



Parsha Vayera / And He Appeared

B'reshith / Genesis 18:1-22:24

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Before we begin this week's *parsha*, we need to revisit the close of last week's Torah portion, where we read of the circumcision of Avraham. And, since we didn't get to read it together last week due to time, we'll cover the "high points" here. First, **B'reshith / Genesis 17:1-2; *And it came to be when Avram was ninety-nine years old, that YHVH appeared to Avram and said to him, "I am El Shaddai – walk before Me and be perfect. And I give My covenant between Me and you, and shall greatly increase you."*** At 99 years old, YHVH tells Avraham to "***walk before Me and be tamim***". The Hebrew term "***tamim***" literally means "***complete***". So, while Avraham left his home, his family and former life in obedience to Elohim; he was still instructed to "***walk before YHVH and be complete***". Next, we read in **B'reshith 17:7-8; *"And I shall establish My covenant between Me and you and your seed after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be Elohim to you and your seed after you. And I shall give to you and your seed after you the land of your sojournings, all the land of Kena'an, as an everlasting possession. And I shall be their Elohim."*** Then, we read in **B'reshith 17:9-12; *And Elohim said to Avraham, "As for you, guard My covenant, you and your seed after you throughout their generations. This is My covenant which you guard between Me and you, and your seed after you: Every male child among you is to be circumcised. And you shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin, and it shall become a sign of the covenant between Me and you. And a son of eight days is circumcised by you, every male child in your generations, he who is born in your house or bought with silver from any foreigner who is not of your seed."*** And finally, we read **verses 21-24; *"But My covenant I establish with Yitzaq, whom Sarah is to bear to you at this set time next year."*** And when He had ended speaking with him, Elohim went up from Avraham. And Avraham took Yishma'el his son, and all those born in his house and all those bought with his silver, every male among the men of Avraham's house, and circumcised the flesh of their foreskins that same day, as Elohim told him. And Avraham was ninety-nine years old when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin.

This is an important lead-in to this week's *parsha*, as we open with HaShem appearing to Avraham following his circumcision. In fact, if you had the opportunity to read some of the rabbis' commentaries and teachings on *Parsha Vayera* during the week, you no doubt read at least a version of one story about the 5th Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Shalom DovBer. This happened when he was a young child of 4 or 5 in Lubavitch, Belarus. On the Shabbat of *Parsha Vayera*, which was very close to the child's birthday, he was brought to his grandfather, himself a well known 19th century rabbi. When the child entered his grandfather's room, he began to cry. After calming him, his grandfather asked him the reason for his tears. The child answered, "In *cheder* (class), we learned that God revealed Himself to

Avraham. Why doesn't He reveal Himself to me?" His grandfather replied: "When a Hebrew, who is 99 years old, realizes that he must circumcise himself, he deserves that God reveal Himself to him."

There is certainly more to it than that. Rabbi Jonathan Sachs, in one of his teachings this week ([Torah Studies – Vayera](#)), asks the question; "What was the significance of this act of Abraham?" Then he answers. "Even when a Hebrew is ninety-nine, and not merely in calendar years, but in service (for when the Torah describes Abraham as "**advanced in days**," the Zohar comments that this means that each day was complete in its service), he is still bound to circumcise himself; meaning, spiritually, to remove the "**foreskin**" of the world, that surface of selfish pleasures which conceals its true nature as the Divine creation." And, Rabbi Sachs goes on to add, "There is a special connection between Abraham and circumcision. For it is said (in Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Melachim) that six commandments were given to Adam; a seventh was given to Noah... and in addition to these a new commandment was given to Abraham—that of circumcision. Since the command was first given to Abraham, it must have had a particular relevance to him; from which it follows that his circumcision did not just add something to ninety-nine years of complete service, but that until then his life was lacking its central component. This is reinforced by the fact that, in reference to the command of circumcision, G-d says to Abraham, "Be thou complete," implying that until then, Abraham had been marred, his service incomplete."

