

GENESIS

Lesson 19 - Chapter 19

The point of Torah Class is to study the Holy Scriptures, and not to establish or learn doctrines; nor are we a class that centers on topical discussions. However, as I said in the introduction to Torah Class several months ago, while we're generally going to go verse-by-verse through the Torah and explain its meaning and context thoroughly, we will come upon sections of Scripture that demand that we pause and discuss them as a topic, and in a wider manner, than only its immediate context.

As a result of the Genesis 18 and 19 story of the 3 men who visited Abraham and Sarah.....3 men who it turned out were Yahweh and 2 heavenly messengers, angels....it opened up what will always be an unresolved mystery this side of eternity: what is the nature and essence of God? Yet, just because we cannot come up with a fully adequate answer to the question, does not mean we should accept un-Scriptural doctrines just because it's easy or traditional.

It was not until the 4th century A.D..... not until the church was Romanized and gentile-ized.... that the "3 persons" concept of the Trinity was born. The earliest known record of the 3 persons doctrine comes from what is called the Athanasian Creed ***"...we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity... for there is one Person of the Father, another of the Son, another of the Holy Ghost is all one... they are not three gods, but one God... the whole three persons are co-eternal and co-equal... he therefore that will be saved must thus think of the Trinity..."***

I stress, the early church....in fact, the church fathers and the church as it existed for the first 300 years after Christ's crucifixion..... knew ***nothing*** of such a concept as God being a conglomerate of 3 persons. They knew full well that the Lord God was one Lord, not 3 Lords. The Shema, contained in Deuteronomy express this, and the N.T., from the very mouth of our Savior, in Luke, repeats it. Here is the Shema in the Torah: NAS **Deuteronomy 6:4 "Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one!** Here is the Shema in the New Testament: NAS **Mark 12:29 Jesus answered, "The foremost is, 'Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God is one Lord;**

While we cannot ever fully untangle all this mystery surrounding the nature of God, we can shed some light on it. And, one of the ways we can do this is by re-establishing the NAME or NAMES of God in our Bibles. I am convinced that so many of the false doctrines and concepts that we are just now beginning to unearth and face head-on, are the result of God's name being set aside in favor of some rather generic terms like God and Lord. Now, I'm not so much talking about whether we should call the Messiah Jesus, Yeshua, Yahshua, Yehoshua, Christ, or something else; or whether God's name is Yahweh, Yahveh, Jehovah, Yah, or something else. We know for sure that the Hebrew letters for God Almighty's name are "yud-heh-vav-heh". I'm unaware of ANY disagreement over that. Rather, the issue is, why have general

terms like Lord and God replaced the NAME of God in the Bible?

Please understand that we are not alone in this; the Jewish people themselves began this practice around 300 years before the birth of Christ. Thankfully, though they substituted the words Lord and God when they read the Scriptures out-loud, or when they wrote commentary about God, they did NOT tamper with the copies of the original Scripture. They left God's name...yud-heh-vav-heh.... intact.

You see, 99% of the time in the Old Testament that our Bibles translations say "Lord", that is NOT what the original Hebrew said. The original Hebrew didn't say Lord and it didn't say God; and it didn't say Adonai, which is just the Hebrew word for Lord; it said Yahweh. Again, this is not disputed among scholars, Christian or Hebrew; I'm not coming up with new information here; I'm just bringing it into the light of day. And, it is not supposition because with the finding of the Dead Sea Scrolls, we know have copies of most books of the O.T. dating to the birth of Christ.

To give you one example of what I'm getting at, allow me repeat the Shema of Deuteronomy, and then of Luke, in Hebrew for you, so you can begin to grasp the problem we face: BHT *Deuteronomy 6:4 šūma` yiSrā`ēl yhwh(´ädönäy) ´élöhê°nû yhwh(´ädönäy) ´eHäd* Hear o Israel, Yahweh is our God, Yahweh is one!

