

In memory of all those brutally murdered in the war on Israel,
including the fallen soldiers of the IDF

בס"ד

8 NOVEMBER 2025 | 17 CHESHVAN 5786

VOLUME 39 | #9

DAF HASHAVUA

וִיָּרָא | VAYERA
ד"ר

SHABBAT ENDS:

London: 5.11pm
Birmingham: 5.16pm
Bournemouth: 5.24pm
Cardiff: 5.26pm
Dublin: 5.32pm
Edinburgh: 5.14pm
Glasgow: 5.19pm
Hull: 5.11pm
Leeds: 5.12pm
Liverpool: 5.21pm
Manchester: 5.16pm
Nottingham: 5.15pm
Sheffield: 5.16pm
Southend: 5.08pm
Southport: 5.22pm
Jerusalem: 5.22pm



*"Then God opened her eyes and
she saw a well of water..."
(Bereishit 21:19)*

וַיָּרָא
VAYERA

4th Sidra in:
בְּרֵאשִׁית
BEREISHIT

By Numbers:
147 VERSES
2,085 WORDS
7,862 LETTERS

Headlines:
**AVRAHAM'S
DILEMMAS**

VAYERA:
Artscroll p.78
Hertz p.63
Koren Sacks p.107
Soncino p.86

HAFTARAH:
Artscroll p.1134
Hertz p.76
Koren Sacks p.1419
Soncino p.113

Sidra Summary

1ST ALIYA (KOHEN) – BEREISHIT 18:1-14

Shortly after Abraham's *brit milah* (circumcision), God appears to him in Elonei Mamre. Abraham greets three 'men' (in fact, angels – see Rashi) and serves them a fine meal. One of them tells Abraham that Sarah will have a baby boy in a year's time. Sarah overhears and laughs in disbelief.

2ND ALIYA (LEVI) –18:15-33

God reveals to Abraham His plan to destroy the wicked city of Sedom. Abraham pleads with God to spare the city, in the merit of any righteous people who might live there. However, there are not even ten righteous people living there.

3RD ALIYA (SHLISHI) – 19:1-20

Two of the men (angels) arrive in Sedom to rescue Lot, Abraham's nephew. Lot welcomes them into his house. The locals protest against Lot's hospitality and try to break down the door. Lot offers his daughters in return for the guests' safety. God strikes the townsfolk with blindness. The 'men' tell Lot to flee with his family.

4TH ALIYA (REVI'I) – 19:21-21:4

God rains down sulphur and fire from the heavens, overturning Sedom and its neighbouring cities. Lot's wife turns to look back and becomes a pillar of salt. Lot hides in a cave with his two daughters. On consecutive nights, fearing that they are the last humans left, Lot's daughters get him drunk and each conceives a child from him.

Abraham moves to Gerar in the Negev. The local ruler Avimelech takes away Sarah, whom Abraham claims is his sister. God appears to Avimelech, warning him not to touch Sarah. Avimelech confronts Abraham, who defends his

non-disclosure. Sarah gives birth to Yitzchak (Isaac), who has a *brit milah* on his eighth day.
Point to Consider: Which of Lot's two daughters is considered in a more negative light? (see Rashi to 19:37)

5TH ALIYA (CHAMISHI) – 21:5-21

Sarah sees the negative effect that Abraham's wayward first son, Yishmael, could have on Yitzchak (Isaac). She tells Abraham to send away Yishmael and his mother Hagar. They travel in the desert and Yishmael nearly dies of thirst. An angel appears, telling Hagar that a great nation will come from Yishmael. God opens Hagar's eyes and she sees a well of water.

6TH ALIYA (SHISHI) – 21:22-33

Abraham makes a peace pact with Avimelech, establishing Abraham's rights to the wells he had already dug.