Now, our parsha this week is titled, "**Va'Yera**"; which literally translates as "**And appeared**". It opens with the words, "**Va'Yera Eloah YHVH elown Mamre veh oo yashav pawtakh ohel b'chom HaYom**". This literally translates as, "**And appeared Eloah YHVH by the terebinths of Mamre to him who stood at the door of his tent in the heat of the day**".

This word phrase "**Va'yera**", or "**and appeared**" is closely related to several other words. For example, we have "**ra'ah**" which means "**to see**" or "**look at**". It also can mean "**to behold**" or as in the name "**Re'uben**" which means "**behold a son**". "**Ra'ah**" also means "**witness**", as well as "**understand**". Now, with different vowel points, "**ra'ah**" becomes "**re'eh**" or "**mirror**" or it can be "**rayah**" which means "**evidence**" or "**proof**". We can see how these are all related to one another. And, as we've talked about before, there are no vowel points in the Torah text, as written. So, in HaShem's "**appearing**" to Avraham, we also have "**beholding**" and "**evidence**" or "**proof**". Beholding what? Proof of what? Well, as we read the opening verses of our *parsha*, I think we'll begin to "**ra'ah**" (see).

Let's begin with **B'reshith / Genesis 18:1-8**; **And YHVH appeared to him by the terebinth trees of Mamre, while he was sitting in the tent door in the heat of the day. So he lifted his eyes and looked, and saw three men standing over him. And when he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them, and bowed himself to the ground, and said, "Adonai, if I have now found favor in Your eyes, please do not pass Your servant by. Please let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree. And let me bring a piece of bread and refresh your hearts, and then go on, for this is why you have come to your servant." And they said, "Do as you have said." So Avraham ran into the tent to Sarah and said, "Hurry, make ready three measures of fine flour, knead it and make cakes." And Avraham ran to the herd, took a tender and good calf, gave it to a young man, and he hurried to prepare it. And he took curds and milk and the calf which he had prepared, and set it before them, and he stood by them under the tree as they ate.**

Now, we learned last week that Avraham was camped at the "terebinth trees of Mamre". The Hebrew word translated as "**terebinth trees**" is "**elon**", Strong's #0436 (*aleph-lamed-yud-nun*). "**Elon**", as we saw last week, is an interesting word. OK? It comes from the same root as "**Eloah**" and "**Elohim**". So, it carries the meaning of "**mighty**". This is why the "**terebinth tree**" is an allusion to the "**mighty**",

“**righteous**” and “**upright**” people. “**Mamre**” (*Mem-mem-reish-aleph*) means “**strength**”. The man, “**Mamre**” was an Amorite who lived in Hebron and made an alliance with Avraham. Based on the oral traditions, the rabbis teach that he was a convert of Avraham’s. Also, as we saw last week, the Anaqim (*giants*) lived there too. So these “*terebinth trees of Mamre*” tell us that Avraham, while living in Hebron dwelt among the mighty and was righteous.

So, as Avraham was standing in the doorway of his tent, he looked up and “**saw**” three “**men**” standing over him. Avraham runs to meet them and bows down and says; “**Adonai, if I have now found favor in Your eyes, please do not pass Your servant by**”. The ISR Scriptures have “**YHVH**” instead of the word “**Adonai**”. However, the Hebrew text reads “**Adonai**”. OK, so Avraham has water brought to wash their feet. Sarah prepares fresh cakes. There was no time to add leaven; so, they would have been without leaven. Along with these cakes, he gives them a freshly prepared **calf**. Now, while the ISR reads that he brought “*curds*”; he actually brought **butter** (*che’mah* in Hebrew) along with **milk**. So, was Avraham just being *neighborly*, or is there more to this? What could this be a picture of? Well, Avraham first brings water for cleansing. Then he chooses a “**ben baqar**” (a “**young bull**” – here “**ben**” means “**male offspring**” and “**baqar**” is “**cattle**” or “**ox**”). It was “**tender**”, “**rach**” in Hebrew, which also means “**delicacy**” or “**perfect food**”. And it was “**tov**”. Well, if you compare these verses with the first ten chapters of **VaYiqra / Leviticus**, you’ll see that Avraham brings what amounts to an “**offering**” to HaShem. Remember that a “**Korban**” or “**offering**” is, in Hebrew, a “**drawing near**”. Avraham was “*drawing near*” to Elohim. Unleavened cakes were a part of these “**offerings**”. The butter and the milk represent the very best of what he had. “**Che’mah**” or “**butter**” is a fat made from the cream (the **best**). This is why HaShem refers to Eretz Yisra’el as the Land flowing with **milk** and **honey** (“**fatness and sweetness**”), the best of everything.

