

Man on a Mission

Drash on parashah 5; Hayyai-Sarah
By MMin Oriyan Phipps (aka Kevin)

Avraham said to the servant who had served him the longest, who was in charge of all he owned, "Put your hand under my thigh; because I want you to swear by Adonai, God of heaven and God of the earth, that you will not choose a wife for my son from among the women of the Kena`ani, among whom I am living; but that you will go to my homeland, to my kinsmen, to choose a wife for my son Yitz'chak." [B'reshet/Genesis 24:2-4]

When Avraham needed to find a wife for his son Yitzchak, he relied on his most reliable servant to accomplish the mission. As we take a look at this task Avraham gave to him and the way in which he carried it out, there are several points to learn and apply to the mission God has given to each of us.

Covenant

The mission started with a covenant. According to Webster, a covenant is "a written agreement or promise usually under seal between two or more parties especially for the performance of some action." A covenant differs from a contract in that a covenant is only binding to the covenanter, and can only be broken by the covenanter. A contract is binding to both parties, and is enforceable by a court of law. The covenanter creates the stipulations of the covenant, which the second party agrees to usually with some sort of seal or sign. In the Abrahamic covenant, God made a covenant with Abraham and his descendants, which Abraham agreed to with the sign of the covenant being circumcision.

Here with Avraham and his servant, Avraham is the covenanter. He makes his servant promise to get a wife for his son only from the land of his family and not Kena'an. The seal of the covenant was the placing of the servant's hand under Abraham's thigh. Research and tradition both show that this would have required the servant's hand to be placed on or at least near Avraham's genitals. As odd as this seems to our modern culture, if you consider what just happened to Avraham and all the males in his household, it makes sense. Circumcision was the sign of God's covenant with Avraham. By having the servant make an oath by placing his hand on or near the area where the circumcision took place, Avraham was making his servant make his promise with the same weight as that of the Abrahamic covenant itself. Thus, God became a notary public, who himself became a witness to the covenant Avraham made with his servant. If the servant did anything other than what was agreed to, not only would he break the covenant with Avraham, but God as well, and would be judged from such.

"I am establishing my covenant between me and you, along with your descendants after you, generation after generation, as an everlasting covenant, to be God for you and for your descendants after you. [B'reshet 17:7]

Any mission, which is truly God ordained, will begin with a covenant. God is always the covenanter in such cases, and the covenant cannot be broken, except by God Himself. The mission God gives us is His mission, not ours. The stipulations are His, not ours. It is not what we are doing for God, it is what God is doing through us, in the same way that Avraham's purpose was to provide a bride for his son. This was accomplished through the work of the servant.

Prayer

He said, "Adonai, God of my master Avraham, please let me succeed today; and show your grace to my master Avraham. Here I am, standing by the spring, as the daughters of the townsfolk come out to draw water. I will say to one of the girls, 'Please lower your jug, so that I can drink.' If she answers, 'Yes, drink; and I will water your camels as well,' then let her be the one you intend for your servant Yitz'chak. This is how I will know that you have shown grace to my master." [B'reshet 24:12-14]

This servant was a loyal servant, not only of Avraham, but God as well. I suspect this was a big reason why he was Avraham's most trusted servant. As I talked about in last week's message, serving Avraham and serving God goes hand in hand. This servant uses wisdom in his pursuit of a bride for his master's son. I don't know what experience he had previously, or if he was using common sense, or if God told him where to go, but one way or another, he knew exactly where to go.

He did not, however, rely entirely on his own ingenuity. After reaching his destination, he realized that it would take power beyond himself to know exactly who would be the right young woman to marry Yitzchak. It was God's choice, not his. This mission would require prayer.

If you entrust all you do to Adonai, your plans will achieve success. [Mishlei/Proverbs 16:3]

For I know what plans I have in mind for you,' says Adonai,' plans for well-being, not for bad things; so that you can have hope and a future. When you call to me and pray to me, I will listen to you. When you seek me, you will find me, provided you seek for me wholeheartedly; [Yirme'yahu/Jeremiah 29:11-13]

As we seek to do God's will, He has promised in His Word to grant us success in what we do. This is His desire. However, before you think that I am crossing over into a prosperity gospel, let me remind you, it is God's work, not ours. When His will is accomplished, we find success, which may or may not be what we see as success. My concept of success with Kingdom Star is a nice facility full of people, and the resources

to help people within the Kingdom Star community. God's view of success might be that I learn how to be a better servant of Him first. Through the struggles I deal with in getting the congregation to what I see as success, I will learn to be the person God wants me to be. Kingdom Star Ministries may never make it out of my dining room, and thus I may see failure. However, God may see the strength of my faith in the effort, and see success. Our view of success usually involves wealth, power, and achievement of goals. God's view of success is usually more personal. What kind of person are you? How do you treat others? What is the nature of your relationship with Him?

