

Parashat VaYera / פרשת ויירה

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Have you looked at the bible in a worldly way?

This Weeks Reading List:

Torah: Genesis 18:1-22:24

Haftarah: 2 Kings 4:1-37

B'rit HaChadashah: Luke 1:26-38 24:36-53 2 Peter 2:4-11

This week's parsha is packed with information (i) Avraham receives a visitation from God and finds out his wife Sarah is going to bear a Son, (ii) the destruction of Sodom and Gemorah, (iii) Lot's rescue from Sodom while also losing everything he owns, and Lot's sexual sin with his daughters, (iv) Avimelech taking Sarah for his wife and God's subsequent curse and then forgiveness on Avimelech and all his household, and finally (v) God testing Avraham to sacrifice his son Yitzchak. In Parashat VaYera we find a remez upon God's choice of Avraham to become the forefather of a special nation that will represent Him and ultimately a blessing to the entire world. But this Remez isn't so obvious at first glance if we are looking at the scriptures from a worldly perspective. Let's explore this a little further.

Genesis 22:1-18

22:1 And it came to pass after these things, that G-d did test Avraham, and said unto him, Avraham: and he said, Hineini (Behold, here I am). 22:2 And He said, Take now thy son, thine ben yachid (only son) Yitzchak, whom thou lovest, and get thee into eretz Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of. 22:3 And Avraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his donkey, and took two of his servants with him, and Yitzchak his son, and cut the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which G-d had told him. 22:4 Then on Yom HaShlishi Avraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off. [1C 15:3] 22:5 And Avraham said unto his servants, Abide ye here with the donkey; and I and the young man will go over there and nishtachaveh (we will worship) and we will come back again to you. 22:6 And Avraham took atzei haolah (the wood of the burnt offering), and laid it upon Yitzchak his son; and he took the eish (fire) in his hand, and a knife; and they went both of them together. 22:7 And Yitzchak spoke unto Avraham his father, and said, Avi (My father): and he said, Hineini, beni (Here am I, my son). And he said, Hinei, the eish (fire) and the wood: but where is the seh (lamb) for a burnt offering? [YESHAYAH 53:7] 22:8 And Avraham said, My son, G-d will provide Himself a seh (lamb) for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together. 22:9 And they came to the place which G-d had told him of; and Avraham built a mizbe'ach there, and laid the wood in order, and made the akedah (binding) of Yitzchak his son, and laid him on the mizbe'ach upon the

wood. 22:10 And Avraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son. 22:11 And the Malach Hashem called unto him out of Shomayim, and said, Avraham, Avraham: and he said, Hineini. 22:12 And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the young man, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest G-d, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine ben yachid from Me. 22:13 And Avraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and hinei behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Avraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son. [YESHAYAH 53:8] 22:14 And Avraham called the name of that place Hashem yireh: as it is said to this day, In the mount of Hashem it shall be provided. 22:15 And the Malach Hashem called unto Avraham out of Shomayim the second time, 22:16 And said, By Myself have I sworn, saith Hashem, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine ben yachid: 22:17 That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy zera as the stars of the skies, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy zera shall possess the gate of his enemies; 22:18 And in thy zera shall kol goyei ha'aretz be blessed; because thou hast obeyed My voice.

I have spoken with a lot of people online about the bible and God's salvation in His Messiah Yeshua. But no matter how convincing the evidence and logical the reasoning found in the scriptures, there are always some who simply will not believe. During various discussions occasionally this portion of scripture comes up. The sacrifice God asked Avraham to perform using his son Yitzchak is a revealing picture of God's offering Yeshua upon the cross for our sins however, I have received comments like the following. "How could God ask Avraham to sacrifice his son Yitzchak it is barbaric?" How could Yitzchak think to obey or be obedient to allow his father Avraham to tie him up and offer him upon the altar?" They go further to say that God is nasty, vindictive, and even genocidal making references to various places in the Torah. To answers these questions I think we need to look closer at hermeneutics, scriptural interpretation. I believe in order to understand the bible; we have to be reading with biblical glasses on. This takes careful training and study of the scriptures. Is it possible you are looking at the bible in a worldly way?

Have you looked at the bible in a worldly way?

To answers these questions I want to begin by (i) looking at what the word "worldly" means and (ii) look at how God is not an impersonal God but one who is actively relating and desiring a deep and intimate relationship.

What does "worldly" mean?

Since we want to understand what worldly means from a biblical perspective it is natural that we should look in the bible, more specifically the Corinthians. Corinth was a strategically located Roman city on the main land situated between east and west and was a crossroads city for several sea routes. Corinth was famous for its intellectual and material prosperity and was the capital of Achaia. However, Corinth became famous for its corruption and profligacy or licentiousness, degeneracy, promiscuousness and depravity. Thus, to Corinthianize meant to commit sexual immorality. The apostle Shaul (Paul) wrote to the Corinthians to address several issues relating to moral problems. And

since the Corinthian's were so worldly it is no surprise the Apostle Shaul used the word "worldly." In 2 Corinthians 5:16 Shaul tells us to not look at anyone from a worldly point of view, that, in the beginning we looked at the Messiah from a worldly point of view, but no longer. The point was in the beginning, the disciples looked upon the messiah to deliver Israel from Roman rule. After being with Yeshua for three years and being witness to the death, burial and bodily resurrection of Yeshua the disciples learned the reason Yeshua came was to redeem a physical Israel in a spiritual way; furthermore, not only Israel but all the nations of the earth being blessed by salvation through faith.

