

פרשת וארא / Parashat Va'era

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32:1-32:52 MATSATI.COM / Rightly Dividing The Word of G-d
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Faith, Grace, and Obedience

השבועות הזה קוראים / This Week's Reading

תורה: Exodus 6:2-9:35
הפטרה: Ezekiel 28:25-29:21
הברית: Romans 9:14-33
החדשה

10 Reading through this week's portion I noticed something interesting. Typically I follow the Masoretic text with a verse by verse comparison afterwards from a modern translation like the NASB or KJV bibles to see if there are any peculiarities in the translation. This week came with an interestingly new challenge because the modern translations do not follow verse by verse from the
15 Masoretic text. It is fascinating to find Christian tradition has enumerated the scriptures differently than that from the Masoretic text. The reason being, in the Masoretic text occasionally the verses are shifted by one or two numbers as a result of differences in enumeration. We can see this very clearly here in this week's portion. This type of phenomenon is quite frequent in the psalms also.
20 "Ginsburg's introduction" may shed some light upon this phenomenon because it is very important. Let's look at what Ginsburg has to say about this.

Ginsburg's "Introduction to the Masoretic-critical edition of the Hebrew Bible" provides some information on the how the scriptures are numbered chapter and verse. Ginsburg calls this the Masoretic order. "According to the Masoretic
25 order (1) an Open Section (פתוחה) has two forms (i) it begins with the full line and is indicated by the previous line being unfinished. The vacant space of the unfinished line must be that of three trilateral words. (ii) If, however the text of the previous section fills up the last line, the next line must be left entirely blank, and the open section must begin a line with the following line. (2) the Closed
30 Section (סתומה) has two forms. (i) It is indicated by its beginning with an indented line, the previous line being either finished or unfinished; this minor break, therefore, resembles what we should call a new paragraph. And (ii) if the pervious section ends in the middle of the line, the prescribed vacant space must be left after it, and the first word or words of the closed section must be written at
35 the end of the same line s that the break is exhibited in the middle of the line. In the synagogue scrolls, which have preserved the most ancient practice as well as in the best and oldest MSS in the book form, this is the only way in which the Open and Closed Sections are indicated. The practice is putting a פ = [פתוחה] or ס = [סתומה] in the vacant space to indicate an Open or Closed section, adopted in
40 some MSS and editions of later date. Ginsburg's Masoretic text follows the earlier MSS and editions in order to maintain uniformity in the divisions in the Torah."

Text taken from
"Introduction to the
Masoretic-critical
edition of the
Hebrew Bible" by
Christian D.
Ginsburg L. L. D.,
Ktav Publishing
House Inc.

45 Now according to what we have just read from Ginsburg's introduction to the
massoretic-critical edition of the Hebrew bible, Ginsburg is describing his
methods for indicating divisions within the text. Ginsburg says the synagogue
scrolls actually preserve this divisional practice and it is believed the triennial
50 cycle is the method of reading the Shabbat Torah portions back in the days when
Yeshua walked upon the earth. The triennial cycle of the Torah reading is a
historical practice in ancient Yisrael by which the entire torah was read in serial
fashion over a three year period. Many conservative and reformed synagogues
stated using the triennial cycle in the 19th and 20th century where the annual Torah
divisions were divided into thirds and each one third was read as the weekly
portion during the appropriate week of the annual calendar. Though it appears to
55 be a later adaptation many scholars believe the triennial cycle was the practice of
ancient Yisrael.

The important point here is by tradition the Masoretic text had some sort of
indication on the division of the text for the purpose of keeping track of and
reading the weekly portion. The division of the text however into chapters and
verses is not of Jewish origin. In 1330 A.D., R Salomon b. Ishmael adopted the
60 Christian numeration of chapters and placed the numerals in the margin of the
Hebrew Bible in order to facilitate reference to particular passages. In a great
majority of the chapters the verse and chapter enumeration coincide with one or
the other Masoretic sections. However, there are many instances where the
Christian enumeration contradicts the divisions of the text in the Hebrew bible. In
65 this week's Torah portion, *Shmot / Exodus 7-8* we find an example of this practice
in which the Christian enumeration is different than that of the Masoretic text. It
is interesting to note that the Christian tradition of enumerating the verses is a
tradition which is widely accepted but was not part of the Jewish culture in the
days of Yeshua. I have to comment; most all Christians don't even realize this
70 discrepancy. This discrepancy is not a doctrinal issue however it draws to
question the traditions which we hold and accept as fact are not what they seem to
be. This week I want to look a little closer at this concept of traditions because it
is very closely related to the Torah and our understanding on the differences
between faith, grace, and obedience.