It is **not** the Scriptural, but the TRADITIONAL Jewish way of saying the Shema to say:
šūma` yiSrā`ēl ädönäy ´élöhê°nû ädönäy´eHäd

It is well documented why the Jews stopped using God's name and substituted HaShem, Adonai, and several other general terms. But, for reasons that escape me, the Church has, for its own good reasons, also chosen to follow this Jewish tradition and ignore the original written texts.....all at the same time it has thrown out practically every other Jewish element of the Scriptures that it could.

Re-inserting God's name, Yahweh, back into the Shema doesn't cause the church any particular doctrinal problems. But, allow me to give you an example of the problem that reinserting God's name into Scripture **can** create. The general conclusion by Christian scholars and church authority is that Yahshua is going to return, of course, and I certainly count on that as do most of you. And, the N.T., in Acts 1:11, tells us that when He returns He will come in the manner in which He left. And, that **manner** is generally considered to mean: 1) in the FORM in which he left, meaning the God/Man we identify as Jesus, Yeshua, 2) from the PLACE He left, the Mount of Olives from where He ascended, and 3) in the WAY He left, that is, up and into the clouds of the sky, so He will come back from the clouds in the sky.

Now, one of the great and dramatic pieces of the story of Christ's return is that when He returns, He will first touch planet earth on the summit of the Mt. of Olives. And, when He does, a violent cataclysm will take place. The mountain will split, with the fault line running east to west.

You might think that if one wanted to find the Bible reference to this particular event, we would

look in Revelation; or we would at least look somewhere in the N.T. In fact, this return to the Mt. of Olives is NOT found in the N.T., but in the O.T., in the book of the prophet Zechariah. And, it is generally assumed that this passage is referring to the End Times, and the coming of the Lord, and I certainly agree with that.

Open your Bibles Zechariah chapter 14. I'm going to read the first 9 verses to you.

READ ZECHARIAH 14:1-9 in regular bible

OK, fine and dandy. Nothing new or particularly difficult there. Now, let me read it you as the original Hebrew gives it to us, literally.

READ ZECHARIAH 14:1-9 from THE SCRIPTURES

Hmmm. That complicates things, doesn't it? Since we know who the Messiah is, we have always assumed we could just insert the word "Jesus", or Yahshua, here in these verses, tying up loose ends and making it all nice and neat and comfortable; but, it seems we cannot. Because the original Hebrew says it is **Yahweh...yud-heh-vav-heh....** who touches down on the Mt. of Olives.

In fact, verse 9 says that it is Yahweh and goes on to add that His Name is echad, one. This, my friends, is a description reserved for the totality of the Godhead.... from the traditional point of view, the sum of the Holy Spirit, the Father, and the Son.....that which we often refer to simply as "God".

So, what are we to do with this? First, even if we cannot fully comprehend it, or explain it, we must acknowledge that it is so, and not just turn our minds off to it. If we do, it says we prefer to be comfortable rather than know the truth. These verses specifically say "Yahweh" is descending on the Mt. of Olives. Second, we must recognize the supreme importance of having God's name reinserted into our Bibles.....without it, we miss so much of the context of the verses, and the identity of just who is being discussed. Third, we are going to have to re-examine some of our cherished end-times assumptions. And, by the way, let's be clear that so much of the modern church doctrine about end-times events is just that.....doctrine. And, Tim LaHaye's Left Behind series hasn't helped matters any. While it is certainly a fascinating story, that is all it is....a story. This is why you'll find it in the Fiction section of Barnes and Noble; though, if you ask around, you'll find many who have read it feel like they've just learned almost exactly how the Tribulation, Rapture, etc., is going to unfold. Fourth, we probably are going to have to acknowledge that our standard "3 persons" assessment and description of Yahweh is not a good one, and that, in fact, it is the man-created church doctrine of the Trinity and it needs to be looked at again.

