

**PARSHAT VAYEIRA**

11 - 17 Cheshvan 5786  
2 - 8 November 2025

Torah: Genesis 18:1-22:24  
Haftorah: Kings II 4:1-37

PSALMS DAILY

**Psalms for our brethren in the Holy Land**

*Psalms 117*

1. Praise the Lord, all nations, laud Him, all peoples.

2. For His kindness has overwhelmed us, and the truth of the Lord is eternal. Hallelujah!

(Please say Chapter 20 daily)

SEFER HAMITZVOT

**Negative Mitzvah 266 Coveting**

It is forbidden to entertain thoughts of jealousy regarding a coveted item that belongs to a fellow.

**Negative Mitzvah 265 Plotting to Acquire a Coveted Item**

It is forbidden to devise plots in pursuit of acquiring a fellow's property or possession [that he is reluctant to part with. E.g., by harassing the owner of the item to sell it or retaining friends to go and talk him into selling it].

**WHEN YOU'RE IN A SLUMP**

When professional baseball players start slumping, it's bad news. They can't hit, they get depressed, and pretty soon, they're benched.

When it happens to the best in the sport, we hear about how they're "trusting their mechanics" even if it's not delivering results. "Trust the process" they say, "and it'll eventually bring the results." It's a fair argument: After all, the mechanics are still there, it's just a matter of time until they break out.

And it usually works.

You see, a player whose swing is off is hopeful and even confident that whatever he's doing will eventually bring the results he's looking for. Day after day, he accumulates empty at-bats, yet his coach (the type that inspires confidence) believes in him and tells him, "Keep doing what you're doing. Any day now, you'll make sweet contact and that ball will pop right off your bat."

He's a professional, after all. He has it in him, and there's no reason to assume he's magically lost his touch. It'll come, it's just a matter of time. There are countless stories to prove it.

This is a wonderful metaphor for life.

**Collect Empty Jugs**

In this week's Haftarah, we read of a distraught woman who turns to the prophet Elisha crying that her husband died and she's destitute. Worse still, creditors are threatening to kidnap her children as collateral, and she doesn't know what to do.

The prophet tells her to collect empty pitchers and fill them with the one small jug of oil that she does have. Miraculously, the oil continues pouring until all the empty containers fill up. She now has a valuable resource, and everyone's happy.

And he said, "*Borrow vessels for yourself from outside, from all your neighbors; do not borrow only a few empty vessels. And you shall come and close the door about yourself and about your sons, and you shall pour upon all these vessels; and the full one you shall carry away.*"

**When Your Fire is Lost**

The Alter Rebbe sees this as a metaphor for a person who used to have a "fire" (the Hebrew word for "my husband" can also be read "my fire" "אש"), but now it's dead.

You know exactly what that's like. Don't you remember when you were young, passionate, and idealistic? Who doesn't recall those early days when you first started exploring your Judaism and everything was fascinating and oh-so-wondrous? Every new ritual, every new teaching was exhilarating and refreshing; you simply couldn't get enough of it.

Don't you remember when you were young and naïve, and your marriage "sparkled?" People talked about how you were so in love, and you felt as if you had discovered the best thing since sliced bread (or perhaps even better)? Your relationship was alive, and every time you looked at your spouse, you couldn't help but think how lucky you were and how much richer your life had become.

Or how about the early days of your career? Each time you entered the office, every time you got into your truck to start the day, you felt like you were changing the world. You spun magic, and people adored your skills, services, or management.

But then you got older, life roughed you up a bit, and now you're "dead." Religion is boring, your marriage is monotonous, and your job is a black hole. It's not bad per se, it's just dead. You drag your feet around and scoff at all those young, naïve puppies who think they're making a difference. "Been there, done that, son. It's all downhill now."

What to do? How do you drag yourself out of the abyss?

