

Lech Lecha (Go for Yourself)
Genesis 12:1-17:27

This week I will have to take you back to last week's Torah portion in order to show you something that ties in with the life of Abraham.

Genesis 9:18 Now the sons of Noah who went out of the ark were Shem, Ham, and Japheth. And Ham *was* the father of Canaan. ¹⁹ These three *were* the sons of Noah, and from these the whole earth was populated. ²⁰ And Noah began *to be* a farmer, and he planted a vineyard. ²¹ Then he drank of the wine and was drunk, and became uncovered in his tent. ²² And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brothers outside. ²³ But Shem and Japheth took a garment, laid *it* on both their shoulders, and went backward and covered the nakedness of their father. Their faces *were* turned away, and they did not see their father's nakedness. ²⁴ So Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his younger son had done to him. ²⁵ Then he said: "Cursed *be* Canaan; A servant of servants He shall be to his brethren." ²⁶ And he said: "Blessed *be* אֱלֹהֵי שֵׁם", The Elohim of Shem, And may Canaan be his servant. ²⁷ May Elohim enlarge Japheth, And may he dwell in the tents of Shem; And may Canaan be his servant."

Now let's break down this story by its details:

- First we have Noah...Noah was a **righteous** man, declared to be **perfect** in Genesis 6:9. And Noah **walked** with Elohim. Can we think of anyone else who may fit this description? Yes, I believe that the righteous Noah was a picture of Adam before the fall.
- From the sons of Noah the whole world was populated. Sounds again like Adam, right?
- Noah sins because of fruit. Hmmmm....
- The sin causes Noah to be "uncovered" in his tent. The Hebrew word uncovered also means to "be revealed", or "to have eyes to see". Again, like Adam, what is revealed is his "nakedness".
- Ham is witness of the sin and tells the brothers. Who was witness to the eating of the fruit in the Garden? I would draw to your attention the connection between Ham and the serpent.
- Shem and Japheth take a "garment" and "cover" their father. Elohim covered the sinful Adam in the Garden.
- Shem and Japheth laid the garment on their "shoulders" and "with their faces turned away" "walked backwards". Shoulders is the same word as the name of the city of Shechem. Shechem is the first place Abram came to when he entered Canaan. To walk "backwards"...this is the same word used when referring to the end times. They were walking in the direction of the end times. They were doing so "with their faces turned away" from the sin.

- Noah “awakes” from his wine. This Hebrew word can mean that the eyes were opened to something spiritual. This would explain why Noah responds with a prophetic blessing/curse.

So how can we explain why יהוה cursed Canaan instead of Ham? Have you ever heard of the concept of “progressive revelation”? When Elohim covered Adam and Eve after their fall, He began to give them the picture of the One who would cover their sins. It was like giving them the first piece of the puzzle. They did not understand exactly how that would happen, but they knew that a Savior would be born through them. The Bible continues to “add to” this picture of redemption through the stories of real people. I believe that when Noah “awakened”, he was given another spiritual piece of the puzzle. This is what caused him to give the unusual blessing/curse.

Let’s take a closer look at it.

- Canaan is the innocent son.
- Canaan is cursed by the Father for sin he did not commit
- Canaan must become a servant to both Shem and Japheth.

Sound like anyone you know? See if these verses help:

Matthew 12:18 "Behold! My **Servant** whom I have chosen, My Beloved in whom My soul is well pleased! I will put My Spirit upon Him, And He will declare justice to the Gentiles.

Philippians 2:7 but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a **bondservant**, *and* coming in the likeness of men.

Galatians 3:13 having become a **curse** for us (for it is written, "Cursed *is* everyone who hangs on a tree)

2 Corinthians 5:21 For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

Let’s continue. We have Canaan, the unfairly cursed son being prophesied to be a servant in the tents of both Japheth and Shem. And who might Japheth and Shem be? The verses indicate that Elohim will enlarge Japheth and he shall dwell in the “tents of Shem”. To make things simple, I’m going to tell you that if you do a study of where the descendents of Japheth went, you would connect them with the western world. So that’s probably us....the believers. But the prophecy is that we would dwell in the “tents of Shem”. The “tents of Shem” is a Hebrew idiom for studying

Torah. In fact Shem means Name. Who has kept the Name of שֵׁם in the “tents of Shem” all these years? Of course the credit for this would go to our Jewish brothers.

