

This Tough Choice Will Set You Free to Receive God's Promises

One of the things I love most about the Bible is that for every verse, or series of verses, there is always more than one thing we can learn. The more you study the more you find.

It is like looking at a beautiful piece of artwork where every angle you look at provides a completely different view of the painting.

One example that I would like to share is found in Genesis 18:1-4 (TLV): "Then Adonai appeared to him at Mamre's large trees while he was sitting in the entrance of his tent during the heat of the day. When he lifted up his eyes to see, suddenly, three men were standing right by him. When he saw them, he ran from the entrance of his tent to meet them and bowed down to the ground. Then he said, 'My Lord, if now I have found favor in your eyes, please do not pass by your servant. Please let a little water be brought so you can wash your feet, and make yourselves comfortable under the tree.'"

In order for us to understand these verses in chapter 18, we must first look back to chapter 17. In chapter 17, we read about Abraham entering a covenant with G-D through circumcision. Circumcision, when performed on an 8-day-old baby, is a minor and nearly pain-free procedure. However, as an adult, this is an extremely painful procedure.

In the case of Abraham's circumcision, he is 99 years old when he is circumcised. Abraham goes through this covenant procedure partially in response to G-D's promise that he would have a son named Isaac. So, when we begin reading chapter 18, these events take place directly after Abraham's circumcision.

Jewish tradition says it was three days after. So, as the narrative in chapter 18 begins, Abraham is sitting in his tent recovering from a very painful surgery when he looks up and sees three men coming toward his tent. Abraham sees them, stands up, and then runs to meet them and bows down to the ground to greet them. Imagine the pain that Abraham would have been in while running at that moment.

But Abraham's pain was not just physical. His pain was also emotional. He had been waiting on the promise of a son for nearly 25 years. He had been faithful to serve G-D for almost 25 years.

Abraham's promise from G-D is still unfulfilled. Now at 99 years in the middle of entering this new covenant with G-D, G-D once again promises Abraham a son. Only this time, G-D not only promises a son, but He provides a name for the son, Isaac.

Abraham is now 99 and Sarah is 90. They are beyond the age of the natural ability to have children. Imagine if you were in Abraham's place: too old to have children, yet once again being promised a child. Abraham would be understandably in physical pain from his circumcision, but also in emotional and spiritual pain from longing for this yet unfulfilled promise of a son.

However, in his pain, Abraham not only chooses to serve these three guests, but he runs to do so. Not only does he run to serve, but in his service, he goes above and beyond a minimal level of serving.

He begs the men to stay. He offers a morsel, but provides a feast. He runs to Sarah. He runs to his herd and picks out an ox himself. He runs the ox to his servants so that it could be prepared for the meal.

All of the above takes place at a time when Abraham may have been in the most pain physically, emotionally and spiritually

in his life. Yet Abraham jumps up, Abraham runs to serve and Abraham makes sure he gives his very best in his service.

The result of Abraham choosing to serve even in his pain or even through his pain is what we read in Genesis 18:10: "Then He said, 'I will most surely return to you in about a year's time, surprisingly, Sarah your wife will have a son.'"

I don't know about you, but there have been many times in my life when I have been in physical pain when opportunities to serve arose and I got up and met the needs of people. Most of us do not have a great deal of difficulty serving when we are only in physical pain.

The real difficulty for many of us is rising up to serve when we are in emotional or spiritual pain, when we have been hurt emotionally, especially by those we love and are called to serve. Or those times when we, like Abraham, are heartbroken as we wait for a promise from G-D to be fulfilled.

We are even more so when it appears to us that the fulfillment of the promise is now beyond reasonably being fulfilled in the physical.

But it is at these times when we have to make the choice to push past the pain of our hurts and serve anyway. When we do, our choice to serve will reveal the presence of G-D in our life, it will bring us deeper revelation and it will bring us closer to the fulfillment of our promises. {eo}

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