



## **Torah Nuggets – Rabbin Deborah Brandt**

### **Vayera –He Appeared Genesis 18:1-22:24**

#### **Is Anything Impossible For God?**

**Gen 18:1 Then Adonai appeared to him** at Mamre’s large trees while he was sitting in the entrance of his tent during the heat of the day.

Gen 18:2 When he lifted up his eyes to see, suddenly, three men were standing right by him.

When he saw them, he ran from the entrance of his tent to meet them and bowed down to the ground.

A Heavenly visitation. Was Abraham aware of who they really were? He knew one thing, they were not from the area, but offered them his hospitality because that was the type of man he was.

**and he sat:** In these verses we have a delightful picture of genuine and primitive hospitality. A venerable father sits at the tent door, not only to enjoy the current of refreshing air, but that if he saw any weary and exhausted travelers, he might invite them to rest and refresh themselves during the heat of the day, and the same custom still continues in the east. It was not the custom, nor was there any necessity, for strangers to knock at the door, or to speak first, but to stand till they were invited. (Treasury of Scripture Knowledge)

**Heb 13:2 Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers—for in doing so, some have entertained angels without knowing it.**

**3Jn 1:5 Loved ones, you are acting faithfully in whatever you do for the brethren and especially for strangers.**

Gen 18:3 Then he said, “My Lord, if now I have found favor in your eyes, please do not pass by your servant.

Gen 18:4 Please let a little water be brought so you can wash your feet, and make yourselves comfortable under the tree.

Gen 18:5 And let me bring a bit of bread so that you can refresh yourselves—then you can pass on—since you have passed by your servant.” They said, “Do just as you have said.”

Gen 18:6 So Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah and said, “Quick! Knead three measures of fine flour and prepare bread loaves!”

Gen 18:7 Then to the herd Abraham ran and took a young ox, tender and good, and he gave it to the servant, who prepared it quickly.

Gen 18:8 Then he took butter and milk and the young ox that he had prepared and set it before them. While he was standing by them under the tree, they ate.

#### **The Promised Seed, The Miracle Birth**

Gen 18:9 Then they said to him, “Where is Sarah your wife?” “There, in the tent,” he said.

**Gen 18:10 Then He said, “I will most surely return to you in about a year’s time, surprisingly, Sarah your wife will have a son.” Sarah was listening at the entrance of the tent, which was behind Him.**

Gen 18:11 Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in years—Sarah had stopped having the way of women.

Gen 18:12 So Sarah laughed to herself, saying, “After I’ve grown decrepit, can I have desire—and my lord so old?”

Gen 18:13 Then Adonai said to Abraham, “Why is it that Sarah laughed, saying, ‘Can I really give birth when I am so old?’

Gen 18:14 Is anything too difficult for Adonai? At the appointed time I will return to you—in about a year—and Sarah will have a son.”

Gen 18:15 Sarah denied it saying, “I didn’t laugh!” For she was afraid. But He said, “No—for you did laugh.”

Sarah and Abraham were way past the age of being able to produce children. Yet God promised Abraham that it would be through his seed that the nations would be blessed. God was ready to perform a creative miracle resulting in a supernatural birth.

Is anything impossible for God? We see a couple of thousand years latter another miracle birth would be manifested. The birth of our Messiah Yeshua.

Luk 1:26 Then in the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent by Adonai into a town in the Galilee named Natzeret

Luk 1:27 and to a virgin engaged to a man named Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin’s name was Miriam.

Luk 1:28 And coming to her, the angel said, “Shalom, favored one! Adonai is with you.”

Luk 1:29 But at the message, she was perplexed and kept wondering what kind of greeting this might be.

Luk 1:30 The angel spoke to her, “Do not be afraid, Miriam, for you have found favor with God.

Luk 1:31 Behold, you will become pregnant and give birth to a son, and you shall call His name Yeshua.

Luk 1:32 He will be great and will be called Ben-Elyon. Adonai Elohim will give Him the throne of David, His father.

Luk 1:33 He shall reign over the house of Jacob for all eternity, and His kingdom will be without end.”