*"Gather empty containers, and let them be filled with the little bit of oil you do have."*

**Trust the Mechanics**

Like the slumping player, you must trust your "mechanics." You really do have it. You really are someone excited about praying and keeping Shabbat. You really do have a passionate marriage and love your spouse deeply. You really are changing the world by fixing broken sinks. You gotta believe it. Ah, but it's not producing results? You're still spacing out while you pray, still fighting with your wife, and you still hate the sight of leaking pipes?

Keep at it. Trust the process. Keep adding those containers - I don't care if they're empty; just keep piling zeros on the scoreboard. Eventually, you're gonna break out. You're on the cusp. If you stick with the process and believe in yourself, the oil will come spilling out with abundance.

Keep praying, trying to put intention into what you're saying. Keep your eyes closed and stick to your regular Shabbat candle-lighting routine, even though you no longer feel that the heavens are opening.

Keep bringing flowers home for the weekend, and saying things like, "I see something's bothering you, would you like to talk about it right now, or should we dedicate some time later tonight to discuss it in earnest?" You don't mean it? Say it anyway (and do it, too!).

Go to work, and fix yet another broken sink. Remind yourself that an entire family is now happy that they can eat with clean dishes again. You don't care

anymore? All those grumpy clients burned you out? You're too cynical to believe it anymore? Say it to yourself anyway, and do whatever it takes to convince yourself that somehow, somewhere, you still believe it. Eventually, you'll hit a home run.

*By Rabbi Aharon Loschak  
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**WHEN YOU'RE IN A SLUMP**

*And I [Jacob] did not take her even to Bethlehem to bring her into the Land, and I know that you hold it against me; but you should know that I buried her there by Divine command, so that she would be of assistance to her children. When Nebuzaradan exiles them (the Israelites), and they pass by there, Rachel will emerge from her grave and weep and beseech mercy for them, as it is said: "A voice is heard on high, Rachel is weeping for her children." And the Holy One, blessed be He, answers her: "There is reward for your work," says the L-rd, "for your children will return to their own border."*

When Jacob knew his final days were near, he charged his son Joseph with the responsibility of ensuring that he would be taken out of Egypt and buried in Israel in the holy Cave of Machpelah, where his parents, Isaac and Rebecca, his grandparents Abraham and Sarah, and Adam and Eve were buried. As Joseph listened intently to his father's last wish and directive, his angst and pain about his mother's burial intensified.

Joseph knew that his mother, Rachel, was his father's most beloved wife, and that Jacob would do anything for her. After all, Jacob had worked for his deceitful uncle Laban for 14 years just to gain his consent to marry her. So why would his father bury her alongside the road, rather than bring her to the Cave of Machpelah for proper burial in the ancestral plot?

Jacob, sensing Joseph's anguish, comforted his son by revealing the hidden story behind her unusual burial: G-d instructed him to bury her on the way to Bethlehem so that, in the future, she could advocate for her descendants on their way into exile. Her roadside burial highlighted her greatness. G-d instructed that she be buried on the road because only her merit would guarantee the Jews' redemption.

The descendants that Rachel sacrificed her burial place for would be passing along that road nearly 1,000 years into the future! However, knowing that she could save her children by advocating for them, she wanted to be buried there. It didn't matter that these children she was praying for had sinned, despite repeated admonishments and warnings by the holy prophets.



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Rachel's self-sacrifice generated G-d's mercy and His promise to return the Jews back to their own borders in Israel. For through Rachel's recognizing these sinning Jews as her beloved children, G-d, too, considered them not based on their deeds, but their essence as His children. The children were promised a return to their home. The Rebbe points out that Rachel's act of self-sacrifice for her future descendants reflects the way in which women serve G-d. While we are all created to serve G-d, there are differences in how we achieve this objective, as can be seen in the different types of commandments given to men and women. Because of their primary responsibilities within the home, women are mostly exempt from "time-bound" commandments, many of which center around prayer and study. (Women are also obligated to learn and pray, but not in the same regimented manner.)