Let’s continue with **B’reshith / Genesis 18:9-15**; **And they said to him, “Where is Sarah your wife?” And he said, “See, in the tent.” And He said, “I shall certainly return to you according to the time of life, and see, Sarah your wife is to have a son!” And Sarah was listening in the tent door which was behind him. Now Avraham and Sarah were old, well advanced in age, and Sarah was past the way of women. And Sarah laughed within herself, saying, “After I have grown old, shall I have pleasure, my master being old too?” And YHVH said to Avraham, “Why did Sarah laugh, saying, ‘Shall I truly have a child, since I am old?’ Is any matter too hard for YHVH? At the appointed time I am going to return to you, according to the time of life, and Sarah is to have a son.” But Sarah denied it, saying, “I did not laugh,” for she was afraid. And He said, “No, but you did laugh!”**

This direct discussion between HaShem and Avraham continues, as we do, from **verses 16-19**; **And the men rose up from there and looked toward Sodom, and Avraham went with them to send them away.” And YHVH said, “Shall I hide from Avraham what I am doing, since Avraham is certainly going to become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? For I have known him, that he will command his children and his household after him, to guard the way of YHVH, to do righteousness and right-ruling, so that YHVH brings to Avraham what He has spoken to him.”**

Many of the commentaries for this week, point out that Avraham merited revelation from HaShem because of his righteousness and because of his loving-kindness toward others. But, here we get a glimpse of the extra measure of righteous obedience that he possessed. It was this same righteous obedience that would lead Avraham to bring Yitzaq to the mountain Elohim would choose, as we’ll read in just a bit.

HaShem asks, “**Shall I hide from Avraham what I am doing, since Avraham is certainly going to become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?**”

As Yah answers His own question, we need to make sure that our translation is correct from the Hebrew. HaShem answers with, ***“For I have known him, that he will command his children and his household after him, to guard the way of YHVH, to do righteousness and right-ruling, so that YHVH brings to Avraham what He has spoken to him.”*** Elohim knows that Avraham will instruct his children, his household and all who will come after him in righteous obedience to HaShem.

Judaism refers to Avraham, Yitzaq and Ya’aqob as the **“Avot”**, the **“Fathers”**. The Ramchal (Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzatto) refers to the period in which the Avot lived, the **“Period of Roots”**. This was a time in history when what a person did had a great impact on all future generations. It was a unique period of time when a person not only chose a direction in life for himself, but for all of his progeny as well. Remember what we’ve been learning; **“Ma’aseh avot siman le’vanim”**. Or, in English, **“The deeds of the fathers (our Avot) are signposts to the children”**.

Rabbi Simon Jacobson, in his article this week, ***“Vayeira – Righteous and Just”*** writes, ***“It’s one thing to make a personal promise. But how many of us can be sure what our children and households would embrace? And not for one generation, but for over 90 generations, till this very day! Easy it wasn’t. Indeed, this commitment to virtue cost many lives and caused much anguish. For thousands of years empire after empire persecuted those committed to an authority greater than theirs. Righteousness and justice had to be fought for, every step of the way. Yet, Abraham’s ‘children and household’ held on to the commitment. They maintained it and endured through their Egyptian slavery, through their suffering at the hands of the Babylonians, Greeks, Persians, and Romans. Their dedication to Abraham’s just path continued despite the hellish Crusades and Middle Ages, through the Inquisitions, expulsions and pogroms. And finally, through the horrors of the Holocaust in the 20th Century. Through all these nightmares of history Abraham’s “children and household” did not just hold up their commitment; they exported it and spread the light unto nations, even to those nations that tormented them. A nation with such vigilance and fortitude deserves to become a great and mighty nation, and through him all the nations of the world will be blessed.”***