Luk 1:34 Miriam said to the angel, “How can this be, since I am not intimate with a man?”

Luk 1:35 And responding, the angel said to her, “The Ruach ha-Kodesh will come upon you, and the power of Elyon will overshadow you. Therefore, the Holy One being born will be called Ben-Elohim.

People scoff (who are not believers) at a “Virgin birth” saying it was impossible. If God can create man from the dust of the earth and breathe life into him, if he can take a rib from his side and create Eve/Chavah as his helpmate, if He can speak the World into existence He can also cause a virgin to be a vessel that would produce the Messiah as told in Luke 1:26-35.

Do you believe that “In the beginning God created the Heaven and the Earth”? If you do, then nothing else is beyond possibilities.

According to the Rabbis, Sarah did not have a womb, but yet through the miracle intervention of God, she was able to have a child? Again, is anything impossible for God? Only if you do not believe, with God all things are possible. If you have faith/trust.

Who were these men that visited Abraham? I believe and so do many other Bible commentators that they were 2 Angels and the pre-incarnate Yeshua.

### **Does God visit men and speak with them? According to the Scripture He does.**

**PRESENCE OF GOD** God’s initiative in encountering people. Biblical words for the presence of God usually relate to the “face” of God.

**Tenach** During the patriarchal period God used a variety of means of revelation to communicate with the people (Gen. 15:1; 32:24–30). These are often described as theophany’s, appearances of God to humanity. Moses had a close relationship with God. He encountered God in the burning bush and knew God “face to face” (Deut. 34:10). The presence of God was also closely related to the tabernacle, the place for ancient Israel to encounter God in worship. The tabernacle was the place of the Lord’s name or glory, a manifestation of God’s presence and activity in the world (Exod. 40:34, 38). The cloud and fire symbolized the presence of God leading on the journey to Canaan.

Perhaps the primary tangible symbol of God’s presence with the people was the ark of the covenant, the container for the tablet of the law and the seat of God’s throne. It led the people in the journey to Canaan and into battle (Josh. 3:1–6). The ark was associated with the sanctuary and eventually came to rest in the temple, the place of the presence of God. Here Isaiah had a powerful vision of the holy God (Isa. 6).

God also manifested Himself in other ways: in fire (1 Kings 18) and in a still small voice (1 Kings 19), both to Elijah. The Psalms speak of God’s presence with the worshiping community (Ps. 139) and of the apparent absence of this present God (Ps. 13). In either case, God is still addressed. Ezekiel spoke of the exile in terms of the glory (presence) of God leaving ancient Israel but then returning at the end of the exile in Babylon (Ezek. 43:1–5). Much of the OT discussion of the presence of God centers on the fact that God is utterly free to be where God wills but constantly chooses to be with His people to give them life.

**Apostolic Scriptures** The primary NT manifestation of the presence of God is in Messiah Yeshua, Immanuel, “God with us” (Matt. 1:23; John 1:14; Heb. 1:1–3). This presence did not end with the death of Yeshua. The risen Yeshua appeared to the disciples (John 21:1–14) and to Paul. Through the apostles, Paul, and the disciples, Messiah’s work continued (Acts 1:8; 26:12–18). The Ruach HaKodesh is an important manifestation of the presence of God and continues the redemptive work of God. The return of Christ will bring permanence to the presence of God with His people.

The Body of Messiah is called to be a manifestation of God's presence. That community is fed by the presence of God found in communion between worshiper and God.<sup>1</sup>

## **Abraham the Intercessor:**

Gen 18:23 Abraham drew near and said, "Will you really sweep away the righteous with the wicked?"

Gen 18:24 Suppose there are fifty righteous within the city. Will you really sweep away and not spare the place for the sake of fifty righteous who are in it?

Gen 18:25 Far be it from You to do such a thing—to cause the righteous to die with the wicked, so that the righteous and the wicked share the same fate! Far be it from You! Shall the Judge of the whole world not exercise justice?"

Gen 18:26 Then Adonai said, "If I find in Sodom fifty righteous people within the city, I will spare the whole place for their sake."

