



Vayera

Beresheet (Genesis) 18:1 - 22:247

At the beginning of the *Parshah*, G-d appears – *vayera* – to Abraham. The Midrash explains that G-d observed the Mitzvah of *Bikur Cholim* (visiting the sick) as Abraham recuperated from his *Brit Milah*, the circumcision that was observed at the end of last week's *Parshah*. Three strangers appear to Abraham and he welcomes them with a great show of hospitality. In the midst of their stay, one of the visitors predicts the birth of a son to Abraham and Sarah.

G-d appears to Abraham and foretells the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. A discussion ensues in which Abraham bargains for the citizens of these cities. Later, two of the strangers arrive in Sodom and accept Lot's hospitality. The townspeople clamor at Lot's door demanding that the "strangers" be turned over to them. Lot offers the townspeople his two virgin daughters instead. The offer is refused. As the people press forward to break down the door, they are struck blind by a bright light. Lot is warned by angels to flee with his family before the destruction, but his married daughters and sons-in-law refuse to heed the warning. Lot and his family are told not to look upon the annihilation of the city as they escape but Lot's wife looks back and immediately turns into a pillar of salt.

Sarah finally bears Abraham a son whom they name Isaac. In time, Sarah becomes displeased when she sees Ishmael at play. She asks Abraham to cast out Hagar and Ishmael so that Ishmael will not share in the inheritance with Isaac. Although it grieves Abraham, he followed the advice of G-d and listens to Sarah. G-d promises that Ishmael will found a nation.

G-d tests Abraham and commands him to sacrifice his son Isaac. Abraham obeys but as he is about to lower the knife to slay his son, an Angel of the Lord calls out to him to stop. Because of Abraham's obedience G-d repeats the promise to make of him a great nation. The last two chapters of this *Parshah* constitute the Torah readings for Rosh Hashanah.



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