The Rebbe compares the woman's primary role within the home and the man's obligations of prayer and study to the two types of burials: along the road and in the Cave of Machpelah. Rachel's burial on the side of the road was devoid of any noticeable spiritual meaning or significance; however, her burial there was all about her children's lives, hope and survival. Her burial was not self-focused or personally gratifying; it was completely altruistic. Jacob's burial, on the other hand, had the glory and bliss of Divine revelation at the holy site of the Cave of Machpelah. He cherished this site for its holiness and yearned to be buried there.

When raising a family, a significant amount of a woman's time is devoted to seemingly mundane tasks (e.g., cooking kosher meals, shopping for clothes, running to doctor's appointments, carpooling, etc.) that often don't feel very spiritual. In contrast, a man's way of serving G-d inherently contains overtly spiritual components that inspire and uplift him on a more consistent basis. His obligations include deep religious study and joining thrice daily group prayers that provide spiritual gratification.

Obviously, there is plenty of overlap in the roles of men and women: A husband is expected to contribute in the house and in the raising of the children, and obligated to teach them Torah. And the wife's spiritual well-being requires that she regularly sustain her soul with prayer, study, group events, etc. However, the commandments

that prescribe the spiritual service of men and women correspond to the make-up of their souls and express their singular qualities and strengths. The nature of women's service highlights our essential bond with G-d, serving Him without regard for self-benefit or spiritual gratification. It is for this reason that a person's Jewishness is determined by having been born to a Jewish mother (unless one has converted). She transmits a soul - an actual part of G-d that is independent of any particulars, giving the Jew an essential and unconditional connection to G-d. On the other hand, tribal affiliation, and whether a Jew is a Cohen, Levi or Israel (with their varied spiritual standings), is determined by the father. These specific tribal categories reflects a man's service, which is defined by its obvious spirituality.

While on the surface, a lot of what a woman is engaged with seems physical or banal, in truth it is the essence of spirituality. She imparts an uncompromised Jewish identity. The vast majority of the Torah's commandments take place in the home, not in shuls and study halls. Within the daily responsibilities and grueling tasks involved with caring for the needs of her family, she models and inculcates Jewish values and demonstrates how to live life according to Jewish law. It is primarily women who create that special atmosphere that evokes the feeling of anticipation and love for Judaism, the holidays and all observances. Her role is nothing short of vital.

Rachel, the quintessential Jewish mother, preferred a roadside burial over a prestigious holy tomb with Jacob, solely for the opportunity to be there for her future descendants. Her actions prompted G-d to respond in kind, revealing His unconditional love and essential bond with His children, regardless of their spiritual standing. Only Rachel's prayers procured G-d's promise that the children would return to their borders. May the prayers and efforts of Jewish women past and present finally bring the ultimate salvation. As the Talmud states, "In the merit of the righteous women, our ancestors were redeemed from Egypt, and it will be in the merit of the righteous women that the Jews will be redeemed from exile."

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## VAYEIRA IN A NUTSHELL

The name of the Parshah, "Vayera," means "And He appeared" and it is found in Genesis 18:1.

G-d reveals Himself to Abraham three days after the first Jew's circumcision at age ninety-nine; but Abraham rushes off to prepare a meal for three guests who appear in the desert heat. One of the three - who are angels disguised as men - announces that, in exactly one year, the barren Sarah will give birth to a son. Sarah laughs.

Abraham pleads with G-d to spare the wicked city of Sodom. Two of the three disguised angels arrive in the doomed city, where Abraham's nephew Lot extends his hospitality to them and protects them from the evil intentions of a Sodomite mob. The two guests reveal that they have come to overturn the place, and to save Lot and his family. Lot's wife turns into a pillar of salt when she disobeys the command not to look back at the burning city as they flee.

While taking shelter in a cave, Lot's two daughters (believing that they and their father are the only ones left alive in the world) get their father drunk, lie with him and become pregnant. The two sons born from this incident father the nations of Moab and Ammon.

