

PARASHAH: Lekh L'kha (Get yourself out)
ADDRESS: B'resheet (Genesis) 12:1-17:27
READING DATE: Shabbat
AUTHOR: Torah Teacher Ariel ben-Lyman HaNaviy

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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-O'lam,
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.)

Welcome to **Parashat Lekh L'kha**. This commentary will address the following topics: 1) Anti-Judaism: Avram and His Progeny, 2) Repairing the Breach, and 3) “Credited to Him as Righteousness.”

Before we get started, I want to say at the onset that some of the commentary that I will be providing today just may appear to be slightly reproofing and correcting to some of you. Correction at times can be unpleasant, I realize. But that's okay, because the Torah has been given to us for reproof and correction when we need it (read 2 Timothy 3:16-17). It is not my intent to openly offend, or belittle anyone. Please allow the Ruach HaKodesh to have his way in you, as you study the pages of HaShem's wonderful Word this hour!

We have finally come to a place in the Torah where the narrative will begin to slow down a bit. By way of retrospect, the Torah has spent the last eleven chapters covering everything from the creation account, to the fall of man, the birth of the first offspring, the first death, the first atonement, a series of lengthy genealogical lists, the world deluge, the Tower of Babel, and the first official, biblical covenant between man and HaShem. All of this information covers a time period of about 2000 years! Yet in comparison, the story we are about to embark on centers around one man and his journey to become the father of HaShem's chosen heritage of people, the Jewish Nation. His story unfolds before us, and the Torah uses the next 13 chapters to do so, while the time period covered is approximately one twentieth of that of the previously mentioned material!

What is HaShem trying to convey to us here? Are the details surrounding the beginnings of humanity less important to him, than one man from Ur? Of course not. What I believe our God is teaching us is that sometimes his Word “majors on the majors, and minors on the minors.” In other words, while at times we would hope for more information on certain aspects of the Torah, HaShem has graciously provided us with exactly the right amount needed to live our lives according to his instructions, and remain pleasing to him.

Having said all of that, interestingly enough, by using a computer assisted word search, I have discovered that the name “Abram,” whom I’ll call “Avram” from this time forward, is found 46 times in the whole Bible! Using the same resources, the name “Abraham,” whom I’ll call “Avraham” from this time forward, is found 216 times in the Bible! These numbers do reflect the possibility of another man, other than the main character of our parashah, bearing the same name. I didn’t factor that possibility out. Yet surely, most (if not all; someone else may do the math for me) surely refer to our very own Avraham! So let’s read about this “Father of many nations.” Our portion gets its name from the opening statement from HaShem.

Anti-Judaism: Avram and His Progeny

The Torah says in chapter 12, verses 1-3,

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל-אַבְרָם לֵךְ-לְךָ מֵאֶרֶץ
 וּמְמֹלַדְתְּךָ וּמִבֵּית אָבִיךָ אֶל-הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר
 אֵרָאֶךָ

וְאָעֲשֶׂךָ לְגוֹי גָדוֹל וְאֶבְרַכְךָ וְאֶגְדַּלְהָ שְׁמֶךָ
 וְהָיָה בְרָכָה

וְאֶבְרַכְהָ מִבְּרַכְיֶךָ וּמִקְלָלֶךָ אֶאֱרָ וְנִבְרַכְוּ
 בְּךָ כָּל מִשְׁפַּחַת הָאָדָמָה

**“Vayomer ADONAI el-Avram “Lekh l’kha me’arts’kha u’mimo-lad’t’kha
 umibeyt avikha el-ha’arets asher ar’ekha.**

**Ve’e’eskha l’goy-gadol va’avarekh’kha va’agadelah sh’mekha v’heyeh
 b’rakhah.**

**Va’avar-akhah m’var’khekha um’kaleh-l’kha a’or v’nivr’khu v’kha kol
 mishp’khot ha’adamah.”**

(Now ADONAI said to Avram, “Get yourself out of your country, away from your kinsmen and away from your father’s house, and go to the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation, I will bless you, and I will make your name great; and you are to be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, but I will curse anyone who curses you; and by you all the families of the earth will be blessed.”)