7TH ALIYA (SHEVI'I) – 22:1-24

God tells Abraham to bring Yitzchak as an offering. Having previously been told by God that Yitzchak would be his heir, and having always encouraged Abraham's acts of compassion and kindness, this Divine instruction defies logic. Nevertheless, Abraham obeys, showing his unconditional devotion to God, regardless of his logical understanding. As Abraham raises the knife, an angel appears, telling him not to touch Yitzchak, presenting instead a ram to sacrifice. Abraham is praised for his faith. Abraham is told about the birth of Rivkah (Rebecca), Yitzchak's future wife.

HAFTARAH

The haftarah includes the moving story of the prophet Elisha's miraculous resuscitation of a young boy who had been born to the Shunamite lady who used to host Elisha in her house. Elisha had originally prophesied the birth of the boy.



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COVENANT AND CONVERSATION

FAITH: THE COURAGE TO LIVE WITH UNCERTAINTY

To mark the upcoming 5th yahrzeit of Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks zt"l and The Rabbi Sacks Global Day of Learning 2025 on 20 Cheshvan (11.11.2025), we will feature over several weeks a potpourri of parasha articles taken from the archives of the Covenant & Conversation Family Edition. Learn more from Rabbi Sacks at www.rabbisacks.org

One of the most perplexing features of the Avraham story is the disconnect between God's promises and the reality. Seven times, God promised Avraham the land. Yet when Sarah died, he owned not even a burial plot and had to buy one at an exorbitant price.

At the very opening of the story, God promised him, "I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you." Without protest or hesitation, Avraham left his home as instructed, and began the journey to the land of Canaan. He came to Shechem and built an altar there. He moved on to Bet-El and built an altar there as well. Then almost immediately we read that "There was a famine in the land."

Avraham and his household were forced to go to Egypt. There, he found that his life was at risk. He asked Sarah to pretend to be his sister rather than his wife, thus putting her in a false position - conduct which Ramban (Nachmanides, 1194-1270) intensely criticised. Where, at that moment, was the Divine blessing? How was it that, leaving his land and following God's call, Avraham found himself in a morally dangerous situation where he was

forced to choose between asking his wife to live a lie, and exposing himself to the probability, perhaps certainty, of his own death?

A pattern is beginning to emerge. *Avraham was learning that there is a long and winding road between promise and fulfilment.* Not because God does not keep His word, but because Avraham and his descendants were charged with bringing something new into the world. A sacred society. A nation formed by covenant. An abandonment of idolatry. A significant code of conduct. A more intimate relationship with

God than any people has ever known. It would become a nation of pioneers. And God was teaching Avraham from the very beginning that this demands extraordinary strength of character, because nothing great and transformative happens overnight in the human world. You have to keep going, even if you are tired and lost, exhausted and despondent.

God will bring about everything He promised. But not immediately. And not directly. God seeks change in the real world of everyday lives. And He seeks those who have the tenacity of faith to keep going



despite all the setbacks. That is what the life of Avraham was about.

Nowhere was this clearer than in relation to God's promise of children. Four times, God spoke about this to Avraham:

[1] "I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you." (Bereishit 12:2)

[2] "I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth, so that if anyone could count the dust, then your offspring could be counted." (Bereishit 13:16)

[3] "Look up at the sky and count the stars — if indeed you can count them." Then He said to him, "So shall your offspring be." (Bereishit 15:5)

[4] "No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Avraham, for I have made you a father of many nations. I will make you very fruitful; I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you." (Bereishit 17:5-6)

Four ascending promises: a great nation, as many as the dust of the earth, as the stars of the sky; not one nation but many nations. Avraham heard these promises and had faith in them: "Abram believed the Lord, and He reckoned it to him as righteousness" (Bereishit 15:6).

Then God gave Avraham some painful news. Avraham and Hagar's son, Yishmael, would not be Avraham's spiritual heir. God would bless him and make him a great nation, "But my covenant I will establish with Yitzchak (Isaac), whom Sarah will bear to you by this time next year." (Bereishit 17:21).

