

**PARASHAH:** Vayera (He appeared)  
**ADDRESS:** B'resheet (Genesis) 18:1-22:24  
**READING DATE:** Shabbat  
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(Note: all quotations are taken from the Complete Jewish Bible, translation by David H. Stern, Jewish New Testament Publications, Inc., unless otherwise noted)

Let's begin with the opening blessing for the Torah:

***“Baruch atah YHVH, Eloheynu, Melech ha-‘Olam,  
asher bachar banu m’kol ha-amim,  
v’natan lanu eht Torah-to.  
Baruch atah YHVH, noteyn ha-Torah.  
Ameyn.”***

(Blessed are you, O' LORD, our God, King of the Universe,  
you have selected us from among all the peoples,  
and have given us your Torah.  
Blessed are you, LORD, giver of the Torah.  
Ameyn.)

Last week, I dealt extensively with Christian attitudes towards the offspring of our main parashah figure, Avraham. It is imperative that we approach Avraham and his physical offspring, the Jewish People from the right perspective. The Torah leaves no room for pride and arrogance on the part of the “grafted-in branches.” I want you to read Romans chapter 11 carefully, and keep that portion “at hand” as we journey through the Torah, reading about “[y]our father Avraham.”

By the way, the careful reader will notice that most of what was said concerning negative attitudes directed towards the progeny of Avraham extends equally unto the Torah-true Christian! You see, genuine believers are also legitimate heirs to salvation, via Yeshua, and via our common father. Anyone, Jew, Gentile, or otherwise, who carries a negative view of genuine [Christian] believers (remember the Hebrew word “kalal” from last week’s study?) might just find themselves guilty of the same kind of anti-Jewish [here read as anti-Christian] hatred discussed earlier.

Let's face it folks... Historically, the world has had no profound love for the Jewish people. What is more, the world has expressed no great love for genuine Christians, all of whom are grafted into a Jewish Olive Tree. We true believers must stand together, united under the banner of Love, the banner of our Leader Yeshua, the Messiah of faithful Jews and Christians alike!

This week's portion, **Parashat Vayera**, like so many other portions, gains its name from the opening few Hebrew words. Our portion last week left off with HaShem changing our main figure's name from Avram (exalted father), to

AvraHam (father of many nations). By adding the covenantal letter “H,” one of God’s sacred letters, he forever fixed his destiny to become the root (Romans 11:16, 18, 24) of the righteous heirs that would faithfully follow in his footsteps; heirs that obey God, and trust in him for the promise of blessing and inheritance. During this exchange, his wife Sarai also took on the covenantal letter “H,” changing her name to SaraH. She is to be remembered as the mother who laughed when God promised her a child (the name Yitz’chak comes from the root word for laughter). This laughter can be interpreted in two ways: joyous laughter at the good news, and doubtful laughter at the thought of the impossible. The Torah records that it was likely the latter. For more on this subject read last week’s parashah.

Sarah is like so many of us today. When we hear of the miraculous, we react in doubt. We want so much to experience the supernatural, that when it finally happens, we simply cannot believe it. I’m reminded of the story in the New Covenant (Acts 12:6-17) when the talmidim (disciples) were gathered together, presumably praying for the release of Kefa (Peter) from prison. The Angel of the LORD supernaturally did release him, and he made his way to the door of the place where they were praying. When he knocked on the door to be let in, the maid who answered was so excited that she forgot to let him in, but instead immediately ran and told the other talmidim. Upon hearing her report, they just couldn’t believe that it was really he! When they finally opened the door to find Kefa standing there, they were amazed! Why are we so amazed at the miraculous? We serve a miraculous God don’t we? The Torah teaches us that there is nothing too hard for ADONAI. And so the promised son was born and the tests for Avraham and his family really had just begun. The opening dialogue picks up presumably right after Avraham had his entire male household circumcised (chapter 17). Over and against the supernatural signs, I would like to say something about a rather down to earth sign: circumcision.

## **B’rit Milah**

The literal meaning of the term “b’rit milah” implies “covenant [pertaining to] circumcision.” The Hebrew word b’rit בְּרִית means, “covenant, alliance, pledge,”<sup>1</sup> while the Hebrew word milah stems from the root word mul מוּל meaning, “to circumcise, let oneself be circumcised, cut, be cut off.”<sup>2</sup> Why does Judaism refer to circumcision as a covenant? The verse clearly reads,

**“And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you.” (Genesis 17:11, KJV, emphasis, mine)**

Likewise, it adds,

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<sup>1</sup> Brown, Driver, Briggs (BDB), בְּרִית.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, מוּל.