The opening monologue from HaShem, containing both directives and promises, is packed with some very important facts that affect every man, woman, and child who will be born from here on out! To be sure, it still affects everyone today! How so? Allow me to conduct a word study.

We have been taught many times over (hopefully), that verse three is referring to the ultimate blessing that Avram would be, once his ultimate righteous heir was born (...**and by you all the families of the earth will be blessed**). The Torah makes it perfectly clear that this righteous heir is non other than Yeshua (ben-Yosef) ben-Dahvid, ben-Avraham (see Matthew chapter one)! But our usual sermons focus on the latter part of that verse. I want to call our attention to the first part of verse three.

“I will bless those who bless you, but I will curse anyone who curses you; and by you all the families of the earth will be blessed.”

Here HaShem promises to “bless” those who “bless” Avram. The Hebrew wording used both times for “bless” is “the root word “barakh,” and it literally means to bow the knee. This promise is understood to be extending to his physical offspring as well, the Jewish People. Moreover, we have seen that many peoples of the world, symbolically and physically, have blessed Avram. To be sure, we don’t hear of many individuals actually “cursing” Avram or his offspring, the Jews (a few unmentioned exceptions do exist). From HaShem’s perspective, he has set up a divine sort of “cause and effect” here: if you (a non-Jew) bless Avram, or his offspring, then in return, I will bless you.

But the really interesting fact is found in the Hebrew word translated as “curse.” In the first instance, the word translated “curse” (in our above translation of the CJB by David H. Stern) comes from the root Hebrew word “arar.” Here is what Strong’s Concordance and Brown, Driver, Briggs and Gesenius Hebrew Lexicon (BDB) have to say about this word:

0779 ‘arar אָרַר {aw-rar’}: a primitive root - curse 62, bitterly 1; (total usage: 63)

to curse.... cursed be he (participle used as in curses).... to be cursed, cursed.... lay under a curse, put a curse on.... to be made a curse, be cursed (adaptation mine, but see footnote)¹

This is some heavy language! Especially when we realize that this is the Sovereign Creator of the Universe speaking this promise here! But the second word translated as “curse” is surprisingly not the same as the first! The original word this time is taken from the root word “kalal.” In fact, in our current parashah (portion), chapter 16:4 translates this word as “contempt,” when referring to the attitude that Sarai (Avram’s wife) had towards her handmaid Hagar. Here is what Strong’s and the BDB have to say about that word:

07043 ‘qalal קלל {kaw-lal’}: a primitive root - curse 39, swifter 5, light thing 5, vile 4, lighter 4, despise 3, abated 2, ease 2, light 2, lighten 2, slightly 2, misc 12; (total usage: 82)

be slight, be swift, be trifling, be of little account, be light.... be abated (of water).... to be trifling, to be swift, show oneself swift.... to appear trifling, be too trifling, be insignificant.... to be lightly esteemed.... to make despicable.... to curse.... to be cursed.... to make light, lighten.... to treat with contempt, bring contempt or dishonour.... to shake.... to whet.... to shake oneself, be moved to and fro” (adaptation mine, but see footnote)²

I hope that this list is a shocker. We usually find ourselves thinking, “As a believer in Messiah Yeshua, I would never meaningfully curse Avram or his offspring, the Jews! I understand that my spiritual heritage is forever bound up in their lineage!” I, as a Torah Teacher, hope that this is similar to what every well-meaning Christian might say. But the shocker is that according to the word used for “curse,” many well-meaning believers are unknowingly “cursing” Avram and his offspring! If I were to translate this verse using our newfound definitions of the word curse, it would read something like this:

“I will [bless] those who [bless] you, but I will [curse] anyone who [despises, makes of little account, lightly esteems, thinks insignificant of] you; and by you all the families of the earth will be blessed.”

Wow! That seems to explain the verse in a whole different light! And so it should! For that is what I really believe the verse is alluding to. Allow me to elaborate.

In the fourth century, when the organized Church decided to divorce herself from her spiritual mother, Judaism, she unwittingly planted the seeds of anti-Judaism. Anti-Judaism is not to be confused with Anti-Semitism. The former is the dislike

¹ Brown, Driver, Briggs (BDB), אָרַר.

