

Parashat Vayera

פרשת וירא

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

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The One whom Avraham is speaking to

השבועות הזה קוראים / This Week's Reading

תורה: Genesis 18:1-22:24

הפטרה: 2 Kings 4:1-37

הברית: Luke 1:26-38, 24:36-53,

החדשה 2 Peter. 2:4-11

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Bereshit / Genesis 18:1 Now the Lord appeared to him by the oaks of Mamre, while he was sitting at the tent door in the heat of the day. 18:2 When he lifted up his eyes and looked, behold, three men were standing opposite him; and when he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them and bowed himself to the earth, (NASB)

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The significance of these opening passages to Parashat Vayera (*Bereshit / Genesis 18:1-22:24*) revolves around the question of whether or not the One whom Avraham speaks to is the eternal Almighty God and what are the implications for our understanding of Yeshua the Messiah. In our study for this week, to determine the answer to the question of who Avraham is speaking to we will be looking at Ginsburg's Masoretic text and the Greek Septuagint (LXX).

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A literal translation of the Hebrew text says "And Adonai (YHVH) appeared to him . . ." The verb "appeared" ראה written in the Niphil verbal pattern does not invoke the idea or feeling of "reveal" as its primary meaning in the sense of to "make known." It is interesting to note though that the Niphil jussive form of ראה appears 49 times in the Torah and each occurrence requires the sense of "appear" that requires a visual experience.

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בראשית 18:1-33

פרש' וירא אליו יהוה באלני ממרא והוא ישב פתח האהל יח 0
1 כחם היום: וישא עיניו וירא והנה שלשה אנשים נצבים
2 עליו וירא וירץ לקראתם מפתח האהל וישתחו ארצה:
3 ויאמר אדני אם נא מצאתי חן בעיניך אל נא תעבר
4 מעל עבדך: יקחנא מעט מים ורחצו רגליכם והשענו

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A literal translation of the (LXX) translates as "Appeared and to him God . . ." Did God make himself known by appearing to Avraham in human form? The importance of this question with respect to Yeshua the Messiah is found in the text of the Ketuvei Shelachim (Apostolic Writings) in *John 1:1-14* that speaks of the Word of God becoming flesh and dwelling among men. Are we to understand

Bereshit / Genesis 18:1-3

18:1 Now the Lord appeared to him by the oaks of Mamre, while he was sitting at the tent door in the heat of the day. 18:2 When he lifted up his eyes and looked, behold, three men were standing opposite him; and when he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them and bowed himself to the earth, 18:3 and said, 'My lord, if now I have found favor in your sight, please do not pass your servant by. (NASB)

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35 that the Word being God appeared to mankind in human form in a similar manner
 as God and the angels appeared to Avraham here in *Bereshit / Genesis 18*? (Note
 this study can be complimented by reading the article “*The Word become flesh, is
 40 this a distinctly Jewish concept?*” The question of whether this is a distinctly
 Jewish concept or not is asked and the Hebrew Masoretic text and Aramaic
 Targum Onkelos is examined. The article can be found here for further study:
[http://www.matsati.com/bblog2/client/index.cfm/2010/8/25/The-Word-become-
 flesh-is-it-a-distinctly-Jewish-concept](http://www.matsati.com/bblog2/client/index.cfm/2010/8/25/The-Word-become-flesh-is-it-a-distinctly-Jewish-concept))

So let’s begin by trying to answer the question of whether the One whom
 Avraham spoke to was indeed God?

ΓΕΝΕΣΙΣ. 18:1-3

18 **Ἦφθη δὲ αὐτῷ ὁ Θεὸς** πρὸς τῇ δρυὶ τῇ Μαμβροῇ, καθήμενον
 2 αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ τῆς θύρας τῆς σκηνῆς αὐτοῦ μεσημβρίας. Ἀναβλέ-
 ψας δὲ τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς αὐτοῦ εἶδε, καὶ ἰδὸν τρεῖς ἄνδρες εἰστή-
 κεισαν ἐπάνω αὐτοῦ· καὶ ἰδὼν, προσέδραμεν εἰς συνάντησιν
 αὐτοῖς ἀπὸ τῆς θύρας τῆς σκηνῆς αὐτοῦ, καὶ προσεκύνησεν ἐπὶ
 3 τὴν γῆν. Καὶ εἶπε, **Κύριε**, εἰ ἄρα εὔρον χάριν ἐναντίον σου, μὴ
 4 παρέλθῃς τὸν παῖδά σου. Ληθθήτω δὴ ὕδωρ, καὶ νιψάτωσαν

