



# CHAVURAT HAMASHIACH

## SYNAGOGUE SABBATH MESSAGE

### *Beit Avraham*

*a lesson on Parashah 4, Vayera*

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A few weeks ago we read the beginning of B'resheet/Genesis. (sorry about being redundant) Now we are studying the beginning of God's nation, Isra'el. The beginning of any kingdom starts with laying the first stone. Avraham is that first stone. Avraham is not an extraordinary man. He is not some great theologian, philosopher, or prophet; not yet anyway. He is simply a man who God called out of the land of Ur (apparently the man from Bud, and the man from Wise were unavailable) to go to the place of God's choosing, and in hearing the word of God, he obeyed. God did the rest. God took this ordinary man wandering the desert and made him the father of many nations, and is still carrying out the covenant He made with Avraham to this day.

Avraham feared God and became His servant. He was not Jewish or Israeli, for these labels had not been made yet. He was a servant of God. That's it. Because of Avraham's love and devotion to God, and his obedience to Him in all that God told him to do, God prospered this man by giving him a large household and many possessions. Oops, I'm being redundant again. How so? You see, in that time whenever you talk about a man, (sorry women, in this case when I say man, I mean male gender, man) you not only talk about the physical man himself, but you talk about everyone in that man's family and everything he possesses. When we read in Scripture of a man traveling from one place to another, we often overlook the fact that chances are that man was not traveling alone. All or part of his household was traveling with him, including his wife or wives, children, servants, cattle, and possessions. He was responsible for all of these people as well as his stuff and their stuff. Conversely, everyone in the household answered to, and lived by the standards and beliefs of their master. This is why if a man sinned, it often affected his entire household. If he succeeded, they enjoyed the prosperity.

Even in the day of Shaul, when he was rescued from prison and the jailor was saved by his faith in Yeshua, Scripture tells us he was saved and his household. This is not to say that his belief was transferred to all of them automatically, but in that day, if the man of the house said, "Yeshua is Messiah". Everyone in his household would believe the same way. In this way they would be saved as well. As we read Torah, you might notice that it is written to men, not women. This is because if a man said, "We are not eating pork." The entire household, including women and children would say, "Amain" and they wouldn't eat pork. They wouldn't even have to know it was because God says so. The head of the house would know that, but everyone else would be satisfied with Avraham says so, or whoever the head of the household was. Now for a passage from last week's parashah. This is God talking to Avraham.

"Here is my covenant, which you are to keep, between me and you, along with your descendants after you: every male among you is to be circumcised. <sup>11</sup> You are to be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskin; this will be the sign of the covenant between me and you. <sup>12</sup> Generation after

generation, every male among you who is eight days old is to be circumcised, including slaves born within your household and those bought from a foreigner not descended from you. <sup>13</sup>. The slave born in your house and the person bought with your money must be circumcised; thus my covenant will be in your flesh as an everlasting covenant. [B'resheet/Genesis 17:10-13]

I would imagine that a household as large as that of Avraham would have had many servants outside the blood family line from multiple national backgrounds. Here's the thing. Yes, there is a thing. Notice that when Avraham was circumcised, thus taking on the sign of the covenant God made with him, not only was he circumcised and all the males in his family, but so were all the foreign servants bought into his household. This would mean that the covenant applied just as much to the foreigner as to the blood relative living in the household of Avraham. Thus Avraham would live up to his name as the father of nations, in the plural, not a nation in the singular, referring only to Isra'el. Granted, this does not mean that Isra'el does not have special place amongst all the other nations. The covenant is still made primarily with Avraham and his descendants, but those outside can still become adopted into the covenant by being bought into the household of Avraham.

“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 YHVH and to do what is right and just, so that YHVH may bring about for Avraham what he has promised him.” [B'resheet/Genesis 18:19]

What would it have meant to live in the household of Avraham? Firstly, Avraham was a Godly man. He would have expected the same from all those living in his household. Avraham was a man who continually sought to learn more about this God who called him out of the middle of nowhere to make him the father of nations. Part of that learning meant testing, as we see with God telling Avraham to sacrifice his promised son Isaac. However, with the testing comes hope in knowing that God is in control and knowing that His promises can be trusted. I see Avraham's house as a busy yet well organized house in order to manage the wealth that he had. We see also that Avraham had military, a well trained one too. So everyone had a job according to the skills each one had. I'm sure even the young ones had their chores. Everyone had a place and everyone supported one another for the well being of the community. Though there were those born of the seed of Avraham and those foreigners living as servants, there was one household, one community.