² Ibid, קלל.

or disinterest of Jewishness and Judaism specifically; the latter is the dislike or disinterest in the Semitic race altogether. By the way, both fall into the category of violating the verse in examination and both are disrespectful to Father Avram and displeasing to HaShem! Over the centuries, this seedbed has blossomed into a full-grown weed called Replacement Theology. This heretical belief fosters the mistaken idea that “God gave up on the Jews when they corporately rejected his Son Yeshua, and instead, adopted the newborn Gentile Church as his chosen people. The unfortunate Jews were left to face the curses of the Torah, and the Wrath of an angry Father, while the Church inherited (spiritually of course) most of the blessings and promises to the Jews, as pronounced in the Torah.” Fortunately, this theological framework is neither blatantly taught to Christians, openly favored by the same, nor endorsed by HaShem!

But the damage has been done. Bad habits are hard to change. Our Christian community today is lacking of real spiritual depth, many so-called believers have a superficial relationship with Yeshua, and we owe a significant part of all of this to the teachings that have been passed down from one anti-Jewish generation to the next. Consequently, many Christians are either, passive and ignorant, when it comes to the Jewish people and communal support, or they are outright opposed to it! The Torah, the Prophets, and the Writings (TaNaKH) have been relegated to the status of “Old Testament,” while the Gospel enjoys the status of “New Testament.” This has a way of causing the Jews to appear to be “old,” “outdated,” and “replaced,” while the Church is defined as “new,” “fresh,” and “current.” Is this not the prevalent attitude of many non-Jews within the Body today? “Your people prove difficult to positively influence, with regards to the Good News and Jesus,” many quip. As a result, Jewish evangelism is weak, understaffed, or (in the few cases where churches have tried) eventually abandoned. Even if not intentional, this type of spiritual ignorance still feeds the Replacement Theological bias, in that, no one is made aware enough to put an end to it. In other words, this ignorance has gone on for far too long.

Repairing the Breach

What can be done to undo some of the damage, and help repair the split between Avram’s offspring and the Church? Since most of my readership is likely composed of Christians and Messianic Jews, I will focus my energies in those camps. More information than I can post in this limited format is available to anyone who is serious in answering this timely and important question. I’m sure you will agree the following suggestions are a start in the right direction (from Christian to non-Messianic Jew):

- Begin to pray about getting actively involved in the current move of the Ruach HaKodesh (Holy Spirit), to bring about a genuine, heartfelt love for Avram’s offspring, oriented from the Church and flowing outwards.
- Ask HaShem to reveal to you your heart, and to forgive you if you have unknowingly harbored these types of thoughts towards Avram’s offspring.

God is still in the business of forgiveness! What my brothers according to the flesh (traditional Judaism, unsaved Jews, non-Messianic Jews, secular Jews, etc) need is to experience the mercy of HaShem, displayed through our honest concern and support!

- Ask HaShem to begin to reveal to you your spiritual heritage traced through faithful Avram and continuing through to his offspring, the Jewish People. You will find that according to Romans chapter 11 (just to name a good starting point), you also have some obligations to the “root that supports you.”

Even after this genuine call for restoration, some people will yet refuse to change their conventional ways of thinking. To be sure, I don't expect Gentiles to begin flooding my e-mail with letters asking me to forgive them for “lightly esteeming the Jews.” No, this type of heartfelt change is not accomplished overnight, and it can only make a difference if the Ruach HaKodesh is genuinely involved. As a Torah Teacher, I expect that it will take some time for human nature to readjust its mindset, and line up with what HaShem wants us to be. To be sure, the change must start with this author. After all, which one of us is perfect? Only the man Yeshua from Natzeret was. Please feel free to drop me a line, in care of this web site, if you still have questions or comments in this area. You may also e-mail me personally. My address is provided at the end of this teaching.

I do want to say this, however: because of the example that the Torah records Avram to have been, any man willing to do so is eligible to become an heir of this great father! Because of Avram's trusting faithfulness to HaShem's command, he subsequently became the father of the many righteous followers that would come after him. And last, but certainly not least, because of Avram's trusting faithfulness, a single righteous man was born into his lineage. From this single righteous man, came the power to join the physical and/or spiritual family of the Creator of all men!