Let me be clear: I'm not necessarily challenging the nature of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, but rather the **conclusions** the modern church has come to about it along with the structure they've given it.....and from that formed a doctrine, a very specific idea of what all that means.....that has been named the doctrine of the Trinity. So, don't anyone leave here thinking

I'm saying otherwise. Nor should I anyone in anyway think that I am challenging the deity of Christ, or that Yahshua is God. ***I am not.***

The problem is that we have created a doctrine whereby we can pretty well separate the **persons** of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. We can even pretty well separate their **functions**. But, I'm not sure that the separation that we ascribe between these can be justified. If we take the 3 persons concept to its logical extreme, then while Christ roamed the Holy Lands, 2/3rds of God was in Heaven, and the other 1/3rd was on earth. That is, God in Heaven was incomplete; a piece of Him was in another place. The Bible goes to great length to stress that Yahweh is echad.... He is one. So, unless He is performing self-amputation, our 3 persons model has some serious flaws.

Let me give you an illustration of what I think is a better and more Scriptural view, using my dear wife as the prime character. Using Bible terms in a similar way that God is described according to His attributes, I could refer to Becky in the following manner: Becky, wife of Tom. Becky, mother of children. Becky, grandmother of our grandchildren. Becky who comforts me. Becky who walks beside me. Becky who is in charge of our household. Becky, compassionate and friend to many.....and so on. What I'm doing is basically describing several of the many attributes of Becky. Now, can I take any ONE of these attributes and discuss it, separately from all the rest? Sure I can. But, can I somehow PHYSICALLY identify a certain part of Becky that IS that attribute? Can a surgeon go into her body, find that part of Becky that is the wife of Tom, and examine it? Can we look with an X-ray and take a picture of that part of Becky that is the friend to many? Can I separate from Becky that piece of her that comforts me? Of course not. Yet, all those attributes of Becky exist, they have names, and more, and together they form all of who Becky is. I can **spea**k of each of these attributes separately, yet I cannot separate any one of them from Becky, nor remove any one of those attributes from her and allow the rest to remain. And, most important, I don't have a whole bunch of Becky persons running around, each with a single function.....there is just 1 Becky with many attributes.

How do we apply this to our challenge of envisioning God? Well, we can begin by envisioning Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as **attributes** of Yahweh, rather than as separate PIECES of Yahweh. And, as a way of demonstrating these attributes rather quickly, we can express the function of each attribute in a simplistic fashion. Now, let me say before some of you want to argue with me about this, that I can only offer you a very primitive and incomplete illustration; for Yahweh is spirit, and not a physical being, like you or I or Becky. So, in a nutshell, here is how we can boil-down the basic functions of the Godhead: The Father is the grand author of the divine plan, the Holy Spirit is the container and messenger of the divine plan, and the Son (also called the Word) is the grand Executor of the divine plan. And, yet, just as we can talk about Becky's various attributes and their functions separately, but can't physically identify them or separate them from Becky, so it is with God's attributes and functions.

Let me make a further analogy: Becky has a soul, which is the grand author of her plans. She has mind, an intellect, which is the grand container and messenger of her plans. And, she has a body that executes those plans. Her soul, which, depending on what part of the Bible one reads, is either synonymous with her spirit, or the place where her spirit resides, is fully spiritual in nature. Her soul is the eternal part of Becky, and it has no physical substance to it

whatsoever. Her soul is where the spiritual part of the Universe connects with her, and it is that part of every human being that separates us from all other living creatures.

Becky's body is that attribute of her which can carry out plans. Our bodies are our direct connection with the physical world, just as our souls are our direct connection to the spiritual world. Becky can be full of ideas, but without a mouth to speak the ideas, or a hand to write them, or arms and legs to bring those ideas to fruition, then having an idea is useless if not meaningless....at least it is in our Universe.

Becky's mind connects her soul to her body; it is the messenger and container that bring the ideas from her spiritual soul to her physical body, so that the ideas can be carried out. Our souls do NOT have a direct connection to our bodies; so our minds function to provide a sort of BRIDGE between the spiritual soul and our physical bodies.

