

פרשת נח / Parashat Lekh Lekha

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32:1-32:52 MATSATI.COM / Rightly Dividing The Word of G-d
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5

The Messiah and the Torah

השבועות הזה קוראים / This Week's Reading

תורה: Genesis 12:1-17:27

הפטרה: Isaiah 40:27-41:16

הברית: Romans 4:1-25

החדשה

10 In this week's study, following the triennial cycle (*Bereshit / Genesis 14:1-15:21*), we find an interesting section of verses which provide some information on the work of the Messiah. Reading through the Torah have you noticed sometimes blood and sacrifice are offered in different ways and in different places? What are the implications of this to the Messiah Yeshua? According to the scriptures the 1st century believers diligently studied the Tanach so as to know about the Messiah, what to look for in the Messiah and what to expect him to do when he is here? In order to elucidate what I consider a fundamental question on the work of the messiah we will proceed in the following manner: (i) we will look at the biblical passage itself and see how it reads in the Masoretic Text (MT, the standard Hebrew text of the Tanach, using Ginsburg's MT), (ii) the Targumim (the Aramaic translation of the Hebrew scriptures, specifically the Targum Onkelos, תרגום אונקלוס), and (iii) the current English translations. In doing so we will ask ourselves the fundamental question "what does the author intend for us to understand in terms of meaning?" and "What does the text mean?" The portion of scripture I want to look at specifically is *Bereshit / Genesis 15:5-10*.

5 מִמַּעֲיָהּ הוּא יִירָשֶׁהָ; וַיּוֹצֵא אֹתוֹ חֲחוּצָה וַיֹּאמֶר הַבְּטַחְנָא
הַשָּׁמַיְמָה וּסְפֹר הַכּוֹכָבִים אֲסִתּוּכֵל לְסַפֵּר אֹתָם וַיֹּאמֶר
6 לֹא כִּי יִהְיֶה זֶרְעֶךָ; וְהֵאֱמַן בֵּיתוֹהָ וַיִּחְשְׁבֶהָ לוֹ צְדָקָה;
7 וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו אֲנִי יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאתִיךָ מֵאוּר כַּשְׂדִּים
8 לְתֵת לְךָ אֶת־הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת לְרִשְׁתָּהּ; וַיֹּאמֶר אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה
9 בְּמָה אֲדַע כִּי אֵירְשֶׁנָּה; וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו קַחְהָ לִּי עֲגֹלָה
10 מְשֻׁלֶּשֶׁת וְעֹז מְשֻׁלֶּשֶׁת וְאֵיל מְשֻׁלֶּשׁ וְתֹר וְגֹזָל; וַיִּקְחֵהָ
אֶת־כָּל־אֵלֶּה וַיְבַתֵּר אֹתָם בַּתֶּיךָ וַיִּתֵּן אִישׁ־בְּתָרוֹ
11 לְקַרְבָּאת רֵעֵהוּ וְאֶת־הַצֶּפֶר לֹא בָתֵּר; וַיִּרְדֵּ הָעֵשׂ עַל־

Bereshit / Genesis 15:5-10

15:5 And He took him outside and said, 'Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them.' And He said to him, 'So shall your descendants be.' 15:6 Then he believed in the Lord; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness. 15:7 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.' 15:8 He said, 'O Lord God, how may I know that I will possess it?' 15:9 So He said to him, 'Bring Me a three year old heifer, and a three year old female goat, and a three year old ram, and a turtledove, and a young pigeon.' 15:10 Then he brought all these to Him and cut them in two, and laid each half opposite the other; but he did not cut the birds. (NASB)

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30 Summary

This week's portion includes *Bereshit / Genesis 12:1-17:27* for the annual reading schedule and *Bereshit / Genesis 14:1-15:21* for the triennial cycle. Following the annual reading we find Avram being called by G-d to leave his land and family to travel to a new land, a land G-d will show him. The scriptures tell us only a little about Avram, at this point, only that he is a descendant of Shem and comes from Ur an ancient city and district of southern Babylonia. The triennial cycle introduces a section of this week's parsha that deals with a regional conflict between a group of five kings (*Bera king of Sodom, and with Birsha king of Gomorrah, Shinab king of Admah, and Shemeber king of Zeboim, and the king of Bela (that is, Zoar)*) and a group of four kings (*Amraphel king of Shinar, Arioch king of Ellasar, Chedorlaomer king of Elam, and Tidal king of Goiim*). The conflict ends with the winning group capturing Lot the nephew of Avram; up until this point Avram had no reason to get involved in the ongoing war. So Avram goes to war and gets his nephew Lot back.