Avraham's servant was looking for a young, beautiful, virtuous virgin from the extended family of Avraham. It is likely there would have been many possibilities to choose from. His inclination would have been to look at external appearance, but he knew that God looks at the heart. If he looked for the most beautiful or virtuous virgin he could find, she may not have been the one God had chosen. He knew that unless it was God's choice, his mission would not be a success.

Loyalty

He and his men then ate and drank and stayed the night. In the morning they got up; and he said, "Send me off to my master." Her brother and mother said, "Let the girl stay with us a few days, at least ten. After that, she will go." He answered them, "Don't delay me, since Adonai has made my trip successful, but let me go back to my master." They said, "We will call the girl and see what she says." They called Rivkah and asked her, "Will you go with this man?" and she replied, "I will." [B'resheet 24:54-58]

There was more to achieving success in this mission than just finding the right woman. Her family had to be willing to let her go and she had to be willing to go. When success is so close, it can often be easy to let a few things slide, and make happen what we want to happen. When the family wished Rivkah to stay another ten days, knowing God's previous "test" worked out, thus showing her to be the right woman, most people would have been willing to work with the family and grant their wish. If it was me, I would mind the extra vacation time. If I was a single guy myself, I might spend some more time at that watering hole. It's easy, as we are doing God's will to look around and see what fringe benefits we can get out of it.

Avraham's servant knew better. He knew that, though he might have the right woman, the mission was not complete without cooperation from the family. He maintained his loyalty to God and to Avraham in that, knowing he had the right woman, he wanted to return to his master as soon as possible to show him his success. A delay might have caused concern on the part of Avraham. He couldn't just get on his cell phone and let Avraham know what was going on. He was not on this mission for his own benefit, nor was he on the mission to cater to the family. He had a specific task and set out to complete the task as soon as possible. If it was God's will, there would be time to hang with the camels later.

Don't you know that in a race all the runners compete, but only one wins the prize? So then, run to win! Now every athlete in training submits himself to strict discipline, and he does it just to win a laurel wreath that will soon wither away. But we do it to win a crown that will last forever. Accordingly, I don't run aimlessly but straight for the finish line; I don't shadow-box but try to make every punch count. I treat my body hard and make it my slave so that, after proclaiming the Good News to others, I myself will not be disqualified. [1 Corinthians 9:24-27]

"Do not store up for yourselves wealth here on earth, where moths and rust destroy, and burglars break in and steal. Instead, store up for yourselves wealth in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and burglars do not break in or steal. For where your wealth is, there your heart will be also. [Mattityahu/Matthew 6:19-21]

Sometimes we see the wicked prosper in this world. They ignore the plans God has for them. Instead, they seek their own glory and honor. As they bring riches and attention to themselves, whatever they succeed at, that is their reward, their only reward. Eventually it will all be gone, and they will be in a place of eternal torment. The righteous person may suffer in this world, while serving God and fulfilling His will amongst men. However, at the end, when the righteous hears, "Well done, my good and faithful servant", as I'm sure Avraham's servant did, the treasures our service stored up in God's Kingdom will be infinitely more than any reward we could have created for ourselves in serving ourselves and forsaking our loyalty to God.

This week, take a look around you. Look at your family first, then your friends, then your community, then your city, then your country, and finally your world. Where is there darkness, emptiness, hurt, suffering, hopelessness, despair, need, sickness, anything contrary to the love, wholeness, and goodness of God? As you consider these things, the mountain of garbage the Adversary has piled up in this world is like standing at the foot of Mt. Everest. Saying that the work that could be done is intimidating is an understatement of understatements. Here's the good news. God does not expect you to do it all. He has not commissioned you to save the world. As immense as the mountain of sin is, compare it to the greatness of the God of the universe. All the troubles of the world become a speck. The same God who created the world, has a plan to redeem it. Your job and my job as His servants is to join Him in the work He is doing in each of the areas I mentioned above. You don't have to do it all, just the part God gives you to do. God's concept of success is your ability to rely on His covenants to you, rely on His help in prayer, and remain loyal to Him and the mission He has given you.

Sometimes we may think that the task God has given us to do is small and meaningless. We never know what part our work plays in the greater plan of God. Avraham's servant didn't know that the girl who gave water to his camels would not just be the wife of his master's son, but the grandmother of the leaders of the twelve tribes of Isra'el.