This man's name is Yeshua!

God's chosen family consists of those physically born into Avram's lineage, who's praise comes not from men, but from God, as well as those spiritually born into Avram's lineage, who's praise comes not from men, but from God (Romans 2:28, 29).

“Are you part of the family?”

“Credited to Him as Righteousness”

*Note: My commentary “**Exegeting Galatians**” was meant to serve as a companion exposition to this particular teaching. I highly recommend reading them together.*

Throughout his letters, the Apostle Paul (Sha'ul) seems to take great interest in Avraham, referring to him no less than 29 times!³ Ya'akov (James) also makes use of Father Avraham in chapter 2 and verses 21-23 of his letter, going so far as to bring the binding of Isaac into the equation for us. For Ya'akov, Avraham's faith was perfected by his corresponding actions. Germane to our study, however, is the phrase "*credited to him as righteousness*," penned by Moshe in B'resheet (Genesis) 15:6 and referenced by Sha'ul in Romans 4:3

For what does the Tanakh say? "Avraham put his trust in God, and it was credited to his account as righteousness.

Given its location within Paul's arguments, both from Romans and Galatians, it is clear that the phrase is referring to imputed righteousness, that is, positional (forensic) right standing with HaShem. For Paul, it is axiomatic that Moshe describes this quality chronologically before Avraham receives the covenant of circumcision in B'resheet chapter 17. This bespeaks of the correct order in which to appropriate the covenant responsibilities of God. On the micro, saving faith in God, symbolized by God accrediting his account as righteous (Hebrew תְּצַדִּיק tz'dakah), precedes the patriarch's obedience to the sign of circumcision. On the macro, the covenant of Avraham precedes the covenant with Moshe.

Thus, we can infer that Sha'ul brings Avraham into the argument to show that forensic righteousness is conferred to those who are not circumcised as well as to those who are—read Gentile and Jew respectively.

Or is God the God of the Jews only? Isn't he also the God of the Gentiles? Yes, he is indeed the God of the Gentiles (Romans 3:29).

And,

Now is this blessing for the circumcised only? Or is it also for the uncircumcised? For we say that Avraham's trust was credited to his account as righteousness; but what state was he in when it was so credited - circumcision or uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision! In fact, he received circumcision as a sign, as a seal of the righteousness he had been credited with on the ground of the trust he had while he was still uncircumcised. This happened so that he could be the father of every uncircumcised person who trusts and thus has righteousness credited to him, and at the same time be the father of every circumcised person who not only has had a b'rit-milah, but also follows in the footsteps of the trust which Avraham avinu had when he was still uncircumcised (Romans 4:9-12).

³ Assuming Paul wrote Hebrews, the count is as follows: Romans 4:1, 2, 3, 9, 12, 13, 16; 9:7; 11:1; 2 Corinthians 11:22; Galatians 3:6, 7, 8, 9, 14, 16, 18, 29; 4:22; Hebrews 2:16; 6:13; 7:1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 9; 11:8, 17.

But what is it about the narrative in Genesis that leads Moshe to finally declare Avram/Avraham as righteous at this juncture? Is there something within the story that would cause any reader to make the same assumption? What was going on in the mind of the Holy One? Perhaps we can draw some conclusions by looking at the passage from a telescopic overview. Allow me elaborate.

The flow of the Genesis narrative has been an interactive look at Avraham and his contending with God ever since God called him away from his native land in chapter 12:1-3. There, in what amounts to a unilateral agreement, we find that HaShem promises to increase his offspring beyond numbering. The corresponding covenant ceremony will later be enacted in p'sukim (verses) 7-20 of chapter 15. But leading up to this point, and trailing afterwards, is a grammatical clue as to what—or whom—Avraham actually placed his trust in!

In B'resheet 12:1 Moshe recalls that ADONAI spoke to Avram.⁴ If we trace every occurrence where God and Avram interact we will discover something quite interesting. Continuing with our investigation, HaShem appears to Avram in 12:7,⁵ and in chapter 13 verse 14 ADONAI again speaks to Avram.⁶ But when we arrive at chapter 15 the narrative appears quite odd. Instead of God appearing or speaking to Avram, the first clause of the first verse records:

אַחַר הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה הָיָה דְבַר-יְהוָה אֶל-אַבְרָם

After these things the word of the LORD came unto Abram...

