Drash on VaYera (Genesis 12:1–22:24)

Ahavat Yeshua DC Service

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Parashat VaYera is found about a third of the way through the first Book of the Torah, Bereshit (Genesis in English Bibles). The Jewish name of the book means *In The Beginning* and the English name means *origin* or *mode of formation*, in this case, of the Universe as well as the Jewish people.

The name of this parashat in English means *And He Appeared*. According to *Wikipedia*, today's parashat:

> […] tells the stories of Abraham's three visitors, Abraham's bargaining with God over Sodom and Gomorrah, Lot's two visitors, Lot's bargaining with the Sodomites, Lot's flight, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, how Lot's daughters became pregnant by their father, how Abraham once again passed off his wife Sarah as his sister, the birth of Isaac, the expulsion of Hagar, disputes over wells, and the binding of Isaac (, the *Akedah*).

Tah-a-mod, Elaine bat Benyamin Moshe. Elaine will read for us Genesis chapter 18, verses 17 through 19 from the Complete Jewish Bible.

> 17 Adonai said, "Should I hide from Avraham what I am about to do,
> 18 inasmuch as Avraham is sure to become a great and strong nation, and
> all the nations of the earth will be blessed by him? 19 For I have made
> myself known to him, so that he will give orders to his children and to
> his household after him to keep the way of Adonai and to do what is
> right and just, so that Adonai may bring about for Avraham what he has
> promised him."

Thank you, my bride.

This one parashat fully presents the significance of Abraham save for the revelation that his act of obedience in sacrificing his son was somehow essential for Adonai to then sacrifice His Son in order to redeem all humanity from all consequences of sin once for all. So behold Abraham, one of the most important humans who has ever lived, at one of the most important times in the history of humanity, when a priestly nation was created and forever set apart for the Purposes of God. Now, behold the Sons of Issachar, who also, according to the Purposes of The Almighty, rose to the significant occasion in which they found themselves, and in the process gave us a template for correctly navigating such times.

King Saul's death is chronicled in First Chronicles chapter 10. Chapters 11 and 12 record the followers of David, both those who joined themselves to him while Saul was seeking to eliminate him, as well as those who came to David in Hebron following Saul's death. Chapter 12 verse 24 in the CJV says:

> Following are the numbers of those who came armed for war to David in
> Hevron, in order to transfer to him the kingdom of Sha'ul, according to
> what *ADONAI* had said.

The following verses note, in the normal tribal order, the numbers as well as a little commentary regarding each tribe, then end with verse 39:

> All these soldiers who were experienced in war came to Hevron wholeheartedly to make David king over all Isra'el, and all the rest from Isra'el were single-hearted in wanting to make David king.

The tribe of Issachar is chronicled in the CJB's verse 33:

> Of the descendants of Yissakhar, men who understood the times and knew what Isra'el ought to do, there were 200 leaders, and all their kinsmen were under their command.

The Hebrew grammar of the verse indicates all these present descendants of Issachar understood and knew, not just their 200 leaders. This description of Issachar seems odd, as *all* those gathered in Hebron seemed to know what Israel ought to do and were now doing it. However the verbs are in past tense, suggesting these sons knew well before Saul's death what *those* times signified, and that the time to align with David needed to wait for Saul's demise. While Bereshit Rabbah 72:5 is not authoritative for us, it chronicles those two hundred leaders formed the tribal judiciary (Sanhedrin), and that their brothers accepted their rulings as halakhic, meaning the authoritative way to go. So according to Talmud, to be a Son of Issachar is to have gifting for ruling regarding the way Israel is to walk.

The Hebrew presents two distinct wordings of these separate knowledge competencies that show the second depends upon the first. However, the Septuagint flattens out that nuance by repeating the Greek participle that is often translated into English as *knowing*, thus losing the interdependency of the two imparted by the Hebrew. This flattening enables the Greek to flow more like the Hebrew in a verse much less read than those in the Torah and the Prophets, especially by lay readers, who were unlikely to ever read it. Thusly the seventy rabbis judged this translation to be the way to go.

