

Parasha Vayera (and He appeared)
October 30, 2004/15 Cheshvan 5765

Torah: Gen. 18:1-22:24

Haftarah: 2 Kings 4:1-37

Brit Chadashah: 2 Peter 2:4-11(L)

Luke 1:26-38, 24:36-53(F)

This week's Torah portion is action-packed. Three major events take place in it, each of which are worthy of their own sermon. First, Sarah receives the message from G-d that she will conceive and give birth to a child. With her and her husband, Abraham, being advanced in age, she thinks this is so hilarious, that when she does give birth to their son later on in the Torah portion, he is named Isaac, which means "laughter."

Genesis 18:11 Abraham and Sarah were already old and well advanced in years, and Sarah was past the age of childbearing. **12** So Sarah laughed to herself as she thought, "After I am worn out and my master is old, will I now have this pleasure?"

Genesis 18:13 Then the L-RD said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh and say, 'Will I really have a child, now that I am old?' **14** Is anything too hard for the L-RD? I will return to you at the appointed time next year and Sarah will have a son."

Then, comes the situation with Sodom and Gommorah. The city was so full of people who so immoral, inhospitable, and downright nasty, that G-d was forced to destroy it. Abraham tries to negotiate with G-d, and G-d agrees to spare the city if even one righteous man can be found – alas, there is none, and the city is destroyed. Lot and his family flee, but his wife turns around to look back and is changed into a pillar of salt. Lot's daughters become concerned about not having any men around to help perpetuate the race, so they get their father drunk and both end up having children by them. The oldest daughter has a son named Moab, of which later on Ruth is a part of this line on the way to the Davidic dynasty leading to Yeshua.

Finally, we have the binding of Isaac. After Isaac is born, Hagar and Ishmael were sent away, with G-d promising that Ishmael will be made into a great nation. Later on, when Isaac was much older, G-d tests Abraham and asks him to sacrifice his son, of course sparing Isaac in the end. It was a test to ensure that Abraham feared G-d and would spare nothing from him, not even his only son.

I have to admit that I had a difficult time finding a common theme running through this Parasha. Should I just pick one event and discuss that? After examining this Torah portion in context with the Haftarah and Brit Chadashah readings, I

realized that which Parasha Vayera does, is demonstrate the range and power of different attributes of G-d.

- 1) G-d is all-powerful, and nothing is impossible with Him. The birth of Isaac is one of the earliest examples in the Bible of the miraculous birth of a child of promise. The Messianic significance of this, is the miraculous birth of Yeshua.

Luke 1:37 For nothing is impossible with G-d

The Haftarah also discusses a child of promise, that of the Shunammite woman's son, who later dies and is brought back to life by G-d.

2 Kings 4:33 He went in, shut the door on the two of them and prayed to the L-rd. **34** Then he got on the bed and lay upon the boy, mouth to mouth, eyes to eyes, hands to hands. As he stretched himself out upon him, the boy's body grew warm.

- 2) G-d is compassionate and just. When Abraham pleaded with G-d not to destroy Sodom, if there had been even one righteous man there, He would not have.
- 3) G-d, although he is in control, has given us the gift of free will. We are not moved about like pawns on a chess board – unless we allow ourselves to be. When evil in the world, or problems in our own lives, are blamed on G-d, we usually need to look no further than our own actions to explain what has really happened. Even a righteous man like Abraham experienced consequences when He tried to take matters into his own hands. That is how Ishmael came into the world, and look at what has happened in the world since then. If anyone ever tries to convince you that the situation in the Middle East has no grounding in Scripture, just remember that. G-d will always lead us in the right direction – if we give up trying to be in control, and give that control to Him.
- 4) G-d demands our obedience, even to the point of sometimes testing our faith. G-d tested Abraham, by asking him to sacrifice Isaac. We are often tested in our faith walk, especially when things are rough. It's easy to have faith when things are going well, but the true test of faith is when we cling to Him when things are not going so well.
- 5) G-d wants us to turn our backs to sin – not turn back to sin. G-d sent angels to advise Lot and his family to leave and not look back, but Lot's wife, for whatever reason, turned back around. In Yeshua, our sins are forgiven. There is no point in looking back on them – G-d has forgotten them, and so should we.