

Va'yera

Genesis 18:1 - 22:24

This translation was taken from the JPS Tanakh

Chapter 18

¹ The Lord appeared to him by the terebinths of Mamre; he was sitting at the entrance of the tent as the day grew hot. ² Looking up, he saw three men standing near him. As soon as he saw them, he ran from the entrance of the tent to greet them and, bowing to the ground, ³ he said, "My lords, if it please you, do not go on past your servant. ⁴ Let a little water be brought; bathe your feet and recline under the tree. ⁵ And let me fetch a morsel of bread that you may refresh yourselves; then go on—seeing that you have come your servant's way." They replied, "Do as you have said."

Abraham hastened into the tent to Sarah, and said, "Quick, three seahs of choice flour! Knead and make cakes!" ⁷ Then Abraham ran to the herd, took a calf, tender and choice, and gave it to a servant-boy, who hastened to prepare it. ⁸ He took curds and milk and the calf that had been prepared and set these before them; and he waited on them under the tree as they ate.

⁹ They said to him, "Where is your wife Sarah?" And he replied, "There, in the tent." ¹⁰ Then one said, "I will return to you next year, and your wife Sarah shall have a son!" Sarah was listening at the entrance of the tent, which was behind him. ¹¹ Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in years; Sarah had stopped having the periods of women. ¹² And Sarah laughed to herself, saying, "Now that I am withered, am I to have enjoyment—with my husband so old?" ¹³ Then the Lord said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh, saying, 'Shall I in truth bear a child, old as I am?' ¹⁴ Is anything too wondrous for the Lord? I will return to you at the time next year, and Sarah shall have a son." ¹⁵ Sarah lied, saying, "I did not laugh," for she was frightened. But He replied, "You did laugh."

¹⁶ The men set out from there and looked down toward Sodom, Abraham walking with them to see them off. ¹⁷ Now the Lord had said, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do, ¹⁸ since Abraham is to become a great and populous nation and all the nations of the earth are to bless themselves by him? ¹⁹ For I have singled him out, that he may instruct his children and his posterity to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is just and right, in order that the Lord may bring about for Abraham what He has promised him." ²⁰ Then the Lord said, "The outrage of Sodom and Gomorrah is so great, and their sin so grave! ²¹ I will go down to see whether they have acted altogether according to the outcry that has reached Me; if not, I will take note."

²² The men went on from there to Sodom, while Abraham remained standing before the Lord. ²³ Abraham came forward and said, "Will You sweep away the innocent along with the guilty? ²⁴ What if there should be fifty innocent within the city; will You then wipe out the place and not forgive it for the sake of the innocent fifty who are in it? ²⁵ Far be it from You to do such a thing, to bring death upon the innocent as well as the guilty, so that innocent and guilty fare alike. Far be it from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly?" ²⁶ And the Lord answered, "If I find within the city of Sodom fifty innocent ones, I will forgive the whole place for their sake." ²⁷ Abraham spoke up, saying, "Here I venture to speak to my Lord, I who am but dust and ashes: ²⁸ What if the fifty

innocent should lack five? Will You destroy the whole city for want of the five?" And He answered, "I will not destroy if I find forty-five there." 29 But he spoke to Him again, and said, "What if forty should be found there?" And He answered, "I will not do it, for the sake of the forty." 30 And he said, "Let not my Lord be angry if I go on: What if thirty should be found there?" And He answered, "I will not do it if I find thirty there." 31 And he said, "I venture again to speak to my Lord: What if twenty should be found there?" And He answered, "I will not destroy, for the sake of the twenty." 32 And he said, "Let not my Lord be angry if I speak but this last time: What if ten should be found there?" And He answered, "I will not destroy, for the sake of the ten."

³³ When the Lord had finished speaking to Abraham, He departed; and Abraham returned to his place.

Chapter 19

¹ The two angels arrived in Sodom in the evening, as Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom. When Lot saw them, he rose to greet them and, bowing low with his face to the ground, ² he said, "Please, my lords, turn aside to your servant's house to spend the night, and bathe your feet; then you may be on your way early." But they said, "No, we will spend the night in the square." ³ But he urged them strongly, so they turned his way and entered his house. He prepared a feast for them and baked unleavened bread, and they ate.