2 Corinthians 5:16

5:16 So from now on, we do not look at anyone from a worldly viewpoint. Even if we once regarded the Messiah from a worldly viewpoint, we do so no longer. (CJB)

To get a better understanding of worldly, let's look at the Hebrew rendition of this verse.

2Corinthians 5:16

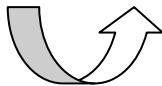
5:16 alken meatah lneda wod iysh lepiy besaro weap hamashiyha imyedaanuhv lepiy besharwo lnedaehv wod atah: (HNTT)

אל-הקורנתיים ב 5:16

16 לֹא לְנַפְשָׁם כִּי אָסִּיּוּ אֲשֶׁר מֵת וְקָם בְּעֵדָם: עַל־כֵּן מֵעַתָּה
 לֹא־נִדְעָ עוֹד אִישׁ לְפִי בְּשָׂרוֹ וְאִף הַמָּשִׁיחַ אִם־יִדְעֵנָהוּ לְפִי
 בְּשָׂרוֹ לֹא־נִדְעֵהוּ עוֹד עִתָּה:

בשר = flesh

לפי = **ל** + **פה** = according to / for (to) the lips



Here we find the word "worldly" is translated from the words "lepiy besaro." The first word is a combination of a preposition **ל** with the word **פה** meaning mouth. The second word **בשר** means flesh/body. So worldly is translated from the Hebrew words which literally mean "for the lips of his flesh/body."

So, when we look upon the bible from a worldly perspective, one does so from the flesh, from a purely physical perspective and not from a spiritual perspective. When we look at how God deals with sin in the bible, we find there are some very significant spiritual lessons we can learn from. For example, the total war that was commanded in the Torah upon entering the Promised Land has applications in our lives removing and totally destroying the strongholds the enemy has in our lives to find victory in our lives, and the thing that might draw us back to sin (i.e. keeping the women, or wealth of the

conquered people, etc). Total war shows us a picture of the severity of sin and its consequences when we look from a spiritual perspective there is depth and meaning to every word found in the scriptures.

We serve a powerful, mighty, and loving God, and also a God that can mourn with us His people. If you are going through some painful situation in your own life, God is right there with you every step of the way. The scriptures demonstrate the love and compassion God has for his people; the scriptures also show God is relating too and showing us he has feelings too just like us. We can see this by looking at a Jewish custom which I will illustrate from the Tanach and the B'rit HaChadashah (NT).

The custom or rite I am referring to is that of "tearing ones tunic." This is performed when something has happened such as losing a loved one. What one would do is tear their tunic and sit down in dust and mourn for their loss. There are many examples found in the bible of this type of custom, but it generally refers to one loosing someone. One example is found in 2 Kings chapter 2 where Elisha loses his friend Elijah. When Elijah is taken into heaven Elisha tears his tunic.

2Kings 2:11-12

2:11 Suddenly, as they were walking on and talking, there appeared a fiery chariot with horses of fire; and as it separated the two of them from each other, Eliyahu went up into heaven in a whirlwind. 2:12 Elisha saw it and cried out, "My father! My father! The chariots and horsemen of Isra'el!" Then he lost sight of him. Seizing his clothes, he tore them in half. (CJB)

The tearing of the tunic is a wonderful Midrash upon God's showing us his love for His Son Yeshua. According to the Talmud the parokhet (veil/curtain) is the tunic of the Temple. Therefore the curtain is the tunic of the one who dwells in the Temple; and thus the tunic of God. When Yeshua died upon the cross, God tore his tunic from top to bottom in mourning over the death of his Son.

Matthew 27:51

27:51 At that moment the parokhet in the Temple was ripped in two from top to bottom; and there was an earthquake, with rocks splitting apart. (CJB)

The tearing of the tunic is a sign of deepest sorrow and is very important because it represents a connection to the mourning rite such as in the action of Elisha on Elijah's ascension. Not only that, but God is saying to us look, I am mourning too in the same way you mourn for your loved ones. I know where you are, I know the pain you are in, and I am here with you because I love you very much.

In conclusion, God is showing us the dedication, sincerity, and moving faith Avraham needed, in obedience, in order to be called by God's name and make him to be a nation that will bless all other nations. Avraham had faith that God would provide a way for his son to live and He did exactly that. Correspondingly, God kept the faith promise and raised Yeshua from the grave alive and doing so made a way for our forgiveness. I believe Avraham understood the nature of saving faith, and from this parsha we can outline exactly what saving faith consists of.

The nature of Saving Faith

1. Saving faith is not its own righteousness
2. Saving faith rests upon promise
3. Saving faith sees the impossible
4. Saving faith deals with sin
5. Saving faith embraces trials and anticipates deliverance
6. Saving faith is extended through the scriptures (i.e. Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God Rom10:17)

Abraham knew and understood that his righteousness is not his own, but something that is accounted to us from God. Today, by faith in Yeshua our righteousness is accounted to us because of the great sacrifice Yeshua made on our behalf.

Hebrews11:8-9

11:8 By trusting, Avraham obeyed, after being called to go out to a place which God would give him as a possession; indeed, he went out without knowing where he was going. 11:9 By trusting, he lived as a temporary resident in the Land of the promise, as if it were not his, staying in tents with Yitz'chak and Ya'akov, who were to receive what was promised along with him. (CJB)

Be Blessed in Yeshua our Messiah!

הללויה לאדוננו מורנו ורבינו ישוע מלך המשיח לעולם ועד:

Hallelujah for our Lord, our Teacher, our Rabbi,
“Yeshua” King Messiah for ever and ever