**“He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised: and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant.” (Genesis 17:13, KJV, emphasis, mine)**

I believe that this act betrays the Torah’s intensions to speak to the male about his responsibilities in helping to bring about the truth that HaShem and HaShem alone can bring the previously mentioned promises of Avraham to come to pass. Let us examine the details.

Covenants usually involved at least two parties. Likewise, there was usually a sign of the covenant being established. This sign, according to ancient Middle Eastern writings, was usually something that either party could carry on their person, such as a stone or other object. This sign, when viewed by either individual, served as a reminder that the person was under obligation to fulfill his part of the covenant. It also assured him that the other party was under the same obligations. Removal of the foreskin of the male sex organ, was not exclusively Hebrew. The ancient Egyptians had been doing it for some time as well. In fact, Wikipedia claims, “The tomb of Ankn-ma-hor of the 6th Dynasty (circa 2200BC) has a detailed rendering of a ceremonial circumcision.”<sup>3</sup> Their extended article on “circumcision” goes on to report:

The oldest documentary evidence for circumcision comes from Egypt. Tomb artwork from the Sixth Dynasty (2345 - 2181 BC) shows men with circumcised penises, and one relief from this period shows the rite being performed on a standing adult male. The Egyptian hieroglyph for "penis" depicts either a circumcised or an erect organ. The examination of Egyptian mummies has found both circumcised and uncircumcised men.

Circumcision was common, although not universal, among ancient Semitic peoples. The Book of Jeremiah, written in the sixth century BC, lists the Egyptians, Jews, Edomites, Ammonites, and Moabites as circumcising people. Herodotus, writing in the fifth century BC, would add the Colchians, Ethiopians, Phoenicians, and Syrians to that list.

Except in the portrayal of satyrs, lechers, and barbarians, ancient Greece artwork portrayed penises covered by foreskins. In the aftermath of Alexander the Great's conquests, Greek dislike of the circumcised penis led to a decline in the incidence of circumcision among many peoples that had previously practiced it. The writer of 1 Maccabees wrote that during the Seleucid Empire, many Jewish men attempted to hide or reverse their circumcision so they could exercise in Greek gymnasia.

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<sup>3</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient\\_Egyptian\\_medicine](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_Egyptian_medicine)

Cultural pressures to circumcise operated throughout the Hellenistic world: when the Judean king John Hyrcanus conquered the Idumeans, he forced them to become circumcised and convert to Judaism, but their ancestors the Edomites had practiced circumcision in pre-Hellenistic times.<sup>4</sup>

Moreover, the Jewish Publication Society (JPS) Torah Commentary to Genesis, in an excursus to circumcision (Excursus 12, p. 385), also corroborates the information provided by Wikipedia, citing quotations from Herodotus (Histories 2:37 and 2:104).

So, when HaShem asked Avraham to participate in this rather “lopsided” covenant (remember Avraham did not earn his position before God, it was graciously granted unto him; read Romans 11:6), our father Avraham did not hesitate to become obedient to the command.

### **Ouch Factor: “Why the Male Reproductive Organ?”**

Why did God have Avraham circumcised (remove the foreskin of his penis) in the first place? Have you ever stopped to ponder this enigmatic question? After all, God is not capricious. He could have easily had our father remove skin from his ear, or his finger, or other part of his body. Why the male sex organ?

Tim Hegg of FFOZ notoriety has been, in my opinion, spearheading the movement to bring about a more accurate view of Paul and the Judaisms that he had to confront in the 1<sup>st</sup> century by publishing essential books and papers for Christians to carefully examine. I wish to quote from one of his works to show the messianic implications of God asking him to circumcise himself exactly where he eventually ended up circumcising himself.

As of 11-15-05 Hegg’s entire online article was available at his web site here (<http://www.torahresource.com/English%20Articles/CircumcisionETS.pdf>)

Referring to our Genesis text Tim Hegg writes:

Chapter sixteen opens with an exposition and complication: Sarai, Abram’s wife, is barren. If the former narrative settled the question of God’s full intention to give offspring, this unit questions the method by which the promise would be fulfilled. Abram follows the advice of his wife and takes Hagar as a second wife. The reader is aware immediately, however, that rather than solving the problem, the action of Abram and Sarai has introduced complication into the story...

