14:18 as a *kohen* of *El Elyon*, a Priest of the Most High God. His name, *Malchi-Tzedek*, means either “King of Righteousness” or “My King is Righteous.” This is the order of *Yeshua*’s Priesthood according to Hebrews 7:21. *Yeshua* is able to serve as our High Priest; He is able to offer himself up as our atonement because of the Priesthood of *Malchi-Tzedek* or as some say in the English, Melchizedek.

Malchi-Tzedek blesses Abraham saying, “Blessed be *Avram* by *El Elyon*, Creator of the heavens and the Earth, and blessed be *El Elyon*, who handed your enemies over to you.” And then we read that *Avram* acknowledges the Lord as the source of his victory by giving a tenth of all of the spoils to *Malchi-Tzedek*.

This is the first mention of the concept of the tithe in the Scripture. Though Cain and Abel and others such as Noah have made offerings unto the Lord, the only acceptable offering up to this point, has been an animal sacrifice. This is the first time that we encounter the tithe, the giving of 1/10 back to the Lord acknowledging Him as the source of blessing. If you are not experiencing the blessing of the Lord in your life, I would encourage you to seek his leading regarding incorporating the concept of giving at least 1/10 back to Him of all that He provides for you. This is an act of faith, and while it provides sustenance for ministries, the most important aspect is what it does for the giver.

Next, Abraham has a vision where he decides to remind the Lord that he is still without an heir. The Lord tells Abraham that his estate will go to someone produced by his own seed and Abraham believes in the Lord and it is credited to him as righteousness, as we read in Genesis 15:6.

This concept is also addressed in the New Covenant Scriptures in Romans chapter 4. *Rav Shaul*, the Apostle Paul, wants us to understand that Abraham’s justification, his being seen as righteous, is not a result of his own efforts, otherwise he would be able to boast to God of his works.

Paul also tells us that if we were able to obtain righteousness by our own works, we would only be receiving what God owes us. But with Abraham, as with all of us, righteousness was imputed to him by God’s grace because of his willingness to trust in the Lord. We don’t have to go to the New Testament to find grace; Noah found grace; Abraham finds grace. And according to Paul, this grace is even made available to the ungodly. We are reminded that just like Abraham, we once did not know God, we were ungodly, and yet He calls us unto Him. 1 John 4:19 says we love him because he first loved us. John 15:16 says, “you did not choose me, but I chose you.”

It is important for us to understand that even as Messianic Jews and Gentiles, we can do nothing to merit salvation. No work of ours, no keeping of the *Torah*, no keeping kosher, nothing that we do produces righteousness. It is only Messiah's sacrifice on our behalf that results in His righteousness being seen in us by the Lord. 2 Corinthians 5:21 says,

“God made this sinless man be a sin offering on our behalf, so that in union with him we might fully share in God's righteousness.”

This describes what would happen when an Israelite brought a sacrifice to the Tabernacle. When an Israelite brought an animal for a sin offering, he would place his hands over the head of the animal that was required to be without blemish, and an exchange would supernaturally take place, an exchange based on God's grace and mercy. The sins of the Israelite would be transferred to the animal, which now would suffer the consequence for sin, which is death. And because the animal had to be without blemish, the righteousness of the animal, would be transferred to the one who had sinned. Because of the acknowledgement of the sin, because of the trust in God for the system to work, the sacrifice results in forgiveness of sin.

Does killing an animal bring forgiveness of sin? No! It is the trust in the one who said to kill the animal, because the penalty for the sin must be paid and the penalty is death. So, God in His mercy accepts the death of the animal instead of requiring the death of the one who sinned.

So we do good works not to obtain righteousness, but because of the change that happens to us when we accept Messiah *Yeshua's* sacrifice on our behalf. Instead of being selfish, we are to be more selfless like the God we serve. We keep the *Torah* not because we have to, but because we want to do it out of our love for our Creator.

You may have lived a life that would not be pleasing to God, but His grace and mercy are available to you. Not because you deserve it, but because Messiah's righteousness can be imputed to you. No matter who you are and no matter what you've done in the past, He can impute Messiah's righteousness to you. Just as Abraham trusted and it was imputed to him as righteousness, we can trust in Messiah and His righteousness can be imputed to us. Just think of the freedom! We are no longer bound by our mistakes of the past. *Yeshua* took care of that on the execution stake. 2 Corinthians 5:17 says,

“Therefore, if anyone is united with the Messiah, he is a new creation – the old has passed; look, what has come is fresh and new!”