Next, we read in **B’reshith / Genesis 18:20-33**; ***And YHVH said, “Because the outcry against Sedom and Amorah is great, and because their sin is very heavy, I am going down now to see whether they have done altogether according to the outcry against it that has come to Me, and if not, I know.” So the men turned away from there and went toward Sedom, but Avraham still stood before YHVH. And Avraham drew near and said, “Would You also destroy the righteous with the wrong? Suppose there are fifty righteous within the city, would You also destroy the place and not spare it for the fifty righteous that were in it? Far be it from You to act in this way, to slay the righteous with the wrong, so that the righteous should be as the wrong. Far be it from You! Does the Judge of all the earth not do right?” And YHVH said, “If I find in Sedom fifty righteous within the city, then I shall spare all the place for their sakes.” And Avraham answered and said, “Look, please, I who am but dust and ashes have taken it upon myself to speak to YHVH, Suppose there are five less than the fifty righteous, would You destroy all of the city for lack of five?” And He said, “If I find there forty-five, I do not destroy it.” And he spoke to Him yet again and said, “Suppose there are found forty?” And He said, “I would not do it for the sake of forty.” And he said, “Let not YHVH be displeased, and let me speak: Suppose there are found thirty?” And He said, “I would not do it if I find thirty there.” And he said, “Look, please, I have taken it upon myself to speak to YHVH: Suppose there are found twenty?” And He said, “I would not destroy it for the sake of twenty.” And he said, “Let not YHVH be displeased, and let me speak only this time: Suppose there are found ten?” And He said, “I would not destroy it for the sake of ten.” Then YHVH went away as soon as He had ended speaking to Avraham. And Avraham returned to his place.***

Now, this may be a small thing; but, we have something curious here, depending on which translation we read. **Verse 22** ends in the ISR Scriptures, in English, by stating that YHVH still stood before Avraham. However, in the Hebrew Torah, the reverse is true. It reads, **“Avraham still stood before YHVH”**. HaShem never stands before man.

Next, Avraham (*true to form*) intercedes on behalf of any that are, or may be, righteous in the cities about to be destroyed. As usual, I find the numbers interesting. I’m not going to belabor this. However, I will just point them out and some possible connections. First, Avraham asks if there are **fifty** righteous, would HaShem spare the cities. **Fifty** is the numeric value of the letter **“Nun”** which equals the **“Kingdom”** or **“Heir to the Throne”**. **Fifty** also equals the numeric value of **“dumah”** or **“His blood”** and **“Yovel”** or the **“Jubilee”**.

Next, we have an interesting play on the numbers. First Avraham asks that if there are **five less** than the **fifty**, would He destroy the city for the lack of **five**? **Five** is the numeric value of the letter **“hey”** which means **“revelation”**. **Five** also represents the Five books of Moshe, or Torah, in Scripture. So it’s also like saying that Elohim would not destroy the cities should He find the **“Revelation of the Torah there”**. And, Who does Torah reveal??? The way of repentance and service to Elohim. Then, HaShem goes on to say that He would not destroy it if He finds **forty five**. What’s interesting here is that **forty five** is numeric value of **“Lot”** and also **“Adam”** or **“mankind”**. And, while HaShem didn’t find **forty five** righteous souls, He did save Lot and He has indeed provided salvation for all **“Adam”** or **“mankind”**.

Then Yah adds that He would not do it if **forty** are found. Forty represents **“trials”** and **“testings”** in Scripture; such as the 40 years in the wilderness. **Forty** is also the numeric value of **“lu’ e”** or **“mine”** or **“for me”** as well as two phrases in **VaYiqra / Leviticus 25:25** **“ga’aloh”**, **“his kinsman”** and **“v’ga’al”**, **“and shall redeem”**, speaking of the mitzvah of the **“kinsman redeemer”**.