⁴ They had not yet lain down, when the townspeople, the men of Sodom, young and old—all the people to the last man—gathered about the house. ⁵ And they shouted to Lot and said to him, "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us, that we may be intimate with them." ⁶ So Lot went out to them to the entrance, shut the door behind him, ⁷ and said, "I beg you, my friends, do not commit such a wrong. ⁸ Look, I have two daughters who have not known a man. Let me bring them out to you, and you may do to them as you please; but do not do anything to these men, since they have come under the shelter of my roof." ⁹ But they said, "Stand back! The fellow," they said, "came here as an alien, and already he acts the ruler! Now we will deal worse with you than with them." And they pressed hard against the person of Lot, and moved forward to break the door. ¹⁰ But the men stretched out their hands and pulled Lot into the house with them, and shut the door. ¹¹ And the people who were at the entrance of the house, young and old, they struck with blinding light, so that they were helpless to find the entrance.

¹² Then the men said to Lot, "Whom else have you here? Sons-in-law, your sons and daughters, or anyone else that you have in the city—bring them out of the place. ¹³ For we are about to destroy this place; because the outcry against them before the Lord has become so great that the Lord has sent us to destroy it." ¹⁴ So Lot went out and spoke to his sons-in-law, who had married his daughters, and said, "Up, get out of this place, for the Lord is about to destroy the city." But he seemed to his sons-in-law as one who jests.

¹⁵ As dawn broke, the angels urged Lot on, saying, "Up, take your wife and your two remaining daughters, lest you be swept away because of the iniquity of the city." ¹⁶ Still he delayed. So the men seized his hand, and the hands of his wife and his two daughters—in the Lord's mercy on him—and brought him out and left him outside the city. ¹⁷ When they had brought them outside, one said, "Flee for your life! Do not look behind you, nor stop anywhere in the Plain; flee to the hills, lest

you be swept away." ¹⁸ But Lot said to them, "Oh no, my lord! ¹⁹ You have been so gracious to your servant, and have already shown me so much kindness in order to save my life; but I cannot flee to the hills, lest the disaster overtake me and I die. ²⁰ Look, that town there is near enough to flee to; it is such a little place! Let me flee there—it is such a little place—and let my life be saved." ²¹ He replied, "Very well, I will grant you this favor too, and I will not annihilate the town of which you have spoken. ²² Hurry, flee there, for I cannot do anything until you arrive there." Hence the town came to be called Zoar.

²³ As the sun rose upon the earth and Lot entered Zoar, ²⁴ the Lord rained upon Sodom and Gomorrah sulfurous fire from the Lord out of heaven. ²⁵ He annihilated those cities and the entire Plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities and the vegetation of the ground. ²⁶ Lot's wife looked back, and she thereupon turned into a pillar of salt.

²⁷ Next morning, Abraham hurried to the place where he had stood before the Lord, ²⁸ and, looking down toward Sodom and Gomorrah and all the land of the Plain, he saw the smoke of the land rising like the smoke of a kiln.

²⁹ Thus it was that, when God destroyed the cities of the Plain and annihilated the cities where Lot dwelt, God was mindful of Abraham and removed Lot from the midst of the upheaval.

³⁰ Lot went up from Zoar and settled in the hill country with his two daughters, for he was afraid to dwell in Zoar; and he and his two daughters lived in a cave. ³¹ And the older one said to the younger, "Our father is old, and there is not a man on earth to consort with us in the way of all the world. ³² Come, let us make our father drink wine, and let us lie with him, that we may maintain life through our father." ³³ That night they made their father drink wine, and the older one went in and lay with her father; he did not know when she lay down or when she rose. ³⁴ The next day the older one said to the younger, "See, I lay with Father last night; let us make him drink wine tonight also, and you go and lie with him, that we may maintain life through our father." ³⁵ That night also they made their father drink wine, and the younger one went and lay with him; he did not know when she lay down or when she rose.