Often times we fail to glean insights from the less famous biblical narratives, amongst those of us who have studied the scriptures I feel one of the neglected passages are *15:9-10*. In *Bereshit / Genesis* chapter 15 G-d speaks to Avram in a vision. To summarize, Hashem tells Avram that he is going to make changes in his life for the better saying He will be a shield and that Avram's reward will be great. Avram questions this and the Lord then shows Avram the stars and saying count the stars if you are able, so shall your descendants be. Avram believed and G-d counted it to him as righteousness. Avram asks how he will know he will inherit the land, and G-d tells him to get a heifer, goat, turtledove, and a young pigeon. Avram then cuts the animals up (except the birds). At this point G-d reveals to Abram his children will be enslaved and oppressed for four hundred years. G-d reassures Avram that he will die in peace and live to an old age. G-d then mentions the generation of people will return to the land for the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet complete. Finally, the Lord makes a covenant with Avram promising the land to his descendents.

Discussion

I mentioned earlier the scriptures this week introduce some information on the work of the Messiah. As you know the work of the Messiah was to make atonement for sin and so the important scriptures we will be examining are those of the covenant HaShem makes with Avram in chapter 15. Interestingly comparing the Hebrew text from Ginsburg's MT with the English translation there appears to be a discrepancy during the translation of *15:9*.

Bereshit / Genesis 15:9

15:9 So He said to him, 'Bring Me a three year old heifer, and a three year old female goat, and a three year old ram, and a turtledove, and a young pigeon.'

5 מִמְעִידָהּ הוּא יִרְשָׁף: וַיֹּצֵא אֹתוֹ הַחוּצָה וַיֹּאמֶר הַבְּטַנָּא
 הַשְּׂמִימָה וּסְפֹר הַכּוֹכָבִים אֲסִתּוּכֵל לְסַפֵּר אֹתָם וַיֹּאמֶר
 6 לוֹ בַּהּ יְהִיָּה זְרַעְךָ: וְהֵאֱמַן בִּיהוָּה וַיִּחְשְׁבָהּ לוֹ צִדְקָה:
 7 וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו אֲנִי יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאתִיךָ מֵאוּר כַּשְׂדִּים
 8 לְתֵת לְךָ אֶת־הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת לְרִשְׁתָּהּ: וַיֹּאמֶר אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה
 9 בְּמָה אֲדַע כִּי אִירְשֶׁנָּה: וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו קָחָה לִּי עֲגֹלָה
 10 מִשְׁלֶשֶׁת וְעֵן מִשְׁלֶשֶׁת וְאֵיל מִשְׁלֶשׁ יֵתֵר וְגוֹזֵל: וַיִּקְחֵהּ
 אֶת־כָּל־אֵלֶּה וַיִּבְתֵּר אֹתָם בַּתּוֹךְ וַיִּתֵּן אִישׁ־בְּתָרוֹ
 11 לְקַנְיָתָהּ רֵעֵהוּ וְאֶת־הַצֹּפֵר לֹא בָתֵּר: וַיִּרְדֵּ הָעֵיט עַל־

“from three”

80 Taking a literal reading of the Hebrew text it says “and He said to him, take to me heifers from three, goats from three, and rams from three, and a turtle dove and a young pigeon.” When we compare this to the English translation why do the English translators chose to translate “from three” to mean “three years old?” Let’s look at little closer at the etymology of the words in question.

85

משלשת

90 The word “meshuleshet” is the word “Shelosh” meaning “three” along with the inseparable preposition “from”. The preposition מן occurs as both a maqqef preposition and as an inseparable preposition in the Hebrew text. In fact the מן occurs 7,592 times and has a few special uses. (1) Comparative use, used to express comparative and superlative ideas, (2) Superlative use, and (3) partitive use where it expresses a portion of something. In our example we have the inseparable preposition. This word literally means “from three,” using Strong’s
 95 Concordance the Hebrew word means “tripled.” It is interesting most English translations we find the translators felt a “tripled calf” actually refers to a “calf of three years old.”