The story continues with the appearance of YHWH to Abram (signaling resolution) reassuring him of the continuation and maintenance of the covenant. The issue of the promised offspring, the main subject of

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<sup>4</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History\\_of\\_male\\_circumcision](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_male_circumcision)

chapters fifteen and sixteen, continues in this section. Regardless of the etymological meaning of the change from Abram to Abraham, the narrative is clear that YHWH has installed Abraham as a father of the nations. Thus, chapter seventeen gives the Divine solution to the problem addressed in chapter sixteen, namely, the realization of the promise regarding the seed. The Divine speech to Abraham in 17:1-5 is taken up exclusively with the promise of offspring.

The introduction of circumcision continues this theme. The promise of offspring has been established, but the method or manner by which the offspring would be realized is now made clear. In the same way that the complications surrounding the promise of land and blessing were resolved by direct, Divine intervention, so too the promised offspring would come by Divine fiat. Human enterprise and strength would not be the means by which God would fulfill His promise to Abraham regarding the seed. Circumcision, the cutting away of the foreskin, revealed this explicitly. Coming on the heels of God's renewed promise to Abraham regarding his progeny and his installation as a father of a multitude of nations, the sign of circumcision upon the organ of procreation must be interpreted within the narrative flow as relating to the method by which the complication (absence of children and age of both Abraham and Sarah) would be resolved. The promise would come, not by the strength of the flesh (which the "Hagar plan" represented) but rather by above-human means.

If circumcision were a sign given to Abraham which pointed specifically to the need for faith in regard to the coming Seed, it is valid to ask whether or not the other OT authors also attached this meaning to the ritual.

Interestingly, the two times circumcision is used in a metaphorical sense in the Pentateuch (Deuteronomy 10:16 and 30:6), the immediate context is that of the Abrahamic covenant. In Deuteronomy 10:12, the unit begins by an exhortation to "revere the Lord your God, to walk only in His paths" which is very close to Genesis 17:1, "Walk before me and be blameless." Further, in Deuteronomy 10:15 the covenant love of YHWH for "the fathers" becomes the basis for the exhortation to "cut away the thickening about your hearts." That is, if the promises made to the fathers should be realized, it will be so only as each Israelite relates to YHWH on the basis of faith. The heart which relies on the flesh (foreign powers, self strength, etc.) will fail. Rather, the fleshly heart must be cut away and discarded.

In reference to the circumcision in the Apostolic Scriptures, Hegg makes these pertinent remarks in the same article:

What brings Paul to use Abraham in his exposition here is the central promise of the covenant that "in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed." Paul's argument is that this promise was given to Abraham before circumcision and that therefore Abraham may rightly be

considered the father of all who participate in the same faith, whether circumcised or not. In fact, the promise that Abraham would be "a father of nations" is applied more precisely by the Apostle in the phrase "father of all who believe."

Paul's argument, while given to prove another point, still confirms what I have previously maintained about circumcision. The ritual did not bring something new to the covenant, but rather reinforced righteousness on the basis of faith, the very hallmark of the covenant from the beginning. Circumcision required Abraham to continue in the faith that had brought him from Ur and to direct this faith toward the God Who had promised to bring a son by Divine intervention. It is on this basis that Paul, in Galatians 4:23, refers to Ishmael as "according to flesh" [...] and Isaac as "through promise" [...].

Paul has shown that a primary function of the law was to point to Christ (Gal. 3:24) and it therefore stands to reason that circumcision has fulfilled its function, for Christ, the promised Seed, has come. Israel, worshiping the sign rather than the Seed to which it pointed, had attributed to circumcision what only God's Son could accomplish. This Paul plainly asserts in his statement that "in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love."

What are Hegg's conclusions? His article states:

1. The narrative structure of Genesis 12-17 would indicate that circumcision is given as a sign of divine intervention to resolve a complication. The complication is Abraham's attempt to gain the promised offspring through fleshly means. The divine intervention is the promise of seed by Divine fiat. Circumcision pictures this by the casting away of the flesh of the organ of procreation. In this way faith in El Shaddai, the Giver of Offspring, continues to be the hallmark of the covenant.
2. Interpreting circumcision as meaning that God and God alone could bring the promised seed, and thus requiring faith, is in harmony with the general posture of unconditional covenants in the Ancient Near East. For in such covenants the loyalty of the Vassal to the Suzerain was expected to be maintained. In circumcision God requires of Abraham the same life of faith in which he obeyed God previously, only this time specifically regarding the promised offspring.