80 As I mentioned earlier I would like to take a look at “the traditions we follow.”
To begin, let’s look at what Yeshua had to say about traditions. Now, as you
know, in the Ketuvei Shelachim (Apostolic Writings) occasionally the “traditions
of men” are contracted with the “Word of G-d.” For example, Yeshua told the
Pharisees:

Mark 7:10-16

85 *7:10 'For Moses said, 'Honor your father and your mother'; and, 'He who
speaks evil of father or mother, is to be put to death'; 7:11 but you say, 'If
a man says to his father or his mother, whatever I have that would help
you is Corban (that is to say, given to God ,'* 7:12 *you no longer permit
him to do anything for his father or his mother; 7:13 thus invalidating the
90 word of God by your tradition which you have handed down; and you do
many things such as that.' 7:14 After He called the crowd to Him again,
He began saying to them, 'Listen to Me, all of you, and understand: 7:15
there is nothing outside the man which can defile him if it goes into him;
but the things which proceed out of the man are what defile the man. 7:16
95 ['If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear.'] (NASB)*

One of the dangers of holding to traditions without thinking deeply upon their
origins is related to nullifying the Word of G-d. One particular tradition I want to
focus upon this week does not nullify the Word of G-d but I question whether
100 both Messianic and Christian believers follow without realizing they are
observing Torah. Among the various traditions we follow whether from Jewish
or Christian origin, do you realize there is a tradition we follow that is a mitzvah
(command) in the Torah? In order to see this we must make a comparison on
Vayikra / Leviticus 23:3 and *Hebrews 10:25*:

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ויקרא 23:1-3

כג וידבר יהוה אל־משה לאמר: דבר אל־בני ישראל
2 ואמרת אליהם מועדי יהוה אשר־תקראו אתם מקראי
קדש אלה הם מועדי: ששת ימים תעשה מלאכה וביום
3 השביעי שבת שבתון מקרא קדש כל־מלאכה לא תעשו
שבת הוא ליהוה בכל מושבתיכם:

110 The translation for holy convocation refers to a holy gathering. It is commanded
on the Shabbat to gather ourselves together. This is the source of the textual
reference the author of *Hebrews 10:25* makes:

Hebrews 10:24-25

115 *10:24 and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good
deeds, 10:25 not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of*

Vayikra / Leviticus 23:1-3

23:1 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 23:2 Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, Concerning the feasts of the LORD, which ye shall proclaim to be holy convocations, even these are my feasts. 23:3 Six days shall work be done: but the seventh day is the sabbath of rest, an holy convocation; ye shall do no work therein: it is the sabbath of the LORD in all your dwellings. (KJV)

some, but encouraging one another and all the more as you see the day drawing near. (NASB)

120 In *Hebrews 10:25*, not forsaking our own assembling together; this refers to our not forsaking our congregational meetings. In Greek, the word used here in the Ketuvei Shelachim is “episunagogen”

Hebrews 10:25

25 μὴ ἐγκαταλείποντες τὴν ἐπισυναγωγὴν ἑαυτῶν καθὼς ἔ-
θος τισὶν ἀλλὰ παρακαλοῦντες καὶ τοσοῦτῳ μᾶλλον ὅσῳ
26 βλέπετε ἐγγίζουσιν τὴν ἡμέραν. ἐκουσίως γὰρ ἁμαρτα-

125 The literal reading of the Greek is “not neglecting to synagogue ourselves together...” Today many believers observe this mitzvot (command) in the Torah and do not realize it. When we “synagogue” ourselves together, when we gather ourselves together in a holy congregation we are observing the mitzvot (command) in the Torah to do so. Note, this is not a form of legalism, the
130 common Christian claim of those who choose to observe the Torah results from a misunderstanding on the concept of Torah observance. The misunderstanding results from misunderstanding the differences between faith, grace, and obedience as believers in Yeshua the Messiah. Let’s look at this a little further by the following example.