³⁶ Thus the two daughters of Lot came to be with child by their father. ³⁷ The older one bore a son and named him Moab; he is the father of the Moabites of today. ³⁸ And the younger also bore a son, and she called him Ben-ammi; he is the father of the Ammonites of today.

Chapter 20

¹ Abraham journeyed from there to the region of the Negeb and settled between Kadesh and Shur. While he was sojourning in Gerar, ² Abraham said of Sarah his wife, "She is my sister." So King Abimelech of Gerar had Sarah brought to him. ³ But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night and said to him, "You are to die because of the woman that you have taken, for she is a married woman." ⁴ Now Abimelech had not approached her. He said, "O Lord, will You slay people even though innocent?" ⁵ He himself said to me, 'She is my sister!' And she also said, 'He is my brother.' When I did this, my heart was blameless and my hands were clean." ⁶ And God said to him in the dream, "I knew that you did this with a blameless heart, and so I kept you from sinning against Me. That was why I did not let you touch her. ⁷ Therefore, restore the man's wife—since he is a prophet,

he will intercede for you—to save your life. If you fail to restore her, know that you shall die, you and all that are yours."

⁸ Early next morning, Abimelech called his servants and told them all that had happened; and the men were greatly frightened. ⁹ Then Abimelech summoned Abraham and said to him, "What have you done to us? What wrong have I done that you should bring so great a guilt upon me and my kingdom? You have done to me things that ought not to be done. ¹⁰ What, then," Abimelech demanded of Abraham, "was your purpose in doing this thing?" ¹¹ "I thought," said Abraham, "surely there is no fear of God in this place, and they will kill me because of my wife. ¹² And besides, she is in truth my sister, my father's daughter though not my mother's; and she became my wife. ¹³ So when God made me wander from my father's house, I said to her, 'Let this be the kindness that you shall do me: whatever place we come to, say there of me: He is my brother.'"

¹⁴ Abimelech took sheep and oxen, and male and female slaves, and gave them to Abraham; and he restored his wife Sarah to him. ¹⁵ And Abimelech said, "Here, my land is before you; settle wherever you please." ¹⁶ And to Sarah he said, "I herewith give your brother a thousand pieces of silver; this will serve you as vindication before all who are with you, and you are cleared before everyone." ¹⁷ Abraham then prayed to God, and God healed Abimelech and his wife and his slave girls, so that they bore children; ¹⁸ for the Lord had closed fast every womb of the household of Abimelech because of Sarah, the wife of Abraham.

Chapter 21

¹ The Lord took note of Sarah as He had promised, and the Lord did for Sarah as He had spoken. ² Sarah conceived and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken. ³ Abraham gave his newborn son, whom Sarah had borne him, the name of Isaac. ⁴ And when his son Isaac was eight days old, Abraham circumcised him, as God had commanded him. ⁵ Now Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him. ⁶ Sarah said, "God has brought me laughter; everyone who hears will laugh with me." ⁷ And she added,

Who would have said to Abraham That Sarah would suckle children! Yet I have borne a son in his old age."

⁸ The child grew up and was weaned, and Abraham held a great feast on the day that Isaac was weaned.

⁹ Sarah saw the son whom Hagar the Egyptian had borne to Abraham playing. ¹⁰ She said to Abraham, "Cast out that slave-woman and her son, for the son of that slave shall not share in the inheritance with my son Isaac." ¹¹ The matter distressed Abraham greatly, for it concerned a son of his. ¹² But God said to Abraham, "Do not be distressed over the boy or your slave; whatever Sarah tells you, do as she says, for it is through Isaac that offspring shall be continued for you. ¹³ As for the son of the slave-woman, I will make a nation of him, too, for he is your seed."

¹⁴ Early next morning Abraham took some bread and a skin of water, and gave them to Hagar. He placed them over her shoulder, together with the child, and sent her away. And she wandered about in the wilderness of Beer-sheba. ¹⁵ When the water was gone from the skin, she left the child under

one of the bushes, ¹⁶ and went and sat down at a distance, a bowshot away; for she thought, "Let me not look on as the child dies." And sitting thus afar, she burst into tears.