Amazing to me is that even at such an old age, Avraham did not question God's reasons behind this somewhat strange covenantal sign!

**To neglect circumcision (b'rit milah) is to neglect the chosen sign of the covenant, and consequently, it is rejection of the covenant itself.**

It was to become a unique marker, outwardly identifying those males of the offspring of Avraham, as inheritors of the magnificent promises that HaShem was

making with this man. It does not serve to secure those promises through personal effort. What is more, the sign of circumcision was to be an indicator that the participant was adopting the same faith that Avraham possessed! The promises were of faith (read Romans chapter 4 carefully). To be 100% sure, the Torah says that the promises were given to him before he was circumcised (Ibid. 10, 11)! This is why, after HaShem promised that his seed would be as numerous as the stars (15:5, 6), Avraham was credited with being righteous—because he believed the unbelievable!

### **Proselyte Conversion and Works of the Law**

Today (as well as 2000 years ago), Christianity has developed an unnecessary amount of paranoia surrounding circumcision. In some ways I cannot blame them for taking this stance. Mark Nanos has demonstrated most creditably that the Judaisms of the 1<sup>st</sup> century functioned with a serious theological flaw in regards to their view of circumcision. Let us pick up his discussion from a paper he wrote entitled "*The Local Contexts of the Galatians: Toward Resolving a Catch-22*," which, at the time I downloaded it on 5-15-05, was available for reading at his site here (<http://mywebpages.comcast.net/nanosmd/index.html>)

Paul was an outsider to Galatia (4:12-20); in fact, he is the only one from elsewhere of whom we can be certain. And Paul's message—to the degree that it offered inclusion of gentiles as full and equal members while opposing their participation in proselyte conversion—ran counter to prevailing Jewish communal norms for the re-identification of pagans seeking full-membership, at least according to all the evidence now available to us. Pursuit of this nonproselyte approach to the inclusion of pagans confessing belief in the message of Christ resulted in painful disciplinary measures against Paul from the hands of Jewish communal agents to whom he remained subordinate, but in ways that he considers mistaken, for he refers to this as "persecution" (5:11; cf. 2 Cor. 11:24). It is not difficult to imagine that pagans convinced by Paul's gospel that they were entitled to understand themselves as righteous and full members of Jewish communities apart from proselyte conversion, but rather on the basis of faith in a Judean martyr of the Roman regime, would also, in due time, meet with resistance from Jewish communal social control agents. Might not the resultant identity crises of those non-proselyte associates develop along the lines of the situation implied for the addressees of Paul's letter?

I suggest that Paul's gospel—or, more accurately in this case, the resultant expectations of the non-Jewish addressees who believed in it—provoked the initial conflict, not the good news of the influencers that Paul's converts can eliminate their present disputable standing as merely "pagans," however welcome as guests, by embarking on the path that will offer them inclusion as proselytes. That offer, on the part of the influencers in Galatia, rather represents the redressing of a social disruption of the

traditional communal norms resulting from the claims of “pagans” who have come under Paul’s influence. Thus the ostensible singularity of the exigence arises not because of a new element introduced by the influencers, and does not suggest that they represent a single group moving among the addressees’ several congregations. Instead, the influencers may be understood to be similarly appealing to a long-standing norm, however independent of each other’s communities they may be acting, when faced with the same disruptive claim on the part of the new Christbelieving subgroups within their communities. The conflict arises because of the claim that their gentile members are to be regarded as full-members of these Jewish groups apart from proselyte conversion.

I understand that the prevailing Judaisms that existed in the first century initially upset the biblical balance by teaching that circumcision was the vehicle by which a non-Jew could and must enter the covenant made with Isra'el. Shame on them! To be sure, a whole theological counsel was formulated to deal with the problem in the first century. Both in Acts 15:1-35, as well as 21:17-26, the Yerushalayim Counsel had to address the issue of “returning to the works of the law” as opposed to “living in the freedom of Messiah.” And what is the meaning of “works of the law”? Surely it does NOT refer “correct and true faith-driven observance of written Torah commands”! No, what this technical phrase is referring to is a set of halakhic rules that an individual must ally himself with in order to be received into a specific and exclusive community. Again we turn to Hegg for insights on the phrase “works of the law”:

One of the difficulties we have when encountering the word "Torah" (usually translated "Law" because of the Greek word *nomos*) in the Apostolic Scriptures is that we wrest its meaning away from the 1<sup>st</sup> Century context in which it was intended to be understood. It is clear that in the 1st Century the Oral Torah (the rulings of the Sages that had taken on halachic authority) had found its place along side of the Written Torah. In some cases it was viewed as secondary to the Written Torah, but in practical measures it was received as equal or even superior. The proper manner to obey the Laws of Moses was in accordance with the Oral Torah. We must remember, then, that when we encounter the word "Law" (*nomos*) in the Apostolic Scriptures, we cannot simply presume that the Books of Moses are its referent. Such a monolithic approach to the word ignores the historical setting. We must, in every case, at least give way to the possibility that Written and Oral Torah are summed (to one degree or another) in the use of the word "Law."

This is particularly true with the phrase "works of the Law" or "works of the Torah." Until the discovery of 4QMMT, we had no extra biblical instances in which the phrase "works of the Law" or "works of the Torah" was used. Now that this Qumran document has been discovered, we have another source to consider, and another witness as to what Paul might have meant when he spoke of "works of the Torah."

The fact that both the phrases ("works of the Torah" and "counted as righteousness") are found in this document is incredibly important for understanding the same phrases in Paul. What we now understand is that the phrase "works of the Law/Torah" was used in Paul's day to refer specific sets of rules or halachah which a group required for its self-definition. Simply put, such a list of "works of the Torah" constituted the entrance requirements into the group. Since the group would no doubt consider its own interpretations of the Written Torah to be the correct interpretation, they would also have held that only those who adhere to their halachah would be actually obeying the Torah and living righteously. "Works of the Torah," then, refers to halachah required for entrance into the covenant community (as envisioned by each sect), not personal obedience to God's word. And since covenant membership was considered one and the same with the status of "righteous," it is not difficult to understand how adhering to a given halachah to gain membership in the community was attached to being reckoned as righteous.<sup>5</sup>

In essence, "works of the law" refer to those "group requirements" as outlined and delegated by each individual group functioning under the prevailing Judaism of Paul's day. Rav Sha'ul (Apostle Paul), missionary to the Gentiles, had to defend the correct Torah viewpoint in his letters addressed to the Churches at Galatia (specifically chapter 5), as well as to the one in Ephesus. Circumcision, a shorthand way for Paul to say "conversion to Judaism/becoming a Jew," was historically misused, but there is no reason for us to continue in such a misunderstanding. Nor is there any reason for the emerging Torah communities to shrink back from that which God has clearly given, provided we maintain our primary identity as that of one firmly grounded in Mashiach.

A "Christian" attempt at disproving the validity of this important covenantal sign of the Jewish people has caused much strife and division among the body of believing Jews and Gentiles. The matter is made clear when we understand that HaShem never meant for this sign to secure the promises for the believer! This was to be the sign that he was connected via covenant to a larger family. Is it valid for the Jews today? Yes! In this way, we forever identify physically and spiritually with the unending covenant made with our father Avraham. Is it practical for non-Jewish believers? Unfortunately at this juncture in history, it is not. Until the Church gets right its view of the Torah and the trappings of legalism, it is somewhat discouraged by Messianic Jewish rabbis. I am not saying that Gentiles cannot undergo this ritual. I am delighted to encounter those few Gentiles who truly understand it's meaning enough to "go under the knife." Is it necessary for the salvation of an individual? No! It never was! That is all I want to say on the matter in this format.

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<sup>5</sup> Tim Hegg, *A Study of Galatians* ([www.torahresource.com](http://www.torahresource.com)) 2002, p. 98-100

What makes Avraham such a great role model of faith is that, not only did he trust in the Word of HaShem, but also the LORD saw into his future and predicted that his offspring would also be taught how to trust in the Almighty. Let's look at 18:17-19,

**“ADONAI said, “Should I hide from Avraham what I am about to do, inasmuch as Avraham is sure to become a great and strong nation, and all the nations of the earth will be blessed by him? 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.” (Emphasis, mine)**

This is a fantastic statement from the mouth of the One who sees every human possibility! Would that we might have HaShem pronounce this blessing over our families today! What must we do? The divine tandem-like actions spoken of here must not be taken too lightly. Firstly, God promises to be faithful to make himself known to us. We like faithful Avraham are then enabled and subsequently covenant-bound to obey the Teachings of our Heavenly Father. Finally, such Teachings are uniquely designed to bring about a righteous behavior in our lives, aligning our lives to be the object of God's righteous promises! To be sure, the syntax of the above p'sukim (verses) is hinting at that very reality (note the running continuity suggested by the connecting phrases “**so that**” in the quote above)! Furthermore, we must, like faithful Avraham, trust in the LORD against all unbelievable odds, to perform in our lives, the promise that he has given us through Yeshua our Messiah! What is that promise?