Likewise verse 4 confesses,

וַהֲנִיחָה דְבַר-יְהוָה אֵלָיו לֵאמֹר

And, behold, the word of the LORD came unto him, saying...

Verse 6 of chapter 15 reveals Avram's reaction to the Word of the LORD by stating that it was at this moment that he believed the unbelievable and it was credited to him as righteousness. Remember, up until this point, Avram had remained childless, and was beginning to suppose that maybe the heir of his household was to be the recipient of God's promise from Genesis 12:1-3.⁷ The narrative of chapter 15 trails off with statements amounting to "ADONAI said to

⁴ וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל-אַבְרָם

⁵ וַיֵּרָא יְהוָה אֶל-אַבְרָם

⁶ וַיְהִי וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל-אַבְרָם

⁷ B'resheet 15:2, 3.

him, "I am ADONAI," (verse 7)⁸ and "That day ADONAI made a covenant with Avram." (verse 18)⁹

Who or what was this mysterious "Word of the LORD" that suddenly¹⁰ appeared in the parenthesis of the narrative with Avram?

I will let the Chazal (the Sages of Blessed Memory) add their input to this Hebraic feature of the story:

In Scripture "the word of the Lord" commonly denotes the speech addressed to patriarch or prophet (Gen. xv. 1; Num. xii. 6, xxiii. 5; I Sam. iii. 21; Amos v. 1-8); but frequently it denotes also the creative word: "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made" (Ps. xxxiii. 6; comp. "For He spake, and it was done"; "He sendeth his word, and melteth them [the ice]"; "Fire and hail; snow, and vapors; stormy wind fulfilling his word"; Ps. xxxiii. 9, cxlvii. 18, cxlviii. 8). In this sense it is said, "For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven" (Ps. cxix. 89). "The Word," heard and announced by the prophet, often became, in the conception of the seer, an efficacious power apart from God, as was the angel or messenger of God: "The Lord sent a word into Jacob, and it hath lighted upon Isra'el" (Isa. ix. 7 [A. V. 8], lv. 11); "He sent his word, and healed them" (Ps. cvii. 20); and comp. "his word runneth very swiftly" (Ps. cxlvii. 15).¹¹

The Word of the LORD is in fact the LORD, ADONAI himself! This much is made clear by the objective text and the subsequent notations that we observed in Hebrew via the footnotes. But let us take it one step further to complete the mystery. In Aramaic, the sister language to Hebrew, the translation of "word" becomes **מאמר** mah'amar, from which we get "memra." Since the Hebrew "Word" was already identified as possessing personality, the corresponding memra likewise took on identity! Early Jewish theologians defined the Memra, or Word of God, with six different characteristics. In the first portion of his Gospel, Yochanan (John) associates each of these qualifications with their Messianic fulfillment in Yeshua. These six claims were:

⁸ וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו אֲנִי יְהוָה

⁹ בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא כָּרַת יְהוָה אֶת-אַבְרָם בְּרִית

¹⁰ The Hebrew word הִנֵּה "hineh" is explained by Jewish authorities as "...untranslatable. It is often rendered as 'here' or 'behold,' but this is an approximation of an expression that has no equivalent in the Indo-European languages. For this reason, it is often left untranslated. In general, it serves to intensify a statement and to provide emphasis. Here, the intensity denotes that it was a sudden or intense experience." (Navigating the Bible, online commentary to Genesis 15:4)

¹¹ Jewish Encyclopedia, pp. 464-465.