Our review of Japheth:

- He’s a picture of the believers
- He’s to be enlarged
- He will be studying Torah for he’s in the tents of Shem
- He’s being served by Canaan (picture of Yeshua)

Our review of Shem:

- He’s the Jews
- His tent is where the Name dwells & where Torah is studied
- He’s also to be served by Canaan

Our review of Ham:

- He is associated with sin.
- His grandson (through Cush) is Nimrod (ruler of Babylon), a paradigm of the anti-messiah
- Another son is Mitzraim (Egypt) who is a picture of the world
- His sin will cause the innocent one to become cursed and to become a servant

Our review of Canaan:

- He’s the cursed son who is destined to be a servant.
- His descendents will dwell in the Promised Land
- The Promised Land is called “the land of Canaan” throughout the Torah. Not once is it referred to as the “land of Israel” in Torah. Surprised? I was.
- How about this – the land of Canaan....or the land of servants

It is interesting that it is the land of Canaan that Abraham is told to go to (Genesis 12:1). Look how Fausset’s Bible dictionary describes Canaan:

727.06 Canaan is in Scripture made the **type of the heavenly land of rest and inheritance (Heb. 4:1-11)**. We must win it only under the heavenly Joshua, Jesus the Captain of our salvation, and by faith, the victory that overcomes the world, sin, self, and Satan (1 John 4:4,5; 5:4,5).

In the same way that Yeshua was both sinless and became sin for us....The land of promise can be called both Canaan and Israel!

So this is Canaan’s challenge....to become a servant....to become a land of servants....i.e. Israel! Unless they stoop down to be servants, they are a wicked people.

It is easier for us, looking backwards from where we are, to see that Yeshua was being prophetically pointed to by Canaan. But back then it was still a mystery. There would be more puzzle pieces to help them understand as time went on. Let's try to put ourselves in Abram's shoes at the beginning of Genesis 12.

Extra-biblical historical sources give us much information about Abram. Yes, I know that these are not inspired works. But they are still useful and as we use discernment, this info can help us to "fill in the blanks". Following is some interesting information about Abram:

Abram entered the world in the year 1948 (bit of a co-incidence, don't you think?) after creation, following 20 generations of mankind. The popular image of Abram as a smiling, white-haired, gentle shepherd amidst his tents and camels is most likely not an appropriate picture of who he really was. From his earliest childhood and throughout his life Abram was said to be a revolutionary and a rebel against the sophisticated yet often barbaric culture of the ancient Assyrians, Babylonians, Egyptians, and Canaanites (these are all from the line of Ham). He travelled extensively. He had an unquenchable passion to discover the mystery of the Almighty.

Abram was unable to keep Elohim for himself; his passion was to introduce Him to the whole world. It is written of Abram that when he would come to a town, he would stand up in the town square and start calling everyone to come and listen to him. He would ask, "What is the point of squandering your life on the pursuit of this world? Think about the purpose of life in this world. The purpose is to find the one true God." Abram set the young people on fire with his revolutionary ideas, and they would come running after him. According to Midrashic literature, Abram called people together in public meetings in Haran to proclaim the truth about the one Creator and to encourage the people to serve Him. After these public meetings he was willing to debate his claims with anyone that questioned them. In this way he won thousands of followers who confessed the existence of the Creator God.

This is the man that יהוה chooses to direct mankind back in the proper direction after the fall of the tower of Babel. To accomplish this goal, Abram was promised a special land, but not as a reward, but rather as a means to fulfill יהוה's own divine purpose. יהוה seeks a special nation to represent Him, to educate all other nations and spark their spiritual development. Abram is only a single individual, but he is destined to become the forefather of this chosen nation.