**“Furthermore, we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called in accordance with his purpose; because those whom he knew in advance, he also determined in advance would be conformed to the pattern of his Son, so that he might be the firstborn among many brothers; and those whom he thus determined in advance, he also called; and those whom he called, he also caused to be considered righteous; and those whom he caused to be considered righteous he also glorified!” (Romans 8:28-30)**

We usually stop at the first verse, but reading further informs us of our true identity in Messiah: righteous heirs according to trusting faithfulness, causing us to be called, as faithful Avraham was called, “righteous”!

## **Akedah**

Moving past the details surrounding the fall of the wicked cities of S'dom and Amorrhah (chapter 19), the incident with Avimelekh (chapter 20), and Hagar (chapter 21), I want to focus on the binding of Yitz'chak in chapter 22. The rabbis

refer to this story as “The Akedah,” meaning “The Binding.”<sup>6</sup> A couple of interesting details stand out in this story.

First, when Avraham began to make his journey to Mount Moriah to offer his ONLY (Heb: yachid יחיד refers to only, solitary)<sup>7</sup> son for a burnt offering unto HaShem, his dialogue with his servants is very significant. He told the young men in verse 5, to abide with the donkeys, while he and Yitz'chak went to the mount to worship. He went on to say that both of them would return! This was after he had clearly been commanded to offer his son as a sacrifice! Do you see the significance of this statement? It demonstrated the incredible faith that this man Avraham had in trusting HaShem for the promises. Avraham had been told that his seed would number the stars of the sky, innumerable. If he were to have to kill his son, his only son according to promise, in obedience to the Word of the LORD, then the LORD would have to somehow miraculously “resurrect” him! This is shown in his statement “I and the boy...will return”!

Here is the pinnacle of God’s demonstrative power—resurrection from the dead! We know from further reading that Avraham did not actually kill his son, but the Torah figuratively teaches that he did! The book of Hebrew says,

**“By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had received the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son, even though God had said to him, “It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned.” Abraham reasoned that God could raise the dead, and figuratively speaking, he did receive Isaac back from death.” (11:17-19, NIV)**

Bringing forth life from lifelessness is a power that no other created being possesses. This is why it is the highlight of the miracle-working power of the Almighty. Resurrection serves as the proof of God’s choice of election.

**Yeshua, therefore, demonstrated his position as HaShem’s chosen messiah, by being raised from the dead!**

To be sure, I imagine this was one of the issues that got Rav Sha’ul in so much hot water during his missionary travels, and perhaps even led to his sentencing, at least from one said passage (Acts 24:19-21). Today, it is the single most important fact that differentiates false messiahs from the One and True Living Messiah, Yeshua. History records that many men have received revelations from God and many of these men lay claims to messiah-ship. But all of these

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<sup>6</sup> The Hebrew word akad עקד, found in Genesis 22:9, means, “to bind, tie.” (BDB, עקד).

<sup>7</sup> BDB, יחיד.

men have lived and died. Not a one has risen from the grave to testify of God's amazing power over death! All of their bones are rotting in graves somewhere. But the man from Natzeret is no longer in the grave!

**He has been raised from the dead, by the Power of HaShem, never to die again, and now he sits at the Right Hand of the Majesty on High!**

The closing blessing is as follows:

***“Baruch atah YHVH, Eloheynu, Melech ha-‘Olam,  
asher natan lanu Toraht-emet,  
v’chay-yeh o’lam nata-b’tochenu.  
Baruch atah YHVH, noteyn ha-Torah.  
Ameyn.”***

(Blessed are you O' LORD, our God, King of the Universe,  
you have given us your Torah of truth,  
and have planted everlasting life within our midst.  
Blessed are you, LORD, giver of the Torah.  
Ameyn.)

“Shabbat Shalom!”

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