

Parashah Vayera

The one that tells a complicated series of stories that revolve around Abraham and Sarah; the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah; Abraham's nephew, Lot; and Lot's wife being turned into a pillar of salt. Also, the birth of Isaac and Abraham's test at the altar.

Parashah Vayera begins with Abraham sitting at the entrance of his tent in Mamre. Three mysterious visitors appear, and Abraham and Sarah extend their hospitality to them. They show their kindness and generosity and provide them with food and shelter. These visitors are later revealed to be angels with a message for Abraham and Sarah.

Sarah overhears one of the visitors predicting that she will bear a child in her old age, which leads to her laughter (Isaac, whose name means "laughter," is later born to them).

Abraham learns from the divine visitors that they are on a mission to investigate the wickedness of Sodom and Gomorrah. Abraham pleads on behalf of the cities, seeking to spare them if even a small number of righteous individuals can be found. Lot, Abraham's nephew, is living in the city of Sodom. Two of the messengers arrive in Sodom, and Lot invites them to his home, offering them shelter. As night falls, the men of Sodom surround the house, demanding to confront and harm the visitors. Lot offers his two daughters in their place, but the messengers intervene, striking the crowd with blindness.

The divine messengers warn Lot about the imminent destruction of the cities and urge him to flee with his family. Lot hesitates, so the messengers physically guide him and his wife and two daughters away, warning them not to look back. As fiery destruction rains down on Sodom and Gomorrah, Lot's wife looks back and is turned into a pillar of salt.

Abraham and Sarah journey to Gerar, where he presents Sarah as his sister out of fear for his safety. King Abimelech takes Sarah into his household, unaware of her true marital status. Through Divine intervention, Abimelech is prevented from touching her, and Sarah returns to Abraham. As promised by the visitors in Mamre, Sarah gives birth to a son named Isaac. This event brings great joy to Abraham and Sarah, marking the fulfillment of a Divine promise to them.

Tensions arise between Sarah and Hagar, Sarah's maidservant, once Isaac is born. Sarah insists that Abraham send Hagar and her son Ishmael away, leading to their expulsion into the wilderness. Through Divine intervention, their survival is ensured, promising to make Ishmael into a great nation.

Abraham and Abimelech enter into a treaty after a dispute over a well that Abraham dug. The place is named Beersheba (meaning well of the oath), and Abraham plants a tamarisk tree, calling upon the Divine name.

In a profound test of faith, Abraham is commanded to offer Isaac as a burnt sacrifice. After a three-day journey, they arrive at Mount Moriah. Isaac, bound by his father, is placed on the altar. As Abraham raises his knife, an angel intervenes, commending his unwavering faith. A ram caught in a nearby thicket is offered in Isaac's stead. This event becomes a testament to Abraham's unwavering commitment and faith.

Parashah Vayera is a rich narrative that explores themes of hospitality, faith, divine intervention, and the fulfillment of promises. The stories within this portion illustrate the complexities of human relationships and the profound impact of faith and obedience.

Teen Takeaways from Parashah Vayera

- 1. Hospitality and kindness:** The story of Abraham welcoming strangers into his tent teaches us the importance of being kind and hospitable to others, even to those we don't know. A simple act of kindness can make a big difference in someone's day.
- 2. Faith and obedience:** Abraham's trust in God, even when faced with difficult situations, shows us the power of faith and obedience. It's a reminder that believing in something greater can give us strength in tough times.
- 3. Miracles can happen:** The birth of Isaac to elderly parents like Sarah and Abraham reminds us that miracles can happen when we least expect them. It's a message of hope that things can turn around, even when they seem impossible.
- 4. Justice and compassion:** When Abraham stood up for justice and showed compassion for the people of Sodom and Gomorrah, it teaches us that it's important to do what's right and show kindness, even in challenging situations. Yet why does Abraham put up a fight for these strangers and apparently not object in the case of God's demand to kill his son? Do we sometimes do more for strangers than our own closest friends and family?
- 5. Parental responsibility:** The story of Hagar and Ishmael illustrates the responsibilities parents have toward their children. It's a reminder that parents must care for and protect their kids, no matter the circumstances.
- 6. Facing challenges:** Abraham being tested by God with the command to sacrifice Isaac prompts us to think about how we handle difficult situations and ethical dilemmas. It's a reminder that life can throw tough challenges our way and we must face them with courage and integrity.
- 7. The power of prayer:** Abraham's prayers for the people of Sodom and Gomorrah show us that prayer can have a powerful impact. It's a reminder that we can turn to prayer when we seek positive outcomes in challenging situations.
- 8. Family dynamics:** The parashah shows that family relationships can be complicated. It encourages us to try to understand and empathize with our family members, even when things get tough.
- 9. Compassion for others:** The story of Hagar and Ishmael reminds us to have compassion for those who may be vulnerable or in need. It's a call to help and support those who are less fortunate.

Summary

These lessons from **Parashah Vayera** can guide you in **being kind, having faith, making ethical choices, standing up for what's right, and understanding the complexities of family and relationships** as you navigate your teenage years.