135 Relating to the mitzvah to synagogue/assemble ourselves together, many believers today not only neglect to meet regularly with a congregation of believers but actually suppose it is unnecessary. This is a very serious problem because it is a heresy which endangers ones salvation. How? See *Yochanan / John 13:34-35* and 1 *Yochanan / 1 John 3:10-11, 14, 18; 4:7-8*; the scriptures indicate biblical
140 faith is socially oriented. The social structure of our faith is also found in the Tanach, the Tanach speaks of the kahal (the assembly) and the edah (the congregation), the Ketuvei Shelachim speaks of ekklesia (called-out community) and the Body of Messiah, and both the people of G-d. A common theme found in the Tanach is that of the historical destiny of G-d’s people and their need to treat
145 each other with justice and mercy. The Ketuvei Shelachim has no less emphasis; it actually commands believers to love each other in real, practical ways and to build up the Body of the Messiah. This is the difference between emuna (faith) and obedience. Obedience involves the actions denoting submission to authority, particularly the authority of G-d’s Word. Not only that, but obedience
150 necessitates personal involvement, relationship, communication, and working together for the Kingdom of G-d. These challenges are impossible if G-d’s people do not meet together regularly. This obedience is also directly related to our relationship with G-d.

155 In the last few decades there has been the arrival of extreme forms of individualism under the guise of “independence,” and “freethinking” in the secular world. It is unfortunate today this secular mentality has crept into the believing community and produced fruit to discredit the importance of believers meeting together. One such claim is believers suppose that their personal tie to

160 G-d is the only element of their religious life that matters. But without purposeful
contact with other believers, fruitful work for the Kingdom soon stops, prayer
becomes dry, the world shrinks from a social conscience point of view and people
quickly withdraw into a world of their own making which ends in weak
discipleship and cheap grace. One such example of this is what I call “church
165 flirting” in the Christian community. This is a perversion of true congregational
meeting which consists of flirting from one kehillah (congregation) to another
without becoming committed to any. Those who do so delude themselves
supposing they are not neglecting congregational meetings; such behavior
prevents one from becoming close to any one group and keeps people from
working together for a common good.

170 In this week’s study how does all of this tie together? Thus far we have
learned the chapter and verse enumeration is not a Jewish concept but rather a
tradition we have held without thinking assuming this is the way things have
always been. We are also keeping a tradition of assembling ourselves together
while unknowingly observing the Torah command to do so, and finally there is a
175 movement of extreme individualism today. This has led us to discovering the
difference between emuna (faith) and obedience. We know all about emuna
(faith) and we know an exorbitant amount about G-d’s grace. For it is by faith,
through grace we are saved by the shed blood of Yeshua the Messiah. The
question however is “what do we know about obedience?” What is obedient faith
180 and what is obedient living? James explains it this way:

James 1:22-25

185 *1:22 But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who
delude themselves. 1:23 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a
doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; 1:24 for
once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately
forgotten what kind of person he was. 1:25 But one who looks intently at
the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a
forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he
190 does. (NASB)*

James exhorts us to be doers of the word and not merely hearers only. The next
obvious question is what does it mean to be a doer of the word? Do you study the
bible just to hear what it says and not to do what it commands? Can we expect G-
195 d to answer us if we are not living pleasing according to His ways? Yeshua
explained that all of G-d’s commands should be fulfilled in a more-complete way
than that taught by the leaders of the day. Yeshua stressed we should take into
account the spiritual intent of the Torah not just the letter. Yeshua showed that
both aspects were important for true obedience to G-d.

200 Now something to keep in mind, obedience is for continued spiritual
understanding but it does not entitle us to salvation. Salvation is found alone in
grace and mercy by faith in Yeshua and His shed blood. But G-d does expect us
to do our part; this is why James said what he did in **2:20-22**:

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James 2:20-22

2:20 But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless? 2:21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar? 2:22 You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected; (NASB)

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Faith works together with our works and Yeshua demonstrates this in *Yochanan / John 7:16 Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me. 7:17 If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself. (KJV)* Yeshua here is demonstrating an attitude of humility saying a humble heart with willing obedience is the key. Today, don't let tradition hold you back from stepping out into G-d's will for your life especially if the Lord is calling you to live a more obedient life for him. Being obedient is not easy and each of us needs to work out our walk with G-d in fear and trembling. So I want to encourage you all to step out in faith today. Start living the life of a true believer by demonstrating a humble hear that is coupled with willing obedience to G-d's word. We need to stop serving ourselves and start serving the Lord. It is never too late to start, why not start today? Take care and G-d bless!

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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 forever and ever

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