I can speak of those 3 functions rather easily; we can all sit around and discuss whether my assessment of their operation and purpose is correct or not: but try as we might, we cannot separate them from Becky.....they are organically connected. I cannot send her mind to Miami, her soul to Orlando, and her body to Jacksonville. Further, if any of these attributes and their functions were to cease to exist, Becky would not be Becky any longer. It is similar with God.

God's attributes are identified to us in Bible speak as His NAMES. Each of God's names represents an attribute of God.....God Almighty, the God who heals, the King of Heavenly Hosts, the God who Protects....and so on. Therefore, when we speak of Yahshua, we need to realize that this is but the name of yet another attribute of God.....and this attribute means "God saves". Yahshua is the saving attribute of God.

Now, as to the conundrum of how to explain Yahshua in relation to Yahweh: first, understand that whatever I can come up with is going to be terribly inadequate. Second, understand that Yahweh is completely unrestrained or limited, and that He operates in a number of dimensions, the existence of which we have only recently been able to establish with certainty.

Yahshua, the Hebrew name of Jesus, means "God saves". While Yahshua is a name and an attribute of God, it is also a function and a purpose of God. Jesus, the man, who was typical of one of God's attributes.....saving, salvation..... played out His saving function and purpose on earth. Jesus carried out PHYSICALLY, on earth, God's plan of salvation. The Son, that **spiritual** attribute of God, who is also called The Word, is the spiritual Executor of all God's plans in Heaven. Yahweh, the Father, came up with the plan of salvation. The function of the Son, which is to execute the Father attribute's plans, executed them on earth by putting that attribute of Himself into a real man: Jesus of Nazareth.

The container and messenger of the plan, that attribute called the Holy Spirit, came into Christ on the day He was baptized by John.....the day His earthly execution of the salvation plan was to begin. We are told consistently that His earthly ministry did NOT begin until the Holy Spirit, the container and messenger of the Father's plan, was put into Him. Without doubt, Jesus the man did not know what was ahead of Him, nor did He know what to do and when to do it, until the Holy Spirit attribute was placed in Him. And, even after the receiving of the Holy Spirit, it is

plain that while He had **some** knowledge of what would happen and what He was to do, it was not immediately complete.

How can Yahshua say that if you've seen Me, you've seen the Father? Because if you've witnessed the execution of the plan in absolute perfection, as established by the planner, you've seen the author of the plan. General George Patton once said that because he was so familiar with that brilliant German General Rommel's tactics and strategies, he knew the man well.

Yahshua, Jesus the Christ, the one born in Beit-lechem, and raised in Nazareth, is the physical earthly side to the Reality of Duality, of the Heavenly Spiritual Son. What we saw when He arose was a similar transformation that we will go through in our resurrection: our bodies will transform from the physical earthly kind, to the spiritual heavenly kind. Just as His spirit, which departed from Him on the Cross, was rejoined to Him upon His resurrection, so it will be with us. Our spirits that have left our bodies and gone on ahead of us will be re-joined to new and incorruptible bodies upon our resurrection. That is, whereas Yahshua was at one-time physical earthly, but with a Holy spiritual nature in Him beyond any normal man, He was transformed into the fully spiritual heavenly upon His resurrection, and now lives in Heaven. So it will be for us after the resurrection. The earthly son, Yahshua, was (after His death) transformed into the spiritual, and brought into a full and new type of unity with the heavenly son attribute of Yahweh. The Reality of Duality.

If all I've done is to convince you that God does not consist of 3 separable pieces, called persons, but that He is as the Torah says, echad, one, then I've done my job for today. What words we can use to describe Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are debatable. I have chosen to use the word "attributes", knowing that it is not fully adequate, either, in hopes of stimulating your own searching of the Scriptures, and your striving with God to know Him and understand Him better.

Let's move on.