1. Memra is defined as distinct, yet the same as God. This struggle as to the nature of HaShem persists to this day. Messianic Jews point to the use of the term echad as a composite unity to assist in the explanation of this issue. Yochanan in Yochanan 1:1 stated: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." (Complete Jewish Bible). Yeshua Himself spoke of the fulfillment of this attribute when He stated, "I and the Father are one." Yochanan 10:30, CJB
2. The second attribute of the Memra, Word of God, was that it was the agent of creation. Yochanan states that Yeshua fulfills this in Yochanan 1:3: "All things came to be through Him and without Him nothing made had being." Sha'ul succinctly stated this in Colossians 1:15b-16, referring to Yeshua: "He is supreme over all creation, because in connection with Him were created all things — in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones, lordships, rulers or authorities — they have all been created through Him and for Him."
3. The third attribute stated that the Memra was the agent of salvation. This is claimed in Yochanan 1:12: "But to as many as did receive Him, to those who put their trust in His person and power, He gave the right to become children of God." Yeshua stated His role as agent of salvation several times, most forcefully in Yochanan (John) 14:6b: "I AM the Way — and the Truth and the Life; no one comes to the Father except through me."
4. The fourth Jewish attribute of the Memra was that Memra was the agent of Theophany (the visible presence of God). In Yochanan 1:14 one reads: "The Word became a human being and lived with us, and we saw His Sh'khinah, The Sh'khinah of the Father's only Son, full of grace and truth." Indeed, one might consider the incarnation reality of God in Messiah Yeshua to be a prolonged Theophany. As Sha'ul forthrightly stated in Colossians 1:15a concerning Yeshua: "He is the visible image of the invisible God."
5. The fifth attribute of Memra was that of being the agent of covenant signing. In Yochanan 1:17 the author writes: "For the Torah was given through Moshe, grace and truth came through Yeshua the Messiah." This was the fulfillment of the prophetic words of Yirmeyahu (Jeremiah), written in the thirty-first chapter of his self-titled book in verses 30 (31) and 32 (33): "Here, the days are coming," says Adonai, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Isra'el and with the house of Y'hudah ... For this is the covenant I will make with the house of Isra'el after those days," says Adonai: "I will put my Torah within them and write it on their heart; I will be their God, and they will be my people."
6. The final attribute of Memra was that of being the agent of revelation. Yochanan writes of this in verse 18 of the first chapter of his Gospel: "No one has ever seen God; but the only and unique Son, who is identical with God and is at the Father's side — He has made Him known." When Philip asked Yeshua to reveal the Father, Yeshua's reply was "Have I been with you so long without your knowing me, Philip? Whoever has seen Me has

seen the Father; so how can you say, 'Show us the Father'?" Yochanan 14:9.

Indeed as scholars have summarized: "The writings of John confirm that his understanding of Memra was 100 percent Hebraic. He affirms that Yeshua fulfills all six attributes and all Jewish expectations of Memra."

Conclusions

Avram placed his trust in ADONAI. The raw data gathered from the narrative tells us that it was the Word of ADONAI who received the object of such faith. To be sure, Avram's response is unique, employing the moniker "Adonai, God,"¹² instead of merely YHVH like in 14:22.¹³ Sarna notes this shift in titles in his commentary to Genesis,

This Hebrew divine title, rarely used in the Torah, appears here for the first time. It is used in a context of complaint, prayer, and request. Here, the word for "Lord" is '*adonai*, "my Lord," not the divine name of YHVH, and its use suggests a master-servant relationship. Abram does not permit his vexation to compromise his attitude of respect and reverence before God.¹⁴

However, in comparison to Sarna above, we must carefully note that the Hebrew text of ADONAI (אֲדֹנָי) itself is a peculiar rendering. How so? According to 'The Scriptures' translation by the Institute for Scripture Research (ISR) the original Hebrew name of YHVH has been emended by the Scribes in 134 passages!¹⁵ This means that in 134 places in our existing Masoretic text, the Hebrew may read ADONAI (אֲדֹנָי) but the original word was in fact YHVH יהוה! Richard Spurlock of *Bereans Online*, a well-balanced messianic web site with a nice collection of podcasts for downloading, makes a similar observation in his notes to the course 'Messiah Unveiled':

A most interesting feature of Genesis 15 is evident only in the Hebrew. In the English of Genesis 15:2, the two words 'Lord God' are used. The English translation is that the English translators have up until this point used the scribal tradition of *kere ketiv* [say/write] with regard to the Tetragrammaton [sic]. If you remember, the ancient scribes used a system of circumlocution to encourage the reader to not say the Holy Name out loud. What was written was the four letters of a *yod*, a *hay*, a

¹² וַיֹּאמֶר אֲבְרָם אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה

¹³ "…unto the LORD, the most High God." אֶל-יְהוָה אֵל עֶלְיוֹן

¹⁴ Nahum M. Sarna, *The JPS Commentary to Genesis* (The Jewish Publication Society, 1989), p. 113.