Abram walks into Canaan with a highly evangelistic bent. The directions יהוה gives him and the name of our Torah portion are quite interesting:

Genesis 12:1 And יהוה said to Abram, 'Go for yourself, from thy land, and from thy kindred, and from the house of thy father, unto the land which I show thee.

The name of our Torah portion (found in 12:1) is Lech Lecha – go for yourself...literally, "walk away". This is the challenge for each of us – to leave the world (represented by Ham), be willing to be a servant (symbolized by Canaan), be teachable (like Japheth) and find your destination in the tents of Shem (where you will learn Torah).

Other historical references tell us that Abram studied in Shem's Yeshiva (School of Torah). Yes, Shem was still alive during the time of Abram. In fact he was still alive during the early years of Jacob. Shem would have taught on the blessing/curse spoken by Noah. Abram would have learned of the prophecy spoken of Canaan. And here he had been directed by Elohim to come to THE LAND OF CANAAN! What do you suppose Abram thought of that? Do you think the evangelistic Abram felt an obligation to teach them their rightful position as servants?

Many of the actions that Abram took reflect the knowledge that he had at the time. But יהוה would continue to reveal Himself and His plan to Abram. More pieces would be added to the puzzle.

Very shortly after Abram entered Canaan, famine forced him to go down to Egypt in the pattern of **descent** and **ascent** that would be repeated by his descendants. Joseph, Jacob and Yeshua would all go down to Egypt, then return. We, too follow the pattern of **descending** to slavery in Egypt (symbol of the world and bondage to sin) and **ascending** through our salvation. To see ourselves as slaves helps us to understand that we need a redeemer....a Messiah.

Now granted, Abram was not at a place to understand all this yet, but more would happen that would add pieces to the puzzle:

In Genesis 15 Abram receives the covenantal promise that he will father his own child. יהוה solidifies this covenant through what is known as "the cutting of the pieces". Overall it is a wonderful promise, but what is the "horror and great darkness" that comes over Abram when he is sleeping?

Genesis 15:12 Now when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and behold, **horror and great darkness** fell upon him.

Abram is shown the fullness of the promise being given to him and his descendents. But what sort of a promise is this?!!! Abram is given the revelation of what will happen to his own descendents...slavery in Egypt! Canaan, not Shem was supposed to be the one enslaved!! But this bondage of Shem is also a part of the Almighty's master plan. Shem must also learn the lesson of servanthood. Hopefully it was a comfort to Abram to learn that "afterwards you will come out with great substance."

Genesis 15:14 "And also the nation whom they serve I will judge; **afterward they shall come out with great possessions..**

The concept of servants/slaves (same Hebrew word) in Egypt was probably not desirable to Abram. In the power-hungry world of Nimrod, the slave was the lowest of the low. Historically, slaves have been subjected to every kind of abuse, physical and psychological. In contrast, the Torah gives the servant/slave his dignity. Even the Canaanite slave would keep many of the commandments, including circumcision. It was even possible for the Canaanite slave to be freed

and become a member of the assembly of the children of Israel....he could be a part of the “Tents of Shem”.

Abram shone a positive light on the concept of slavery by turning it into a way of understanding our relationship with Adonai. Abraham was the first to call himself “Your servant”.

Genesis 18:3 and said, "My Adonai, if I have now found favor in Your sight, do not pass on by **Your servant**

We see that Moses thought of himself the same way:

Deuteronomy 3:24 'וַיֹּהִי אֱלֹהִים, You have begun to show Your **servant** Your greatness and Your mighty hand, for what god *is there* in heaven or on earth who can do *anything* like Your works and Your mighty *deeds*?

The lesson for us all is that we must enter into relationship with the Father at the servant level. Yeshua humbled Himself to show us the pattern:

Matthew 12:18 "Behold! My **Servant** whom I have chosen, My Beloved in whom My soul is well pleased! I will put My Spirit upon Him, And He will declare justice to the Gentiles.

Philippians 2:7 but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a **bondservant**, *and* coming in the likeness of men.

