

Messianic Rabbi: How Will You Respond When G-D Appears to You?

I still remember the first time I read Genesis 18 when I was a child in synagogue. The words seemed to leap off of the page directly into my imagination as I pictured Abraham looking up and seeing G-D walking towards him.

I was totally blown away as I read that the one who, only a few chapters before, had spoken the world into existence was dropping by Abraham's tent for lunch. As we read the narrative, our Shabbat school teacher told us the greatest lessons we can learn from these passages was how we, as Jewish people, treat guests that visit us. This was the Torah teaching us hospitality. Still to this day, when people visit my home, I think back to these verses as I attempt to follow the example of Abraham.

Without question, Abraham demonstrated great hospitality, as we read in Genesis 18:3-8:

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. And let me bring a bit of bread so that you can refresh yourselves—then you can pass on—since you have passed by your servant. They said, "Do just as you have said." So Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah and said, "Quick! Knead three measures of fine flour and prepare bread loaves!" Then to the herd Abraham ran and took a young ox, tender and good, and he gave it to the servant, who prepared it quickly. Then he took butter and milk and the young ox that he had prepared and set it before them. While he was standing by them under the tree, they ate.

However, I believe the most important lesson we can learn from Genesis 18 is found not in verses 3-8, but in verses 1 and 2:

“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.”

In these verses, we find an extremely important pattern the Torah is teaching. For a moment, let’s put aside the fact that the invisible G-D has put on human form and is visiting one of His creations for lunch. Let’s also set aside the prophetic types and shadows of this narrative and its fulfillment in Yeshua (Jesus) who would also come as a man, robed in human flesh. I will write more about both of these shadow images in future blogs. For this blog, I want to focus primarily on the pattern found in these first two verses and how that pattern relates to you and I today.

Take a look at verse 1: Ad-nai (G-D) appeared to Abraham while Abraham was sitting in the entrance of his tent. Abraham’s response to seeing Ad-nai was to lift up his eyes to see. To understand this a little clearer, just imagine you are sitting in your tent in the middle eastern desert and in the distance you see something that draws your attention. Your response would probably be to lift your eyes and try to see whatever it was more clearly. This is what is happening to Abraham; he sees Ad-nai appear and rather than ignore what he sees and continue resting in his tent, Abraham stops what he is doing and looks more intently.

Understand this same thing is happening every day to people all over the world, and if you are a Bible believer, it has happened to you. How it happened for each of us is different, but G-D appeared to each one of us. We who know Him responded to His appearance by lifting our eyes until, like Abraham who

suddenly saw three men (two angels and G-D, as we find out in the next chapter), we clearly saw who He was. Once Abraham knew G-D had appeared to him, he stood to his feet and ran and bowed down to Him. In the same way, you and I, once we recognize G-D has appeared to us, also bow down to His lordship.

This important pattern is established early in the Bible so that, as we read through the Scriptures, we will see it. The pattern is that we, as sinners, are sitting in our tents like Abraham when G-D appears to us. We then have to choose to lift up our eyes to see Him more clearly. Once we see Him clearly, we will stand up and run to Him. The result of our running to Him is that we get to welcome Him into our "tents," as we read in 1 Corinthians 3:16:

"Don't you know that you are God's temple and that the Ruach Elohim dwells among you?"

And just like with Abraham, once we have welcomed Him into our tents, G-D will fellowship with us as well, as we read in Revelation 3:20:

"Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me."

It is during this intimate fellowship that G-D will reveal the prophetic plans to us as He does with Abraham, as we read further into Genesis 18.

By the way, we find the inverse pattern for those who choose not to lift up their eyes in Psalms 1:1:

"Happy is the one who has not walked in the advice of the wicked, nor stood in the way of sinners, nor sat in the seat of scoffers. But his delight is in the Torah of Adonai, and on His Torah he meditates day and night."

Notice that for one who is not lifting his eyes to search for G-D in Torah, he begins with first walking in the advice of the wicked, then standing in the way of sinners and ultimately sitting in the seat of the scornful. See the reverse pattern is that Abraham sat, then stood, then walked toward G-D.

Understanding this pattern helps us better understand just where Lot was spiritually, when he was sitting in the gate of Sodom, as we see in Genesis 19:1: "Now the two angels came to Sodom in the evening, while Lot was sitting at the gate of Sodom." {eoa}

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