It is difficult on how to approach determining this question on
 whether this is God speaking to Avraham or simply a man or an angel. The
 approach I will take in this study is to look at the name by which Avraham
 addresses the spokesperson of the three men that appeared to him, the word
 “Adonai.” Tim Hegg’s commentary “*The Messiah in the Tanach*” on these
 verses mentions another commentary by Spurrel “*Notes on the Text of Genesis*”
 55 *Oxford, 1896*, Spurrel examines the vowel marks, the Masoretic text points the
 word Adonai with the qametz and not with the patach which signifies that the
 Masorets believed
 3 **וַיֹּאמֶר אֲדֹנָי אֱמֹנָא מְצַתִּי חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ אֱלֹהֵי תְעֹבֵר** Avraham was
 4 **מַשְׁלֵל עַבְדְּךָ; יִקְחֵנָא מִעַשְׂרֵימִים וְרַחֲצוּ רַגְלֵיכֶם וְהִשְׁעֵנוּ** addressing the Almighty
 60 God. Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew English Lexicon (BDB) has an interesting
 comment on the word Adonai. According to the BDB, variations of the word
 Adon (אָדֹן) as Adonei, Adoni, and two variations of Adonai using the qametz and
 the patach marks are used in the Masoretic text to distinguish the divine
 references from human references. Looking at *Bereshit / Genesis 18:3*, the
 65 Masoretic text points the word “Adonai” with the qametz and not the patach thus
 according to the Masorets Avraham is addressing the Almighty God. Comparing
 the LXX with the Hebrew text, we see Kurie from the word “κύριος” (kurios)
 meaning Lord is capitalized which indicates to me the translators of the LXX
 were under the opinion that this name Adonai was considered קֹדֶשׁ “holy,” the
 70 capital letter signifies that they saw this as a reference to the Name (YHVH) of
 God.

In addition to this, the Masorets have a note that indicates the
 spelling of Adonai with the qametz that occurs 134 times in the Tanach without
 the divine name YHVH or Elohim. The list of verses can be found in Ginsburg,

Genesis 18:1-3
 18:1 Appeared and to
 him God before the
 oak in Mamre, at his
 sitting near the door of
 his tent at the midday.
 18:2 And lifting up his
 eyes he saw; and
 behold three men had
 set upon him. And
 seeing, he ran up to
 meet with them from
 the door of his tent.
 And he did obeisance
 upon the ground. 18:3
 And he said, O Lord,
 if surely I found favor
 before you, you should
 not go by your servant.
 (Literal Translation)

75 The Masorah, 4 volumes (<http://www.lulu.com/product/hardcover/hebrew-bible-bfbs-major-edition-%28volumes-3-and-4a%29/559844>, accessed October 2010). Next, let's look at a few select verses from the Torah. The following verses are taken from the Torah that has the occurrences of Adonai without the accompanying divine names.

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בראשית 18:27

27 הַמָּקוֹם בְּעִבְרָתָם: וַיַּעַן אַבְרָהָם וַיֹּאמֶר הִנְהֵנָּה הוֹאֵלְתִי
28 לְדַבֵּר אֶל־אֲדֹנָי וְאַנְכִי עֹפֵר וְאַפֵּר: אֲוִלִי יַחְסְרוּן הַמְּשִׁים

בראשית 18:31

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31 לֹא אֶעֱשֶׂה אִם־אֶמְצָא שֵׁם שְׁלֹשִׁים: וַיֹּאמֶר הִנְהֵנָּה
הוֹאֵלְתִי לְדַבֵּר אֶל־אֲדֹנָי אֲוִלִי וַיִּמְצְאוּן שֵׁם עֶשְׂרִים
וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא אֶשְׁחִית בְּעִבּוֹר הָעֶשְׂרִים: וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל־נָא 32

בראשית 19:18

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18 בְּכָל־דְּבַר הַתְּרָה הַמְּלֹט פִּן־תִּסְפָּה: וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹט
19 אֱלֹהִים אֶל־נָא אֲדֹנָי: הִנְהֵנָּה מִצָּא עֲבֹדְךָ חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ

Textual variant using the YHVH in place of Adonai.