Notice the verse does not explicitly say what resources the reading should utilize. However, the usage of the Hebrew word bi·nah, which is translated into *understanding*, implicitly clarifies the process. Gathering what data can be gathered and thinking hard about it supplies context for making decisions, but understanding what to do must often encompass context only The LORD can provide. Bi·nah is the same noun we are warned about in Proverbs chapter 3 verses 5 through 6 [NIV]:

> 5 Trust in the Lord with all your heart
> and lean not on your own understanding;
> 6 in all your ways submit to him,
> and he will make your paths straight.

Chronicles commends possessing bi·nah, but Proverbs warns against leaning on bi·nah you autonomously acquire using your own God-given giftings. These sons of Issachar clearly understood this distinction even though Solomon had not yet been born, let alone compiled the Book of Proverbs.

Abraham became a great-grandfather of Issachar well after his death at the time his grandsons Jacob and Esau were only 15. But was he also a Son of Issachar? Probably not when he was born, but by the end of this parashat, he had certainly arrived.

The verb for “what Israel should do” is a·sah and it occurs in our Torah reading twice. First, in verse 17 The LORD asks, "Am I concealing from Abraham what I am doing?" God’s understanding of the times is flawless, and His doing regarding Sodom and Gomorrah included getting Abraham involved in the decision-making. Second, in verse 19 He says Abraham will command his children “to do what is right and just.” Surely this is the core summary principle of The Way of Adonai, both the personal doing and teaching children to do this, especially by example. In addition, in verse 25 which was not read, Abraham asks, “Shall the Judge of the whole world not do justice?”, lo ya·a·sah mis·pat? Abraham uses the bridge of his relationship with The Almighty to turn the expectation that Abraham “do what is right and just” right back upon The LORD, that He also do what is right and just! It was right and just of Abraham to do that, just as The LORD intended (who knew there was no minyan in those cities).

As noteworthy as the times of Abraham were to furthering the Purposes of God for our planet, and likewise the times that established the throne of David over the Kingdom of Israel, the Followers of The Way also were remarkably used by The LORD during the most important period in the history of humanity so far: the first century AD. The times *they* read included the life, death, and resurrection of Mashiach Yeshua followed by the outpouring of the Ruach H’Kodesh. The name “Followers of The Way” surely points back at Genesis 18 as well as Isaiah 40’s "prepare the way of the LORD." Standing before Felix in Acts chapter 24 verse 14, Paul says that according to the Way, which his accusers call a sect, he serves the God of the fathers, believing everything written in the Torah and the Prophets. The Way did not abolish Torah, but much existing application of Torah was reevaluated according to the Wisdom and Authority of The Messiah. And when the Way had to decide what to require of Gentiles who had received the Spirit, a new type of council was convened to, with the full involvement of the Ruach, read the times and proclaim the way to go regarding these non-Jewish Believers, thus beginning the development of the revolutionary Halakhah regarding the One New Man. Often these Sons of Issachar times transpire without the availability of new written Scripture that comes forth.

It intrigues me that today is Reformation Day, commemorating Martin Luther being a good Son of Issachar by reading the times, particularly the indulgences of the establishment churches, and knowing to write his 95 theses and dramatically nail them to that church door this day 509 years ago in 1517. Gutenberg’s printing technology spread the word far and wide, leading to the Protestant movement while further printing advances started bringing common language Bibles into the homes of Christians who were learning to read from them.

These days there is much more to read than usual. We know from prophecy, especially the Book of Revelations, that important times are coming and we, too, need to read such times and know the Way to go all the way through the Return of The King. So, in closing, note that a Berean who is not also a Son of Issachar can be entirely correct and never move, while a Son of Issachar who is not also a Berean may be leaning on his own bi·nah. Be both, and do rightly and justly.

The next parashat is *Chayei Sarah*, which spans Genesis chapter 23 verse 1 through chapter 25 verse 18.