Getting back to our portion, the Lord instructs Abraham in Genesis 15 to take some animals and cut them in half. Walking between animal carcasses was a method of establishing a type of covenant at that time, called a covenant of strong friendship. Normally, both parties would walk between the carcasses and say, “If I should break this covenant, then what has happened to these animals should happen to me.” In this case, *Avram* is in a deep sleep, only the Lord in the form of a smoking firepot and a flaming torch goes between the animals, so the covenant on Abraham’s part is unconditional. The covenant is based on Abraham’s faith, and the covenant establishes a people of faith.

Does this mean that all of Abraham’s descendants will receive these covenant blessings, no matter what? While the blessings would be available to every descendant of Isaac, to our Jewish people, his twin brother Esau rejected his opportunity to participate in the blessing. Because of his actions, his line was eliminated as a line of blessing and became the Edomites.

Moses would also provide instructions from the Lord to the Israelites that certain actions on their part would result in their being cut off from the covenant blessings. For example, eating leavened bread during the week of the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Exodus 12:15), working on the Sabbath (Exodus 31:14), and not afflicting the soul on *Yom Kippur* (Leviticus 23:29). We also find that rebellious sin as it is described in Numbers 15:30, could result in the sinner, whether an Israelite or even a sojourner in their midst, being cut off from the covenant promises.

And just because the Lord promises us something, doesn’t mean we will understand sufficiently to obtain the promise in the right way. *Avram* believes in the Lord, he trusts, but he does not understand the Lord’s will concerning providing an heir for him. Since *Sarai* has been unable to conceive thus far, *Avram* & *Sarai* conclude that the Lord must want them to have a child by *Sarai*’s handmaid, *Hagar*. And if we were watching this in a movie, it would be time to cue the music that indicates that trouble is coming because the descendants of the child that will come through *Hagar* continue to trouble the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to this day.

So Abram has a son by *Hagar*, Ishmael, who is prophesied to be a wild man in Genesis 16:12. It says his hand will be against every man and every man's hand will be against him, and he will dwell in the midst of his brethren.

Our portion continues in Chapter 17 where *Avram* and *Sarai*'s names are changed by the Lord to Abraham and Sarah. They have a child -- the child that the Lord had promised to them, and they name him *Yitzkhak* (Isaac), which means laughter. God renews his covenant with Isaac, and will renew it again with Isaac's son, Jacob (*Ya'akov*), whose name will be changed to *Yis'rael* (Israel).

The covenant between the Lord and Abraham (and his descendants) is a *b'rit olam*, an everlasting covenant as we read in Genesis 17:7. We see the continuation of the covenant in our *Haftarah* portion. Isaiah 41:8-9 says, "But you, Israel, my servant, *Yaacov*, whom I have chosen, descendants of *Avraham*, my friend. I have taken you from the ends of the earth, summoned you from its most distant parts and said to you, 'You are my servant - I have chosen you, not rejected you.'" And then we find the promise of the Lord's faithfulness in verse 10. This verse is often quoted as though it applies to all believers, though in context, it applies to the Jewish people. "Don't be afraid, for I am with you, don't be distressed for I am your God. I give you strength, I give you help. I support you with my victorious right hand."

And in verse 14, Jacob is referred to as a worm, the same Hebrew word (*tola'at*) translated as crimson in one of the colors of the tabernacle and in one of the colors of the garments worn by the High Priest. It is a description of the Messiah in Psalm 22:6 and this word is also found in Isaiah 1:18 and Jonah 4:7.

Returning to the *Torah* portion, in Genesis 17:9, we find the Lord's instructions to Abraham to circumcise his entire household as the sign of the Abrahamic covenant. You know, God often uses the physical world to teach Spiritual truths to us. The sign of the Abrahamic covenant is physical circumcision. And what is the sign of the *B'rit Khadashah*, the New or Renewed Covenant? It is the Spiritual circumcision called the circumcision of the heart, first spoken of in the *Torah* in Deuteronomy 10:16 and 30:6. This circumcision is to cause us to no longer be rebellious and stiff-necked. It enables us to love God with all of our heart and all of our soul.

God's promises of blessing to Abraham were fulfilled in many ways during his lifetime, but they have been fulfilled even further through the sending of his descendant, Messiah *Yeshua* to this Earth just over 2000 years ago. And when we accept the gift of God's Son; when we accept the blood sacrifice that He offered up on our behalf, we enter into the New Covenant with Him and His righteousness is imputed to us. As we have seen with Abraham, though we have done nothing to deserve it, we are able to be seen as righteous in God's sight. We are able to spend the rest of eternity in the presence of our Holy and Righteous God, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the Holy one of Israel.