בראשית 20:4

וַאֲבִימֶלֶךְ לֹא קָרַב אֵלֶיהָ וַיֹּאמֶר אֲדֹנָי הִנְנִי גַם־צַדִּיק 4
תהרג

v. 28 וְעַל־פְּנֵי כָל־אֶרֶץ וּכְנַחַשׁ וְתִ"א כ"ו וְעַל פְּנֵי תַפְכָּר בַּת־עַי. v. 30 כֵּן בַּהֲלָלוּ יְרוּשָׁלַיִם מִצַּעַר חֶסֶד. v. 31 בַּהֲלָלוּ לְבַא חֶסֶד. v. 33 סָבִיר הָהוּא וְכֵן ת"י. v. 33 נְקוּד עַל ו'. v. 4 וְעַל אֲדֹנָי.

שמות 4:10

10 בִּיבֹשְׁתִי: וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל־יְהוָה בִּי אֲדֹנָי לֹא אִישׁ
דְּבָרִים אֲנֹכִי גַם מִתְמוּל גַּם מִשְׁלֵשׁם גַּם מֵאֵז דְּבַרְךָ
11 אֶל־עֲבֹדְךָ בִּי כְבֹד־פָּה וְכִבְדֵּה לְשׁוֹן אֲנֹכִי: וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה

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שמות 4:13

13 עִבְרִיתָּהּ וְהוֹרִיתִיךָ אֲשֶׁר תִּדְבָר: וַיֹּאמֶר כִּי אֲדֹנָי שְׁלַח
 14 נָא בְיַד־תְּשַׁלַּח: וַיַּחֲרֵאֶף יְהוָה בְּמִשְׁהוֹ וַיֹּאמֶר הֲלֹא

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שמות 15:17

קָנִיתִי: תִּבְאֵמוּ וְתִטְעֲמוּ בְּתַר נַחֲלַתְךָ מְכוֹן
 לְשִׁבְתְּךָ פְּעֻלַת יְהוָה מִקְדָּשׁ אֲדֹנָי כּוֹנְנִי

v. 13 ב"נ נֶאֱלַת רַפִּי. v. 16 ס"א עליהם | פסק. v. 16 כן בהללוי ירושלמי ורעה חסר.
 v. 16 בהללוי קניתי. v. 17 נ"א ב"נ ותטעמו בגעיא. v. 17 ס"א יהוה וכן ד"ב חר"ה
 ד"ו וח"ש. v. 19 כן יריחו את" בריש שורה שניה. v. 20 ס"א ותצאן ונמסר עליה במוגה
 ותצאן. v. 25 ו רבתי.

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שמות 34:9

8 רַבְעִים: וַיִּמְהַר מֹשֶׁה וַיִּקַּד אֶרְצָה וַיִּשְׁתַּחוּ: וַיֹּאמֶר אִם־
 9 נָא מְצַאתִי חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ אֲדֹנָי יִלְדֶנָּה אֲדֹנָי בְּקִרְבְּנוּ כִּי
 עִבְדְּךָ עֲרַף הוּא וְסַלַּחַת לְעֹנְנֵנוּ וּלְחַטָּאתֵנוּ וְנַחֲלַתֵנוּ:

Textual variant using the YHVH in place of Adonai.