100 To help clarify the translation problem here I thought it would be interesting to examine the Targumim to see if there was support for the English translation of “three years old.” The Targumim (singular Targum) are the translations of the Hebrew Scriptures into Aramaic. These translations were necessary to provide the scriptures in the vernacular (everyday language) for the returning exiles from Babylon who had learned and taken the Aramaic language of their captors. The Targumim are actually quite interesting, they often contain expanded paraphrases incorporating the theology and perspectives of the translators in the time they were written. The standard Targum of the Torah is Onkelos and the standard
 105 Targum of the prophets is Jonathan after Jonathan ben Uzziel (translator). Targum Pseudo-Jonathan is another Targum of the Torah. Yerushalami is the

comparative
 adj. pertaining to comparison; relative; using comparison; of the comparative degree (Grammar)

superlative
 n. word denoting the highest degree of a quality (Grammar); something of superior value

partitive
 n. (Grammar) word that denotes a part of a whole (i.e. some, half)
 adj. separating, dividing into parts; of part of the whole (Grammar)

110 translation of the books of Ezra, Nehemiah and Daniel. The Targum Onkelos is dated to the 2nd century CE. It is believed translations of the Torah in the form of a Targum without a doubt existed prior to this time. The Targum Jonathan and Yerushalami date to around the 2nd and 3rd century CE. The official eastern Targum to the Torah is the Targum Onkelos therefore next let's look at *Bereshit / Genesis 15:9*.

115 **Targum Onkelos Bereshit / Genesis 15:8-10**

וַיֹּאמֶר לֵיהּ אֱנָא יְיָ דִּי אֶפְקֵתָךְ מֵאוּרָא דְכַשְׂדָּאֵי לְמַתְּנָן לְךָ יְתֵי אֲרֵעָא קְדָא לְמִירְתָּהּ:
ח וַאֲמַר יְיָ אֱלֹהִים מַנָּא אֵינְדַע אַרְי אֲרֵי אֲרֵינָהּ מַטְ וַאֲמַר לֵיהּ קְרִיב קְדָמִי עֲגִלִין (תִּלְתָּא)
וְעִזִּין (תִּלְתָּא) דְכַרְיִין (תִּלְתָּא) וְשִׁפְנִינָא וְבַר יוֹנָה י וְקְרִיב קְדָמוּחֵי יְתֵי כֹל אֵלִין וְפִלִיג
יְתַהוּן בְּשׁוּרֵי וִיהֵב פִּלְגִינָא פִּלְגֵי לְקַבִּיל חֲבַרְיָה וְיְתֵי עוֹפָא לָא פִּלִיג יֵא וְנִחַת עוֹפָא עַל

120 In Hebrew it may appear unclear if one translates משלש as “from three” or “three years old.” Looking at the Targum Onkelos we see the straight forward reading is pretty obvious. תלת, תלתא, תלתה is Aramaic for שלוש meaning “three”. Taking both the Hebrew text and the Aramaic text into consideration, the Stone Edition Tanach appears to have the most accurate English translation for *Bereshit / Genesis 15:9*:

125 ***Bereshit / Genesis 15:9***
“And He said to him, Take to Me three heifers, three goats, three rams, and a turtle dove and a young dove.” (Stone Edition Tanach)

130 So HaShem was asking Avram to bring three heifers, three goats and three rams as an offering because He is entering into a covenant. Why does HaShem request so many animals in order to make this covenant? What are the implications of this which apply to Yeshua the Messiah? It may help to look at some other scriptures from the Torah for our understanding. In the Torah a guilt offering is brought when certain sins have been committed in order to make atonement for sin (See *Leviticus 5:15, 5:25, 14:12, 19:21*, and *Numbers 6:12*). The following are a few examples.

140 ***Leviticus 5:15***
5:15 ‘If a person acts unfaithfully and sins unintentionally against the Lord’s holy things, then he shall bring his guilt offering to the Lord: a ram without defect from the flock, according to your valuation in silver by shekels, in terms of the shekel of the sanctuary, for a guilt offering.

145 ***Leviticus 6:25***
6:25 ‘Speak to Aaron and to his sons, saying, ‘This is the law of the sin offering: in the place where the burnt offering is slain the sin offering shall be slain before the Lord; it is most holy.

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תלת, תלתה, תלתא is Aramaic for שלוש meaning “three”.

Reference
Marcus Jastro A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature (New York: Pardes, 1950)

Leviticus 14:12

14:12 'Then the priest shall take the one male lamb and bring it for a guilt offering, with the log of oil, and present them as a wave offering before the Lord.