It is against this background of four promises of countless children, and a further promise that Avraham's covenant would

be continued by Yitzchak, that we must set the chilling words that open the trial: "Take your son, your only son, the son that you love — Yitzchak — and offer him up."

The trial was *not* to see whether Avraham had the courage to sacrifice his son. This was completely abhorrent to Judaism.

The trial was *not* to see whether Avraham had the strength to give up something he loved. He had shown this time and time again. At the very beginning of his story he gave up his land, his birthplace and his father's house, everything that was familiar to him, everything that spoke of home. In the previous chapter, he gave up his firstborn son Yishmael whom, it is clear, he also loved. Was there even the slightest doubt that he would give up Yitzchak, who was so clearly God's miraculous gift, arriving when Sarah was already postmenopausal?

The trial was to see whether Avraham could live with what seemed to be a clear contradiction between God's word now, and God's word on five previous occasions, promising him children and a covenant that would be continued by Yitzchak.

He did just that. He prepared himself for the sacrifice. But he told no one else. When he and Yitzchak set off on the third day on their own, he told the two servants who had accompanied them, "Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you." When Yitzchak asked, "Where is the lamb for the burnt offering?" Avraham replied, "God Himself will provide the lamb."

These statements are usually taken as diplomatic evasions. I believe, however, that Avraham meant exactly what he said. He was living the contradiction. He knew God had told him to sacrifice his son, but he also knew that God had told him that He would establish an everlasting covenant with his son.

The trial of the binding of Yitzchak was not about sacrifice but about uncertainty. Until it was over, Avraham did not know what to believe, or how it would end. He believed that the God who promised him a son would not allow him to sacrifice that son. But he did not know how the contradiction between God's promise and His command would resolve itself.

The poet John Keats once wrote in a letter that Shakespeare's greatness lay in his "Negative Capability" — that he was a person capable of sitting in uncertainties, mysteries, and doubts, without irritably reaching after fact and reason. Shakespeare, in other words, was open to life in all its multiplicity and complexity, its conflicts and contradictions, while other, lesser writers sought to reduce life to a single philosophical frame. Perhaps what Shakespeare was to literature, Avraham was to faith.

I believe Avraham taught us that faith is not certainty; it is the courage to live with uncertainty. He had negative capability. Avraham knew that God's promises would come true, so he could live with the uncertainty of not knowing how or when.

Jewish artists you want to (re)discover

BY: **TATIANA VON BEELEN**

Senior Graphic Designer and Brand Lead
at the United Synagogue



SOLOMON GERSHOV

(1906 – 1989)
Dvinsk, Russian Empire –Leningrad, USSR

As someone born in the Soviet Union in Leningrad, I want to share this world with British Jewry. If you have read my earlier articles, you may already have noticed this. One of the most dramatic chapters for Jews in the USSR, and for my own family, was Stalin's anti-cosmopolitan campaign. This mass political campaign, carried out between 1948 and 1953, is viewed by many researchers as antisemitic. It led to dismissals from work and numerous arrests. It is estimated that roughly 200,000 to 400,000 Jews may have ended up in Soviet labour camps over the entire Stalin period. What survives are testimonies, documents, and works of art that show how Jews lived and endured in the camps.

The story of the Latvian-born

Jewish artist Solomon Gershov seems typical of these times yet symbolic. Born in Dvinsk (now Daugavpils, Latvia) in 1906 to a religious Jewish family, he trained in Vitebsk under Marc Chagall. In 1922, at the age of sixteen, Gershov moved to Petrograd (later Leningrad), where he continued his artistic training under Kazimir Malevich. His early years reflected the optimism of the avant-garde, blending expressive, dramatic, and sometimes ironic styles. In 1948 his fate changed when he was arrested and sent to Vorkuta, one of the harshest Gulag labour camps.

Life in Vorkuta was marked by hunger, back-breaking labour, and bitter cold. Temperatures often fell to minus 50 degrees Celsius, and the polar night left prisoners in darkness for months at a time. Yet in these brutal conditions Gershov's art became a lifeline. Using scraps of paper, cheap paints, and even packaging materials, he sketched portraits of fellow prisoners, including doctors, cooks, engineers and students. In a system designed to erase individuality, his drawings preserved faces, stories and dignity.