Next, we have **thirty**, the numeric value of the letter **“lamed”** or **“shepherd’s staff”**. **Thirty** is also the numeric value of **“ba kaha”** or **“in power”** and **“va cheet ah”** or **“He will purify”** and **“va ah chayeh”**, **“and I make alive”**. By His staff, His leading, in power He will purify and make us alive.

Then, we get to **twenty**. If Elohim would find **twenty** righteous, He would relent and not destroy the cities. **Twenty** is the numeric value of the letter **“kaf”** or **“palm of the hand”** or **“covering”**. It is also the numeric value of **“Yadah”** or **“His hand”** and **“abib”** or **“the first month”** in which Passover occurs. If He is our covering, if we are in the palms of His hands destruction will pass over us.

Finally, He says for the sake of **ten** righteous, He will withhold destruction. **Ten**, the letter **“yud”** meaning **“hand”**, also the word phrases **“v’hoveh”**, **“and I came”** and **“Avoh”**, **“I will come”**. What a picture we see in this account of Avraham’s intercession and Lot’s impending salvation. Once again, we see our future being played out in the lives of our forefathers. Again, in the days to come HaShem will not go this far to save a city for even ten. Speaking of His Judgment, Elohim says in **Yehezqel / Ezekiel 15:13-20**; **“Son of man, when a land sins against Me to commit a trespass, and I shall stretch out My hand against it, and cut off its supply of bread and send scarcity of food on it, and cut off man and beast from it, even though these three men, Noah, Dani’el, and Iyob, were in it, they would deliver only themselves by their righteousness,” declares the Master YHVH. “If I cause an evil beast to pass through the land, and it shall bereave it, and it shall be a wasteland, so that no man passes through because of the beasts, even though these three men were in it, as I live,” declares the Master YHVH, “they would deliver neither sons nor daughters. They alone would be delivered, but the land be a wasteland. Or if I bring a sword on that land, and I shall say, ‘Sword, go through the land,’ and I shall cut off man and beast from it, even though these three men were in its midst, as I live,” declares the Master YHVH,**

“they would deliver neither sons nor daughters, for they alone would be delivered. Or if I send a pestilence into that land, and I shall pour out My wrath on it in blood, to cut off from it man and beast, even though Noah, Dani’el, and Iyob were in it, as I live,” declares the Master YHVH, “they would deliver neither son nor daughter. They would deliver their own lives by their righteousness.”

OK, let’s move on to **B’reshith / Genesis 19:1-16**; *And the two messengers came to Sedom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gate of Sedom. And when Lot saw them, he rose up to meet them, and he bowed himself with his face toward the ground, and he said, “Look, please my masters, please turn in to your servant’s house and spend the night, and wash your feet, and rise early and go your way.” And they said, “No, but let us spend the night in the open square.” But he urged them strongly, and they turned in to him and came into his house. And he made them a feast, and baked unleavened bread, and they ate. Before they lay down, the men of the city, the men of Sedom, both old and young, all the people from every part, surrounded the house. And they called to Lot and said to him, “Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us, and let us ‘know’ them.” So Lot went out to them through the doorway, and shut the door behind him, and said, “Please, my brothers, do not do evil! Look, please, I have two daughters who have not known a man. Please, let me bring them out to you, and do to them as you wish, only do no deed to these men, because they have come under the shadow of my roof.” But they said, “Stand back!” And they said, “This one came in to sojourn, and should he always judge? Now we are going to treat you worse than them.” So they pressed hard against the man Lot, and came near to break down the door. But the men reached out their hands and pulled Lot into the house with them, and shut the door. Then they struck the men who were at the doorway of the house with blindness, both small and great, and they wearied themselves to find the door. And the men said to Lot, “Have you anyone else here? A son-in-law, and your sons, and your daughters, and whomever you have in the city – bring them out of this place! For we are going to destroy this place, because the cry against them has grown great before the face of YHVH, and YHVH has sent us to destroy it.” And Lot went out and spoke to his sons-in-law, who had married his daughters, and said, “Get up, get out of this place, for YHVH is going to destroy this city!” But to his sons-in-law he seemed to be as one joking. And when morning dawned, the messengers urged Lot to hurry, saying, “Get up, take your wife and your two daughters who are here, lest you be consumed in the punishment of the city.” And while he loitered, the men took hold of his hand, and his wife’s hand, and the hands of his two daughters, YHVH having compassion on him, and they brought him out and set him outside the city.*