Abraham moves to Gerar, where the Philistine king Abimelech takes Sarah - who is presented as Abraham's sister - to his palace. In a dream, G-d warns Abimelech that he will die unless he returns the woman to her husband. Abraham explains that he feared he would be killed over the beautiful Sarah.

G-d remembers His promise to Sarah, and gives her and Abraham a son, who is named Isaac (Yitzchak, meaning "will laugh"). Isaac is circumcised at the age of eight days; Abraham is one hundred years old, and Sarah ninety, at their child's birth.

Hagar and Ishmael are banished from Abraham's home and wander in the desert; G-d hears the cry of the dying lad and saves his life by showing his mother a well. Abimelech makes a treaty with Abraham at Beersheba, where Abraham gives him seven sheep as a sign of their truce.

G-d tests Abraham's devotion by commanding him to sacrifice Isaac on Mount Moriah (the Temple Mount) in Jerusalem. Isaac is bound and placed on the altar, and Abraham raises the knife to slaughter his son. A voice from heaven calls to stop him; a ram, caught in the undergrowth by its horns, is offered in Isaac's place.

## IN JEWISH HISTORY

### **Sunday, 11 Cheshvan 5786 - 2 November 2025** **Passing of the Matriarch Rachel (1553 BCE)**

The matriarch Rachel died in childbirth on the 11<sup>th</sup> of Cheshvan 2208 (1553 BCE) while giving birth to her second son, Benjamin.

Rachel was born in Aram (Mesopotamia) approximately 2175 (1585 BCE). Her father was Laban, the brother of Jacob's mother, Rebecca. Jacob came to Laban's home in 2184 (1576 BCE), fleeing the wrath of his brother Esau. He loved Rachel and worked for seven years tending Laban's sheep in return for her hand in marriage. But Laban deceived his nephew, and on the morning after the wedding Jacob discovered that he had married Rachel's elder sister, Leah. Laban agreed to give him Rachel as a wife as well in return for another seven years' labor.

Rachel was childless for many years, while her elder sister gave birth to six sons and a daughter in

succession. Finally, in 2198 (1562 BCE), she gave birth to Joseph. Nine years later, while Jacob and his family were on the road to Jacob's ancestral home in Hebron (after a 22-year absence), she gave birth to a second son, but died in childbirth. Jacob buried her by the roadside, in Bethlehem; there, "*Rachel weeps over her children, for they are gone [in exile]*" (Jeremiah 31:14). Her tomb continues to serve as a place of prayer for Jews after more than 35 centuries.

### **Tuesday, 13 Cheshvan 5786 - 4 November 2025** **Burning of the Talmud in Venice (1553)**

By order of the Pope, the Talmud was burned in Venice on the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> of Cheshvan, 5314 (1553). The reason given was that the Talmud contained statements heretical to the Christian faith.

### **Thursday, 15 Cheshvan 5785 - 6 November 2025** **Passing of Mattityahu (139 BCE)**

In the 2<sup>nd</sup> century before the common era, the Holy Land was ruled by the Seleucids (Syrian-Greeks) who, with the collaboration of the Jewish Hellenists, introduced pagan idols into the Holy Temple and set about to forcefully Hellenize the people of Israel. Mattityahu, the son of the High Priest Yochanan, was already an old man when he picked up a sword and raised the flag of revolt in the village of Modi'in in the Judean hills. Many rallied under his cry, "Who that is for G-d, come with me!" and resisted and battled the Greeks from their mountain hideouts.

After heading the revolt for one year, Mattityahu passed on the 15<sup>th</sup> of Cheshvan 3622 (139 BCE). His five sons - the "Macabees" Judah, Yochanan, Shimon, Elazar and Yonatan - carried on the battle to their eventual victory, celebrated each year since by Jews the world over with the festival of Chanukah.