In Chapter 19, verse 1, it says Lot fell on his face before these two angels. Does this mean Lot knew they were angels? I don't think so. The Oriental world at that time treated visitors and guests with utmost honor. Bowing low was a customary greeting to a visitor, as was inviting them into your home to stay. The Angels saying "no" to Lot's offer, they'd stay in the square, that is, the area near the front gate, was also a typical Oriental response to the INITIAL offer of hospitality.....its like us saying "oh, no, that's just too much trouble for you". Then, the expected response from the host was an insistence that they stay..... and, of course, the visitors did. This cordial Middle Eastern kabuki dance between host and guest has stayed generally unchanged right up through today.

As we move through Torah, we'll find several mentions of someone "sitting in the gate", which is where we find Lot when the Angels arrive. First, understand that the gate was the way into a walled city. If a city had a wall that meant the city was substantial in size and population. Second, a gate typically had a tower and some guardrooms, and required a person entering to walk through a couple of rooms, making some quick turns, to get from the outside to the inside;

that way, it was harder for group of bandits or an army to suddenly rush through the gateway into the city. Third, the gate area, in that era, doubled as the “town square”. It was a general meeting place, where official business occurred. Trials might even occur there. The idea was that whatever business was occurring was public, and had witnesses.

I'd like you to notice in Verse 3 that Lot prepared his guests a meal with Matzah, which is the Hebrew word for unleavened bread.....a flat bread, make without yeast. This is done when meal preparation has to be hurried.....no time is available for the bread to rise. Why is this pointed out here? Because we soon find out they ARE in a hurried situation, as they are about to flee. We will see similar scenes in a number of places in the OT, but perhaps the most famous is the Exodus from Egypt, where God instructed the Israelites to eat a final meal of unleavened bread so they could get ought'a Dodge FAST! This preparation of unleavened bread is another of the many “patterns” and “types” that we find throughout the Scriptures.

Next we see the event that so many of us first learned of back in children's Sunday School: the men of Sodom wanted to harm Lot's two guests, who were actually Angels, and Lot tried to stop them. What we probably DIDN'T hear in children's' Sunday School was that the incredibly perverted and wicked men of Sodom wanted to commit unspeakable sexual acts on these men, and, that Lot offered these evil men his own daughters if they'd leave the 2 angels alone! If you're anything like me, that is unimaginable that I'd offer my own daughters up for rape, rather than anything happen to these two strangers. Well, once again we run into a completely typical cultural situation for that time. It was considered the duty of a family to care for their guests ABOVE themselves. They were to give up their own lives to protect their guests, if necessary. And, that's what's happening here.

But, we also see something else: we get an example of the horrendous wickedness of Sodom.....sufficient wickedness that Yahweh has determined to eradicate the place and the people. And, it is a sexually immoral wickedness, which as we find in Leviticus, ranks as the worst of the worst human sins before God. And, the exhibited sin here revolves around homosexuality. These men lusted after other men to the point that when Lot offered his virgin daughters, they declined.

I cannot just let this pass without saying that despite most of the world's highest cultures now taking all social stigma out of homosexuality, and, as Canada just did, making the marriage between two people of the same sex legal, and in doing so glorifying sexual perversion, we see Yahweh's opinion of it here in Genesis 19; He destroyed all involved with it. Notice that it doesn't say that the people of Sodom committed idolatry, nor that they cheated one another, nor that they practiced injustice; the ONLY sin mentioned was homosexuality. Now, no doubt, these other things occurred; but that is not what was recorded for us to read almost 4000 years later.

We must fight with every means we have to prevent our nation from going in this direction. That many of us in this room have children or grandchildren who are gay is a certainty. That we still love them is a certainty. That they are committing a sin of the highest order is a certainty. That they are wrong is a certainty. That we have Christian Churches who now ordain homosexuals is perhaps even more disturbing. Will we ever rid our American society of this

immorality? Not likely. But, following Yahweh is not about taking polls, and majority rules, and following the crowd. Standing against such things is our duty, no matter how unpopular it may be.

What happens next is that it turns out these two men (angels), who Lot thinks he is protecting, are actually protecting Lot. And, they do so by first supernaturally blinding the men who are trying to batter down the door to get to them, and then by insisting that Lot and his family leave quickly before the destruction begins.