I don’t know if Lot knew that these men were different, as they walked in to the city. But, as Lot sees them come into town and, like his uncle Avraham, he rose up to meet them and bowing, offers his home and hospitality to them. When they agree to join him, he washes their feet and prepares a feast for them, again including unleavened bread. See the similarities in what Lot does and what Avraham did in the previous chapter. Even as the men from the city come “*knocking*” in order to abuse these men, Lot offers his own daughters in order to protect those who are guests in his house. I found it interesting that, as Lot tries to tell the men of the city to “***not do evil***” as these men are his guests, that they say in **verse 9**; *But they said, “Stand back!” And they said, “This one came in to sojourn, and should he always judge? Now we are going to treat you worse than them.” So they pressed hard against the man Lot, and came near to break down the door.* I also find it interesting that the men of the city remember that Lot was a sojourner and they do not approve that he always seems to judge their evil actions.

Now, it’s these “*messengers*” that have to rescue Lot from the men of the city. We see that these two messengers have power to strike these men blind. This reminded me that the “***messengers***” of

Elohim, whether angels or men, are given power to perform the works of Him who sent them. Look at the powers given to Moshe in order to get Pharaoh's attention and the attention of the Children of Yisra'el, not to mention in order to feed them and give them water. Then, there was "**Eliyahu**" (*Elijah*) and "**Elisha**", to name just a couple.

Two weeks ago, in *Parsha No'ach*, we learned that it was because of Noach's righteousness, that he and his whole house (*his wife, sons and sons' wives*) were saved. And, now here, in Sedom (*Sodom*), we have the messengers of Elohim taking Lot and his whole house, (*his wife and unmarried daughters – those under his covering*) out of the city just before its destruction. Again, we see that Lot's righteousness will save his whole house. Or, will it? People still have the ability to choose. In this case, Lot's sons-in-law and his daughters who were under their husbands' covering, chose to ignore the warning to "**come out**" and would perish with the wicked. And, as we'll see in a minute even Lot's wife made a choice at the very last minute that cost her, her life. She took her eyes off her salvation and looked back. Ruth suggested something I hadn't seen before; and, I think she's correct. She said that Lot's wife probably looked back in hopes of seeing her two other daughters and perhaps her grandchildren coming out after them. Folks, when our time comes, we can't look back. All of us will have to make our own decision, whether to go, stay behind or turn back. Fear for their children kept a whole generation of B'nei Yisra'el out of the Promised Land. And, this is what HaShem restated in **Yehezqel 15**, that we read a few minutes ago, about not saving a city even if Noah, Dani'el and Job were living there. He'll rescue the righteous and obedient, and judge the rest.

Let's continue with **Chapter 19:17-30**; ***And it came to be, when they had brought them outside, that he said, "Escape for your life! Do not look behind you nor stay anywhere in the plain. Escape to the mountains, lest you be consumed." And Lot said to them, "Oh no, YHVH! Look, please, your servant has found favor in your eyes, and you have increased your kindness which you have shown me by saving my life, but I am unable to escape to the mountains, lest calamity overtake me and I die. Look, please, this city is near enough to flee to, and it is small. Please let me escape there – is it not a small matter – and let my life be saved?" And He said to him, "Look, I have favored you concerning this matter also, without overthrowing this city for which you have spoken. Hurry, escape there. For I am not able to do any deed until you arrive there." So the name of the city was called Tso'ar. The sun had risen upon the earth when Lot entered Tso'ar. And YHVH rained sulphur and fire on Sedom and Amorah, from YHVH out of the heavens. So He overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground. But his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a post of salt. And Avraham arose early in the morning and went to the place where he had stood before YHVH, and he looked toward Sedom and Amorah, and toward all the land of the plain. And he looked and saw the smoke of the land which went up like the smoke of a furnace. Thus it came to be, when Elohim destroyed the cities of the plain, that Elohim remembered Avraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when He overthrew the cities in which Lot had dwelt. And Lot went up out of Tso'ar and dwelt in the mountains, and his two daughters were with him, for he was afraid to dwell in Tso'ar. And he and his two daughters dwelt in a cave.***