Those who are slaves to other **men** know the bitterness of slavery, but those who are willing to serve **Elohim** know freedom! The more we serve Elohim, the more we are freed from the cycle of sin. Through serving Elohim, man reaches his greatest heights – relationship with the Almighty.

Mark 9:35 And He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, "If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and **servant** of all."

John 12:26 "If anyone **serves** Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My **servant** will be also. If anyone **serves** Me, him *My* Father will honor.

Romans 1:1 Paul, a **bondservant** of Yeshua the Messiah, called *to be* an apostle, separated to the gospel of Elohim.

James 1:1 James, a **bondservant** of Elohim and of Adonai Messiah Yeshua, To the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad: Greetings.

2 Peter 1:1 Simon Peter, a **bondservant** and apostle of Yeshua the Messiah, To those who have obtained like precious faith with us by the righteousness of our Elohim and Savior Yeshua the Messiah:

When we keep the commandments, we are His **servants**. That elevates us to a special relationship....one Yeshua called “friends”!!

John 15:14 "You are My **friends** if you do whatever I command you.¹⁵ "No longer do I call you **servants**, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you **friends**, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you.

So...let's try to keep this all connected. We all descend from one of the three sons of Noah. Obviously through the thousands of years since then, these families have intermarried and are for the most part impossible to untangle. I am going to make the point that these are three stages of a person's life.

- Servant...pictured by Canaan, son of Ham.
- Student...pictured by Japheth, willing to learn
- Teacher...pictured by Shem. Shem means Name. His tent is the picture of where יהוה, the Master teacher dwells.

I want to end up in the tents of Shem, don't you? Together these three sons make up the picture of Noah. His name means “rest”. Remember what Yeshua said in Matthew 11?

Matthew 11:28 "Come to Me, all **you who labor** and are heavy laden, and I will give you **rest**.²⁹ "Take My yoke upon you and **learn** from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find **rest** for your souls.

Oh....so exciting!! Do you see all three stages in Yeshua's statement? First he speaks to the **servant**...the one who labors. He speaks to the **student** as He tells him to “learn from Me”. And who is the **teacher**? None other than Yeshua Himself as the invitation is there to “come to Me”. If you do all this, then you will find “rest” for your souls. Rest....the picture of all three stages (sons)...personified by Noah, himself! Yeshua was expounding on the story of Noah!

Let's take a look into the future now. We are all interested in restoration. Jacob/Israel will be in the role of servant when יהוה comes for her:

Jeremiah 30:10 ' Therefore do not fear, O My **servant** Jacob,' says יהוה, 'Nor be dismayed, O Israel; For behold, I will save you from afar, And your seed from the land of their captivity. Jacob shall return, have **rest** and be quiet, And no one shall make *him* afraid.

And as far as that curse goes:

Revelation 22:3 And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of Adonai and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His **servants** shall serve Him.

Now let's close with the commandment for the Sabbath and what the Father feels is important for us to remember on this day –

Deuteronomy 5:12 ' Observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy, as יהוה your Elohim commanded you.... And **remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt**, and יהוה your Elohim brought you out from there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; therefore יהוה your Elohim commanded you to keep the Sabbath day.

Shabbat Shalom!
Ardelle

Just one more thing and extra credit for those of you “great thinkers”. Any thoughts on why Yeshua may have been silent with this “woman of Canaan”?

Matthew 15:22 And behold, a woman of Canaan came from that region and cried out to Him, saying, "Have mercy on me, O Adonai, Son of David! My daughter is severely demon-possessed." ²³ But He answered her not a word. And His disciples came and urged Him, saying, "Send her away, for she cries out after us." ²⁴ But He answered and said, "I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." ²⁵ Then she came and worshiped Him, saying, "Adonai, help me!" ²⁶ But He answered and said, "It is not good to take the children's bread and throw *it* to the little dogs." ²⁷ And she said, "Yes, Adonai, yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters' table." ²⁸ Then Yeshua answered and said to her, "O woman, great *is* your faith! Let it be to you as you desire." And her daughter was healed from that very hour.