במדבר 14:17

וְעִתָּהּ וְנִדְלַנָּה כַּח אֲדֹנָי בְּאֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְתָּ לְאָמֹר: יְהוָה

v. 17 ו' רבתי. v. 17 ברוב ספרים כ"י יהוה וכן ד"ב. v. 18 ס"א חסד וַאֲמַת וכן ח"ש,
 ת"י ות"ע: עיין שמות ל"ד ז'. v. 18 ס"א ופִשַׁע וְחַטָּאה וכן ח"ש, ת"י ות"ע: עיין
 שמות ל"ד ז'. v. 18 בזנבוקי ונקה בסגול. v. 20 ס"א בְּדַבְרֶיךָ מֵלֵא וכן ח"ש, חר"ד
 וד"ו. v. 21 כן ירושלמי, בהללוי כְּכַד חסר. v. 22 כן בהללוי, ירושלמי בְּקִלֵי חסר.
 v. 23 כן ב"א, ב"נ וְכָל־ בגעיא, נ"א ב"א וְכָל־ בגעיא, וב"נ וְכָל־ בלא געיא. v. 24 כן
 ירושלמי, בהללוי יוֹרִישֶׁנָּה מֵלֵא יו"ד. v. 25 סביר הַמִּדְבָּרָה, בס"א הַמִּדְבָּרָה כתיב וקרי
 וכן בח"ש. v. 27 כן ב"א, ב"נ אֶת־ בגעיא.

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Checking the context of these reference verses it is clear that when Adonai is pointed with the qametz, in the absence of the Name (YHVH), this can only be speaking of the Almighty God. In addition to this, in *Bereshit / Genesis 20:4*, *Shmot / Exodus 15:17*, and *Bamidbar / Numbers 14:17* the marginal mesorah contains a very significant note on the name Adonai. The mesorah notes that in other manuscripts, for example the "First edition of the entire Bible, Soncino 1488," the "Third edition of the Bible," "Brescia 1494," and the "Pentateuch, Brescia 1492" the Word Adonai is replaced with the YHVH. This means that in some alternate texts, the tetragramaton (YHVH) is used rather than Adonai. This provides for us manuscript evidence that support our interpretation that Avraham

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was speaking to the Almighty God. It is clear that the Masorets believed the text in *Bereshit / Genesis 18:1-3* to be a reference for God Himself appearing to Avraham when the word Adonai is written with the gametz. In addition to this, there is rabbinic commentary in the *Talmud Bavli Shabbat 127a* and *Shavuot 35b* that contains dialog on the text that Avraham is speaking to God Almighty.

There is overwhelming evidence that the use of Adonai with the gametz as referring to the YHVH. In addition to this evidence, the grammar of the Hebrew text itself gives credence to the interpretation. The text begins with the YHVH (Name of God) that He appeared to Avraham and then speaks of the three men.

וַיִּרְא אֱלֹהֵי יְהוָה בְּאַלְמֵי מַמְרָא וְהוּא יֹשֵׁב פְּתַח־הָאֵהָל יח
כְּהֵם הַיּוֹם: וַיֵּשֶׁא עֵינָיו וַיִּרְא וְהִנֵּה שְׁלוֹשָׁה אַנְשִׁים נֹצְבִים 2
עָלָיו וַיִּרְא וַיִּרְץ לִקְרֹאתָם מִפֶּתַח הָאֵהָל וַיִּשְׁתָּחוּ אַרְצָה: 3
וַיֹּאמֶר אֲדֹנָי אִמְנָא מִצֵּאתִי הֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ אֶלְנָא תֵּעֲבֹר 3
מֵעַל עֲבָדֶיךָ: וַיַּחְדָּנָא מְעַט־מִיָּם וְהִחֲצִי רִגְלֵיהֶם וְהִשְׁעֵנוּ 4

When Avraham speaks, He speaks in the second person singular inviting all three men to stay and eat. The narrative of the text switches

between plural and singular (examine the context, verses *18:1-14*). The ongoing conversation between Avraham and the men, the switching between plural and singular, and the textual variant in the Masoretic text indicate without a doubt the One whom Avraham is speaking to is God Almighty.