So what does this mean to God's community today? Are you thinking that being in the household of Avraham, even as a servant would have been a good thing, and you wish you could go back in time to experience it? Well, there's no need to start constructing your time machine. Consider this.

Yeshua, born of the seed of Avraham, has purchased us with His own blood. [***1Corinthians 6:20***] Therefore, we are not only servants of God, but servants of the household of Avraham. In this way, the Avrahamic Covenant applies to us, who, though Gentile by birth, have, through faith in Yeshua, become part of Beit Avraham. If this sounds a little far fetched for you, take a look at these verses.

“For in union with the Messiah, you are all children of God through this trusting faithfulness; because as many of you as were immersed into the Messiah have clothed yourselves with the Messiah, in whom there is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor freeman, neither male nor female; for in union with the Messiah Yeshua, you are all one. Also, if you belong to the Messiah, you are seed of Avraham and heirs according to the promise. [Galatians 3:26-29]

So, there were two ways into Avraham's household. Either they were born into it, or they were bought into it. Either way, both were circumcised and the covenant then applied to them both. It is the same today, as those of us, who through faith in Messiah Yeshua, have been bought with His blood and brought into Beit Avraham as servants of God.

In our society today, we like to put labels on people and ourselves. We have distinctions of color, race, gender, religion, social status, and many others. How are we ever going to even begin to deal with racism and prejudice if when we look at people, all we see is labels and the feelings that go with them, rather than simply people made in the image of God? In my travels around the world, defending freedom, I have discovered that people are people, including the Muslim men working on the other side of the barbed wire fence from where I work. I may not agree with their religion, but they are people, made in the image of God. They are not even part of the household of Avraham as I am, but they will never see the light that will lead them to the Messiah, who has already purchased them with His blood, if all I see is an Arab Muslim, and with that comes the label, "terrorist". I go to the BX to get my haircut, and the only people cutting hair are men because in this culture a woman cannot touch a man who is not her husband and vice versa. Are these terrorists, or men attempting to live a life of purity away from sexual temptation? There is much I think we can learn from these people, even though we do not believe in Allah or the Koran. Certainly we do not want to sit in the council of the ungodly, but it is better to build bridges because of Yeshua's compassion than to build walls because of our labels. When our walls keep us from sharing God's light with others in the household of Avraham, how will we ever build the bridges we need to allow others to come into the community. May we never keep a Korean from entering God's Kingdom because of our fear of communism. Don't build walls between you and your Hindu coworker because you don't understand how a person could worship a cow. That person may not even worship cows in the way your label dictates.

Granted, there are times we cannot avoid using labels to describe ourselves or others. Whatever labels you use to describe, such as Jewish or Messianic, you will likely also run into people who disagree with you, or question why you call yourself that? This can be good, as long as you can explain it to them. If you are truly living as the light you have been called to live, whatever labels you have will not matter so much because people will see who you are first. In the same way, Our labels of other people should never get in the way of us fulfilling our obligations to our fellow man, whether in the household of Avraham or without, set out in Torah.

The irony today, is that many of Avraham's descendants have fallen away from their Messiah, and God is going to use the household servants along with native born Believers to bring them back. However, we will only do this from within the household, living by the ways of God, rather than from outside where we are seen as coming from S'dom wanting to change them or destroy them. Labeling ourselves and others as gentile, Jewish, Christian, Messianic, or whatever only makes all this more difficult. When all is said and done, there really is only one label that matters in this world.

"Don't be afraid, because I am with you; I will bless you and increase your descendants for the sake of my servant Avraham." [B'reshet/Genesis 26:23]

Are we servants of God? If we belong to Beit Avraham, it is a necessity. It is the primary distinction separating those in Avraham's household from those outside. Avraham was an ordinary man, but when God said go he went, and when God said do he did exactly what was commanded, even when it involved sacrificing his only son. God prospered him, yet he never acted like a rich man, since he knew that all he had was from the hand of God. He pursued God and learned all he could about God, not afraid to question God's justice when things didn't make sense. God didn't

make him a king, for God was already the King of Kings, but the King of Kings took a man wandering through a desert wilderness and made him into a servant of servants, who through his life of devotion to God, was able to change the world.

“A talmid is not greater than his rabbi, a slave is not greater than his master. It is enough for a talmid that he become like his rabbi, and a slave like his master.” [Mattityahu/Matthew 10:24-25]

As we learn to be more like our Messiah, we ought to learn to be more like Avraham as well. As members of his household, if we learn to live like our father Avraham, God can use us to change the world we live in as well.

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