¹⁵ The Scriptures, *Explanatory Notes: Emendations by the Sopherim*, (Institute for Scripture Research), p. 1214.

vav, and a hay. Under those consonants, the scribes placed the permanent *kere ketiv* in the form of vowel points. The vowel points were for the word 'Adonai' [Lord]. Thus the reader, when they came to the Holy Name, would say, 'Adonai'. The English translators took this tradition to another level. Instead of writing the four letters, they substituted 'LORD' in all capital letters. This informed the reader that the Hebrew behind the word was in fact the Holy Name.

When we get to Genesis 15:2, the translators have a problem—the actual word 'Adonai' is used next to the Holy Name. The problem is that if they followed their translation consistently, it would say, "Lord LORD," which is difficult rendering. Following the scribal tradition of circumlocution (word substitution), they simply write 'Lord GOD.' The 'GOD' is in fact a substitution for the Holy Name in this case...

What is the significance of this word arrangement? This is the first time this word combination is used in Scripture. This word combination is used in other places in Scriptures, but not very often. We need to investigate to see if there is some connection between these passages, and if it is a Messianic connection.¹⁶

What are we to make of this exchange of names and how does it relate to Yeshua and the Memra? May I suggest (under the guidance of the Apostolic Scriptures) that the Memra of YHVH appeared to Avram in such a way as to allow Avram to address him as a servant would address his visible, flesh and blood master in face-to-face reverence and respect? Did Avram see a man? Did he see the invisible YHVH? I can't be dogmatic either way since biblical theophanies are often shrouded in mystery, but my gut feeling is that Avram saw the pre-incarnate LORD Yeshua with his natural eyes and yet called him YHVH! One thing is sure: Avram believed the unbelievable, and it was to the Word of the LORD—the Memra—that he addressed his objective faith! Surely HaShem saw into the heart of the patriarch and recognized the appropriation of the choices that lay before him. What is more, only the LORD himself can supernaturally open the eyes of a man to allow him to make a choice between choosing his Messiah or rejecting him. Avraham chose to lay hold of the Promise given in Genesis 12:1-3 by seeing at the heart of such a promise a glimpse of the Messiah who would bring it to pass! Tim Hegg provides a concluding thought to our study,

The response of God is said, once again, to come via His "word"--"the word of the LORD came to him saying...." God assures Abram that he will indeed have a son, and then He takes Abram outside to give him a sign of the promise He has just made. But the sign itself requires faith. For

¹⁶ Richard Spurlock, *Messiah Unveiled* (available at <http://www.bereansonline.org/default.htm>, 2005), p. 34-35.

God shows Abram the stars and declares: "So shall your descendants (literally "seed") be." Not only would Abram have a son, but the descendants of Abram would endure from generation to generation, so that in the end, the offspring of Abram would be beyond counting.

But would God's word—His promise of a son—be enough for Abram? After all, it had been some time (perhaps as much as 20 years by the Sages reckoning) since the initial promise had been given, and there was still no son. Sarai was still barren. In fact, God's word was enough for Abram, as the next verse (v. 6) indicates. "And he believed in the LORD." Moses has reserved this clear statement of Abram's faith for the moment when the promised son is specifically the focus of attention. Surely Abram believed from the time that God first revealed Himself to him. His actions prove his faith: he left Ur, traveled to the place that God had indicated, forsook the idolatry of his fathers, and worshipped the One true God. But Moses intends us to see that Abram's faith was cast upon God in a particular fashion—in connection with the promise of a son. And thus we have the all important verse: "And he believed in the LORD, and He reckoned it to him as righteousness."¹⁷

The closing blessing is as follows:

***"Baruch atah YHVH, Eloheynu, Melech ha-O'lam,
asher natan lanu Torah-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!"

Torah Teacher Ariel ben-Lyman yeshua613@hotmail.com

¹⁷ Tim Hegg, *Parashah Twelve* (torahresource.com, 2003), p. 2.