Here, Lot's wife looks back. As I said, she took her eyes off of her salvation. Her connection to her children, to the world, was too strong. The "**fear of Heaven**", "**fear of YHVH**" was not in her, to the point that she could overcome her flesh. That is really the question we must ask ourselves, in trying to be obedient to our Creator's commands, "**Do we fear YHVH enough to be serious about keeping His commands**"?

Torah states, in **Debarim / Deuteronomy 32:29**; ***"If they were wise, they would understand this,***

they would consider their latter end!” How does this apply to Lot’s wife? Dead is dead, right? We’re told that she became a “**pillar or post of salt**”. In Hebrew, it was a “**netseeb melach**”. Gesenius’ Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon says that “**netseeb**” is a “**statue**”, a “**fossil**” or a “**monument**” to something. “**Melach**” or “**salt**” was a word for noting the most set-apart and the firmest of covenants in Scripture. The most set-apart Covenant of all is the Torah, our Ketubah. One of It’s key provisions is for our deliverance. Lot’s wife turned away from that covenant and was made a “**monument**” to it.

Now, let’s go to **B’reshith / Genesis 22:1-14**; **And it came to be after these events that Elohim tried Avraham, and said to him, “Avraham!” And he said, “Here I am.” And He said, “Take your son, now, your only son Yitzaq, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriyah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains which I command you.” And Avraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and Yitzaq his son. And he split the wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place which Elohim had commanded him. And on the third day Avraham lifted his eyes and saw the place from a distance. So Avraham said to his young men, “Stay here with the donkey while the boy and I go over there and worship, and come back to you.” And Avraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Yitzaq his son. And he took the fire in his hand, and a knife, and the two of them went together. And Yitzaq spoke to Avraham his father and said, “My father!” And he said, “Here I am, my son.” And he said, “See, the fire and the wood! But where is the lamb for a burnt offering?” And Avraham said, “My son, Elohim does provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering.” And the two of them went together. And they came to the place which Elohim had commanded him, and Avraham built an altar there and placed the wood in order. And he bound Yitzaq his son and laid him on the altar, upon the wood. And Avraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son, but the Messenger of YHVH called to him from the heavens and said, “Avraham, Avraham!” And he said, “Here I am.” And He said, “Do not lay your hand on the boy, nor touch him. For now I know that you fear Elohim, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me.” And Avraham lifted his eyes and looked and saw behind him a ram caught in a bush by its horns, and Avraham went and took the ram and offered it up for a burnt offering instead of his son. And Avraham called the name of the place, ‘YHVH Yireh,’ as it is said to this day, “On the mountain YHVH will be seen.”**

There has been much written on this test, the Akeidah, or the *binding of Yitzaq*. Among non-Jews, teachers have made many assumptions and put forth theories about what all of this meant. However, if we look to our Hebrew teachers, we can understand much.

First, if we consider what we’ve been learning as a whole about the principle of, “**The deeds of the fathers (our Avot) are signposts to the children**”, we will see that Avraham was told to take his son Yitzaq to land of Moriyah, to one of its mountains that Elohim would tell him. Avraham brought Yitzaq to Mt. Moriyah (Mountain of the Teacher). And there, this picture and pattern would be played out.