Leviticus 19:21

19:21 'He shall bring his guilt offering to the Lord to the doorway of the tent of meeting, a ram for a guilt offering.

Numbers 6:12

6:12 and shall dedicate to the Lord his days as a Nazirite, and shall bring a male lamb a year old for a guilt offering; but the former days will be void because his separation was defiled.

Furthermore, there is also a guilt offering that is brought when it is not clear if a sin has been committed (See *Leviticus 5:18*).

Leviticus 5:17-19

5:17 'Now if a person sins and does any of the things which the Lord has commanded not to be done, though he was unaware, still he is guilty and shall bear his punishment. 5:18 'He is then to bring to the priest a ram without defect from the flock, according to your valuation, for a guilt offering. So the priest shall make atonement for him concerning his error in which he sinned unintentionally and did not know it, and it will be forgiven him. 5:19 'It is a guilt offering; he was certainly guilty before the Lord.' (NASB)

I believe the reason HaShem requested so many animals were to cover both the sins that were known and unknown which Avram had committed. In the Torah, there are specific requirements how the blood of sacrifices was to be applied to the altar. But under certain circumstances, G-d accepted blood sacrifices that were not offered up on the altar in Jerusalem like the sacrifice Avram prepared here in *Bereshit / Genesis 15:9-10* (See also *2 Samuel 24:17-25* and *1 Kings 18:31-39*). In the Torah sometimes blood and sacrifice are offered in different ways and in different places. In the scriptures there is no mention whether Avram placed these animals upon an altar. After having prepared the animals by cutting them in half G-d took care of the rest (See *Bereshit / Genesis 15:17-18*). Now, in *Bereshit / Genesis 15* we find HaShem accepts the sacrifice brought by Avram making a covenant with Avram and his children forever.

These scriptures give us a very important and fundamental message on the work of the Messiah. The fundamental message of the Ketuvei Shelachim (Apostolic Writings) is that the Messiah had to suffer and die if He was one day to rule and reign (See *Luke 24:25-27* and *24:44-47*). This fundamental message however has been questioned periodically throughout history by doubters. One manner in which the Messiah has been questioned is upon his atoning sacrifice and Torah. Take the following as an example:

200 “Yeshua the Messiah did not offer himself in the manner prescribed
according to the Torah of Moshe and that his blood was not sprinkled
upon the Altar.”

205 The question is one of whether the Messiah Yeshua offered himself in the
manner prescribed according to the Torah? In the Torah blood and sacrifice are
offered in different ways and in different places. Likewise, Yeshua the Messiah
did in fact offer himself a manner which is in agreement with the Torah. Thus,
keeping with Jewish tradition, Yeshua willingly offered himself on our behalf as a
righteous one making atonement for the sins of the world. Yeshua’s blood was
210 not poured out on the altar in the Temple but his offering did proceed by the
manner prescribed in the Torah, just as it is written in *Hebrews 13:11-12*:

Hebrews 13:11-12

215 *13:11 For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the
holy place by the high priest as an offering for sin, are burned outside the
camp. 13:12 Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people
through His own blood, suffered outside the gate. (NASB)*

220 Yeshua suffered outside of the city gate to make the people holy through his
own blood, and then as our high priest carried his own blood into the holy of
holies in Heaven. In this way Yeshua, the Messiah paid in full, fulfilling the
image and purpose of the Torah’s system of atonement through shedding his
blood on our behalf.

Hebrews 9:11-15

225 *9:11 But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things to
come, He entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not
made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation; 9:12 and not through
the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the
230 holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. 9:13 For if
the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who
have been defiled sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh, 9:14 how much
more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered
Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works
235 to serve the living God? 9:15 For this reason He is the mediator of a new
covenant, so that, since a death has taken place for the redemption of the
transgressions that were committed under the first covenant, those who
have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.
(NASB)*

Be Blessed in Yeshua our Messiah!

245 הללויה לאדוננו מורנו ורבינו ישוע מלך המשיח לעולם ועד:
Hallelujah for our Lord, our Teacher, our Rabbi,
“Yeshua” King Messiah forever and ever

Note:

Yeshua did explicitly identify himself as the messiah in Matthew 16:16-1, Mark 14:61-62, Luke 7:20-23, John 4:25-26, 5:39, 5:45-47, 8:59, 10:24-25.