¹⁷ God heard the cry of the boy, and an angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, "What troubles you, Hagar? Fear not, for God has heeded the cry of the boy where he is. ¹⁸ Come, lift up the boy and hold him by the hand, for I will make a great nation of him." ¹⁹ Then God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water. She went and filled the skin with water, and let the boy drink. ²⁰ God was with the boy and he grew up; he dwelt in the wilderness and became a bowman. ²¹ He lived in the wilderness of Paran; and his mother got a wife for him from the land of Egypt.

²² At that time Abimelech and Phicol, chief of his troops, said to Abraham, "God is with you in everything that you do. ²³ Therefore swear to me here by God that you will not deal falsely with me or with my kith and kin, but will deal with me and with the land in which you have sojourned as loyally as I have dealt with you." ²⁴ And Abraham said, "I swear it."

²⁵ Then Abraham reproached Abimelech for the well of water which the servants of Abimelech had seized. ²⁶ But Abimelech said, "I do not know who did this; you did not tell me, nor have I heard of it until today." ²⁷ Abraham took sheep and oxen and gave them to Abimelech, and the two of them made a pact. ²⁸ Abraham then set seven ewes of the flock by themselves, ²⁹ and Abimelech said to Abraham, "What mean these seven ewes which you have set apart?" ³⁰ He replied, "You are to accept these seven ewes from me as proof that I dug this well." ³¹ Hence that place was called Beer-sheba, for there the two of them swore an oath. ³² When they had concluded the pact at Beer-sheba, Abimelech and Phicol, chief of his troops, departed and returned to the land of the Philistines. ³³ [Abraham] planted a tamarisk at Beer-sheba, and invoked there the name of the Lord, the Everlasting God. ³⁴ And Abraham resided in the land of the Philistines a long time.

Chapter 22

¹ Some time afterward, God put Abraham to the test. He said to him, "Abraham," and he answered, "Here I am." ² And He said, "Take your son, your favored one, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the heights that I will point out to you." ³ So early next morning, Abraham saddled his ass and took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac. He split the wood for the burnt offering, and he set out for the place of which God had told him. ⁴ On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place from afar. ⁵ Then Abraham said to his servants, "You stay here with the ass. The boy and I will go up there; we will worship and we will return to you."

⁶ Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and put it on his son Isaac. He himself took the firestone and the knife; and the two walked off together. ⁷ Then Isaac said to his father Abraham, "Father!" And he answered, "Yes, my son." And he said, "Here are the firestone and the wood; but where is the sheep for the burnt offering?" ⁸ And Abraham said, "God will see to the sheep for His burnt offering, my son." And the two of them walked on together.

⁹ They arrived at the place of which God had told him. Abraham built an altar there; he laid out the wood; he bound his son Isaac; he laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. ¹⁰ And Abraham picked up the knife to slay his son. ¹¹ Then an angel of the Lord called to him from heaven: "Abraham!

Abraham!" And he answered, "Here I am." ¹² And he said, "Do not raise your hand against the boy, or do anything to him. For now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your favored one, from Me." ¹³ When Abraham looked up, his eye fell upon a ram, caught in the thicket by its horns. So Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering in place of his son. ¹⁴ And Abraham named that site Adonai-yireh, whence the present saying, "On the mount of the Lord there is vision."

¹⁵ The angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time from heaven, ¹⁶ and said, "By Myself I swear, the Lord declares: Because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your favored one, ¹⁷ I will bestow My blessing upon you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars of heaven and the sands on the seashore; and your descendants shall seize the gates of their foes. ¹⁸ All the nations of the earth shall bless themselves by your descendants, because you have obeyed My command." ¹⁹ Abraham then returned to his servants, and they departed together for Beer-sheba; and Abraham stayed in Beer-sheba.

²⁰ Some time later, Abraham was told, "Milcah too has borne children to your brother Nahor: ²¹ Uz the first-born, and Buz his brother, and Kemuel the father of Aram; ²² and Chesed, Hazo, Pildash, Jidlaph, and Bethuel"— ²³ Bethuel being the father of Rebekah. These eight Milcah bore to Nahor, Abraham's brother. ²⁴ And his concubine, whose name was Reumah, also bore children: Tebah, Gaham, Tahash, and Maacah.