Gen 18:27 Then Abraham answered and said, "Look, pray, I have decided to speak to my Lord, though I am dust and ashes."

Gen 18:28 Suppose the fifty righteous people are lacking five. Will You destroy the whole city for lack of five?" And He said, "I will not destroy it if I find forty-five there."

Gen 18:29 So he spoke to Him yet again and said, "Perhaps forty will be found there?" And He said, "I will not do it for the sake of the forty."

Gen 18:30 Then he said, "Please, let my Lord not be angry, so I may speak. Perhaps thirty will be found there?" And He said, "I will not do it if I find thirty there."

Gen 18:31 Then he said, "Look, pray, I have decided to speak to my Lord: Perhaps twenty will be found there?" And He said, "I will not destroy it for the sake of the twenty."

Gen 18:32 Then he said, "Please, let not my Lord be angry, so I may speak once more. Perhaps ten will be found there?" And He said, "I will not destroy it for the sake of the ten."

Gen 18:33 Now when He had finished speaking to Abraham, Adonai left, and Abraham returned to his place.

### **Intercession (Gn 18:23–33)**

Yahweh's remarks regarding Sodom jarred Abraham. He knew that an outpouring of divine wrath was inevitable. Thoughts of his nephew living in the midst of that doomed city spurred Abraham to one of the most dramatic intercessory prayers recorded in the Bible.

Five observations regarding this prayer are in order: (1) The prayer grew out of holy boldness, for Abraham *drew near* to the Lord. (2) The prayer is undergirded with the conviction that the Judge of all the earth would certainly do what was right (18:25). (3) The prayer is based on the premise that God would not slay the righteous with the wicked (18:23, 25). (4) The prayer demonstrates fervent importunity. Six times Abraham posed a hypothetical situation to God.

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<sup>1</sup> Bellinger, W. H., Jr. (2003). Presence of God. In C. Brand, C. Draper, A. England, S. Bond, E. R. Clendenen & T. C. Butler (Eds.), *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (C. Brand, C. Draper, A. England, S. Bond, E. R. Clendenen & T. C. Butler, Ed.) (1326–1327). Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers.

Starting with fifty righteous persons, he systematically reduced the number to ten. If there be this number of righteous people in the city would God destroy those righteous souls along with the wicked in the city? (5) The prayer is a model of reverent humility, and the more so as the prayer moves through its successive stages. At one point Abraham referred to himself as “dust and ashes” (18:27). The patriarch began the last stage of his prayer by begging, “Let not the Lord be angry and I will speak but once more” (18:32).

Abraham’s intercession was successful. He got all for which he asked. As a matter of fact, Abraham quit asking before God stopped giving. If Lot had won his own family plus only two neighbors God would have spared Sodom. So why did not Abraham go below ten in his importunity? Perhaps because to do so would have degraded the noble intercession to a narrow plea for his relatives. On the other hand, perhaps Abraham himself could not believe that there could be less than ten righteous souls in Sodom.<sup>2</sup>

## **The Power of Prayer**

James/Yaacov 5:15 The prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. If he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.

James/Yaacov 5:16 So confess your offenses to one another and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous person is very powerful.

1Pe 3:12 For the eyes of Adonai are on the righteous and His ears open to their prayer, but the face of Adonai is against those who do evil.”

1Pe 4:7 Now the end of all things is near. So be self-controlled and sober-minded for prayer.

We should never limit God in His ability to answer our prayers, however, He answers the prayers that are in His will for us. His will for us are the promises in His Word, if we approach his Throne based upon His promises we can be assured of an answer. He always answers our prayers; His answer is either Yes or No. After all Father Knows Best!

James/Yaacov 1:5 If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.

James/Yaacov 1:6 But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind.

James/Yaacov 4:2 You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask.

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<sup>2</sup> Smith, J. E. (1993). *The Pentateuch* (2nd ed.). Old Testament Survey Series (146–147). Joplin, MO: College Press Pub. Co.

James/Yaacov You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.

1Jn 3:22 and whatever we ask we receive from him, because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him.

1Jn 5:14 And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us.

1Jn 5:15 And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him. (ESV)