Solomon Gershov, From "Memories of the Gulag" series, 1970-80s. Courtesy of Novayagazeta.ee

Art literally saved him. His skills as a draughtsman and decorator sometimes shielded him from the hardest physical work. More importantly, creating gave him the strength to resist despair. For Gershov, drawing was survival, a refusal to let the Gulag strip him of his humanity.

Freed in 1956 after Stalin's death, Gershov returned to Leningrad scarred but unbroken. Though excluded from official recognition, he painted works such as *Memories of the Gulag*, where allegory and memory fused into powerful testimony.

Gershov's story is not only that of an artist but also of a survivor. His paintings, born in exile and captivity, remind us that creativity can endure even where almost everything else is destroyed.



Solomon Gershov, Jew from Gornel. Worker at a sawmill, 1970-80s. Courtesy of Novayagazeta.ee



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THE TRIBE WEEKLY

PARASHAT VAYERA

7-8 NOVEMBER | 17 CHESHVAN

VAYERA AND THE AKEIDAH: LEARNING TO SEE DIFFERENTLY



BY: **RABBI MATT MARKS**

Executive Director,
Tribe

One of the things I love about former Chief Rabbi Sacks' teachings is how they often challenged – not just confirmed – what I thought I knew. Take the *Akeidah* (the Binding of Isaac) when Abraham was commanded to give up his son Isaac - one of the most difficult stories in the Torah. I always assumed the test was simple: Would Abraham give up his son? The Torah even seems to stress this: "Take your son, your only one, the one you love..." It sounds like

the ultimate test of loyalty.

But Rabbi Sacks offered a different lens. In Abraham's time, giving up a child wasn't shocking. The real revolution was not Abraham's willingness to act, but his willingness to change direction. Abraham's greatness wasn't blind obedience; it was the courage to correctly understand God's commands and see a broader picture of life when doing so.

And that's the hard part for us too. We live inside our own assumptions, our own opinions. It's easy to think our lens is the only one. When we can't imagine another perspective, difference feels like a threat. And when difference feels like a threat, bad things happen. We've seen this in

recent events where people tried to create spaces where contrasting opinions could meet – and were met with hostility, and even tragedy.

Sometimes we even tell ourselves we are the ones being silenced. But in a world of social media, where our feeds often echo our own views, we can become so firm in our stance that we mentally silence other lenses without realising it.

Abraham's example calls on us to pause. To hear the voice that says: stop. Look again. See differently. Faith isn't just trusting God – it's also about making space for perspectives beyond our own, and remembering that what we see is never the whole picture.

Parasha Wordsearch

Find these words in the grid. The words can go in any direction and can share letters as they cross over each other.

F	G	S	S	A	C	R	I	F	I	C	E
E	V	I	T	C	E	P	S	R	E	P	V
T	G	G	E	M	P	Y	Z	B	X	D	A
S	S	O	E	K	A	H	C	Z	T	I	Y
K	L	E	G	N	A	H	P	A	I	Z	E
P	Y	H	T	Q	X	K	A	K	Y	R	R
T	N	T	A	N	V	M	E	R	V	Q	A
C	G	D	L	S	O	U	A	I	V	D	M
E	M	U	N	A	H	S	W	R	D	A	B
R	T	Q	I	A	Y	E	I	U	M	A	F
I	Z	U	I	Q	I	O	M	E	S	M	H
L	I	G	N	C	C	D	L	K	Z	X	O

LOYALTY
RAM
SON
TEST
AVRAHAM
HASHEM
EMUNAH
AKEIDAH
ANGEL
SACRIFICE
YITZCHAK
VAYERA
PERSPECTIVE





THE TRIBE SCRIBE

VAYERA: REEL PRIORITIES!



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