These passages indicate that God (YHVH) has no problem taking on the form of a human and entering into the world. Note also that the context of the passages indicates that Avraham was not surprised by God appearing to him in human form. According to these verses and later verses where God reveals to Avraham what He is about to do to Sodom and Gomorrah, it is clear that though God can take on human form he does not give up His divine nature and authority. Taking the analysis of the text we have just done, it appears beyond a doubt that the text of *Bereshit / Genesis 18* is to have us believe that the One who spoke to Avraham is an incarnation of God, and that God appearing in the form of a man is biblical concept. This is very significant when reading the apostolic writings in *John 1:1-14*.

John 1:1-18

1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 1:2 He was in the beginning with God. 1:3 All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. 1:4 In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men. 1:5 The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it. 1:6 There came a man sent from God, whose name was John. 1:7 He came as a witness, to testify about the Light, so that all might believe through him. 1:8 He was not the Light, but he came to testify about the Light. 1:9 There was the true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man. 1:10 He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. 1:11 He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him. 1:12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, 1:13 who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. 1:14

170 *And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory,*
glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. 1:15
John testified about Him and cried out, saying, 'This was He of whom I
said, 'He who comes after me has a higher rank than I, for He existed
175 *upon grace. 1:16 For of His fullness we have all received, and grace*
before me.' 1:17 For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth
were realized through Jesus Christ. 1:18 No one has seen God at any
time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has
explained Him. (NASB)

180 These verses the Apostle John wrote that “G-d became a human being” is
understood to mean that the Word being God became a man. The Hebrew
translation of *John 1:14* from the Greek says “the Word tabernacled among us.”
Now, according to the Torah, the Mishkhan (tabernacle) was designed with much
symbolism. One of the symbolisms is of our bodies, that G-d could dwell among
185 men and yet remain on His throne in heaven. In addition to this, God can come to
live in our hearts by His Ruach Hakodesh (Holy Spirit). The concept that the
Word can make His dwelling here among men according to *John 1:14* is not
without precedence in the Torah according to *Bereshit / Genesis 18*. John tells us
that it is the divine Word that had come down to dwell among us. The Torah
190 indicates that God came down in human form to speak with Avraham and to
reveal to him what He was about to do with Sodom and Gomorrah. The
difference here is that it is through the Word that we can know G-d personally.
Think about that for a moment, we can know God personally through His Word.
Our understanding of these verses coupled with this week’s Parashat shows the
195 importance of studying the Bible in order to know God and His will for our lives.
Examine the following verses from the apostolic writings, *Matthew 24:35, Mark*
8:38, 13:31, Luke6:47, 9:26, 21:33,24:44, John5:47, 14:24, and 15:7. Yeshua
says “my words” in these verses. If we are to understand that God can take on
human form, and according to *John 1:14* Yeshua being the Word, the living Word
200 of G-d, how much more important are these words Yeshua is telling us? If you
had read the article on “The Word become flesh” then you learned that the Word
according to rabbinic thought is the creative work of G-d, the agent by which G-d
created the world. This sounds a lot like what is written in *Colossians 1:16 For*
by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible
and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers:
205 *all things were created by him, and for him: 1:17 And he is before all things, and*
by him all things consist. Even more importantly Yeshua is the agent through
whom we are saved, redeeming us from sin. According to the Scriptures, God
took on human form to speak to Avraham. These scriptures reveal to us that the
210 Word of God can take on Human form. According to *John 1:1-14*, the Word
became flesh in the person of Yeshua the Messiah. Yeshua the Messiah is Lord
and the savior of the world, He laid down His life and taking upon himself our
sins so that we might be forgiven. What will you do with this knowledge about
Yeshua the Messiah? Do you have God’s redemption through His Messiah? If
215 you do not, come and say the following prayer with me.

Heavenly Father,

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Thank You so much for the opportunity to study your holy word and to be able to come before you in prayer. I learned today that Your word can be trusted. I also learned that in You all things are possible. I believe what the Scriptures say about You and about Yeshua. I confess my sins right now and ask that You would have mercy on my soul and forgive me of my sins in Yeshua's name. Thank you Lord for such a wonderful salvation. I give You all of the glory, the honor, and the praise in Yeshua's name I pray. Amen.

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Be Blessed in Yeshua our Messiah!

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