While Torah doesn’t tell us of all their conversations on the way, it carefully points out that Avraham carries out Yah’s instructions very methodically, never wavering. Most of us would be totally unable to sleep with such a command hanging over us. And, we’d likely be dragging our feet. But, we read that Avraham rose early. He makes his preparations, even before they leave the tent. Avraham splits the wood for the offering and then they leave. Three days journey and he sees the *place*. Actually, in Hebrew, for “**sees**”, Torah uses the word, “**va’yera**”, from the title of our parsha. This too is a **revelation**, or a **revealing** of this holy location, as **it appeared to him from a distance**. This is the Place, Mt. Moriyah, that King David would purchase, and on which his son Shelomoh would build the Beit HaMikdash, and where HaShem’s Presence would dwell.

One of the very best teachings that I've ever read on this portion of Torah is from Rabbi Pinchas Winston. He writes in this year's teaching, "[Perceptions – Parsha Vayera](#)", explaining first the pshat (*simple*) meaning and then goes on to teach the deeper understanding of this historical event. I really hope that you all will read this enlightening teaching.

Of all the images within the context of this final test given to Avraham, my favorite is summed up in **verse 14**; ***And Avraham called the name of the place, 'YHVH Yireh,' as it is said to this day, 'On the mountain YHVH will be seen.'*** Rabbi Winston points out; "As Rashi explains, the simple meaning of this verse is: God will select and see for Himself this place to rest His Divine Presence in, and to have offerings brought here. This shows, again, how the actions of the Avot laid the tracks for future generations and events. However, Rashi also provides another explanation: 'God will see' this binding to forgive the Jewish people every year, and to save them from punishment, so that it will be said on this day, 'On the mountain of God there will be seen' the ashes of Yitzchak still piled up for atonement. Hence, '**this day**' refers to Yom Kippur."

He adds, "Thank God for the ashes of Yitzchak! Only one problem: Yitzchak didn't die, so he certainly wasn't burned. Which ashes are we talking about then? According to the Talmud, if someone wants to perform a mitzvah but is prevented from doing so for reasons beyond his control, as far as Heaven is concerned, the mitzvah was done, and the reward for doing it is forthcoming (Brachot 6a). Had it not been for extenuating circumstances, father and son would have carried out the Akeidah to its last detail, which would have included the burning of Yitzchak's body as is the case with every Burnt-Offering. Therefore, as far as God is concerned, it is as if the Akeidah actually occurred. Hence, though we never saw Yitzchak's ashes piled there, or any other place for that matter, God did, and still does. As far as God is concerned, the Akeidah really happened, so-much-so that God forgives us as if it did."

Here too, I want to add what Chazal (the Sages) taught regarding these ashes. You see, the fulfillment of this picture regarding Yitzaq's ashes is found in the ashes of the red heifer; a command given to the Kohanim in **Parsha Chukat, B'midbar / Numbers 19**, for cleansing. Regarding this, the Torah reads; ***And the heifer shall be burned before his eyes – he burns its hide, and its flesh, and its blood, and its dung. And the priest shall take cedar wood and hyssop and scarlet, and throw them into the midst of the fire burning the heifer.... And a clean man shall gather up the ashes of the heifer, and shall place them outside the camp in a clean place. And they shall be kept for the congregation of the children of Yisra'el for the water for uncleanness, it is for cleansing from sin.... And it shall be a law forever to the children of Yisra'el and to the stranger who sojourns in their midst.***

As we consider the lives and actions of our forefathers, Avraham, Yitzaq and Ya'aqob, let's really understand their impact on us today. They feared Elohim and were in obedience to His commands. May we fear HaShem and complete our teshuvah and draw near. As King David prayed to HaShem in **Tehillim 51:6-10**; ***See, You have desired truth in the inward parts, and in the hidden part You make me know wisdom. Cleanse me with hyssop, and I am clean; wash me, and I am whiter than snow. Let me hear joy and gladness, let the bones You have crushed rejoice. Hide Your face from my sins, and blot out all my crookednesses. Create in me a clean heart, O Elohim, And renew a steadfast spirit within me.***

Baruch HaShem YHVH !