

Torah: B’resheet (Genesis) 18:1-22:24
Haftarah: Malakhim Bet (2 Kings) 4:1-37
B’rit Hadashah: Luke 4:11-17

	<i>year 1</i> 18:1-33	<i>year 2</i> 19:1-20:18	<i>year 3</i> 21:1-24
1	18:1 – 5	19:1 – 11	21:1 – 4
2	18:6 – 8	19:12 – 20	21:5 – 13
3	18:9 – 14	19:21 – 29	21:14 – 21
4	18:15 – 21	19:30 – 38	21:22 – 34
5	18:22 – 26	20:1 – 8	22:1 – 8
6	18:27 – 30	20:9 – 14	22:9 – 19
7	18:31 – 33	20:15 – 18	22:20 – 24

and HaShem visited Sarah as he had said / and HaShem did to Sarah as he had spoken

va’ADONÁI paqad et-Saráh ka’asher amar va’yá’as ADONÁI le’Saráh ka’asher diber

וַיֵּהוּהָ פָקַד אֶת-שָׂרָה כַּאֲשֶׁר אָמַר וַיַּעַשׂ יְהוָה לְשָׂרָה כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר:

Vayera (“He Appeared”) opens as guests inform Avraham that Sarah will bear a son. Despite Avraham’s attempts to convince God otherwise, God destroys S’dom and ‘Amora. Sarah gives birth to Yitzkhaq, and Avraham sends away Hagar and Yishma’el. At God’s command, Avraham prepares to sacrifice Yitzkhaq, but an angel of God tells him to offer a ram instead.

The haftarah tells the story of a woman providing hospitality to the prophet Elisha, paralleling Avraham’s hospitality to three "men" in the Torah portion.

Aliyah Summary

- Gen. 21:1-4** HaShem visited (*paqad* – פָקַד) as he had said (17:21, 18:10, 14) and did what he promised (17:16) to Sarah, marking a new, momentous phase in history. Yitz’khaq was prenatally named by HaShem, and the only patriarch not to have a name change. The laughter of HaShem expresses his reaction to the attempts of men to defy his will (Ps. 2:4, 37:13, 59:9). Yitz’khaq was the first to be circumcised on the 8th day, emphasizing his role as the true heir to the Avrahamic covenant (17:12)
- Gen. 21:5-13** Avraham is 100 (17:17) when Yitz’khaq is born, and the laughter is now joyful, not skeptical (17:17, 18:12). It has been 25 years since he first heard the promise of blessing and prosperity (12:4/25:5). Sarah responds in song (3 clauses of 3 words). Weaning (2-5 yrs) marked the first life-cycle stage. Yishma’el was literally “laughing” (*tza-khaq* – צָחַק) with Yitz’khaq. Sarah’s demand was to activate the legality of releasing the “slave-woman” and her children, in which case they forfeit their share of inheritance, echoed in 25:6. HaShem assures Avraham in a night-vision that he will provide for Yishma’el.
- Gen. 21:14-21** Avraham responds in the morning. The Hebrew *shalakh* (שָׁלַח), to send away, is also used for divorce. HaShem heard/heeded – the meaning of the name *Yishma’el*, who is promised nationhood, but not land. Hagar saw what was already there. Both sons of Avraham are saved at a critical moment by a voice from heaven (22:11)
- Gen. 21:22-34** Avraham’s interaction with Avimelekh projects a new confidence as equals, now that his posterity is assured. Both of their names are mentioned exactly seven times, there are seven female lambs, and the name of the well can mean either “oath” or “seven.” Tamarisk is a tall, shady tree with deep roots, requiring little water and very tolerant to harsh conditions. It

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symbolizes strength and resilience. Avraham's makes his first acquisition, the well at Be'er Sheva, with rights guaranteed by the king and the military commander.

5. **Gen. 22:1-8** Yitz'khaq was a small child (3 yrs?) when Yishma'el was sent away, now he is a strong, intelligent young man (33 yrs?). This is clearly a test (*nisah* – נִסָּה), not a divine requirement of human sacrifice, received in a night-vision. *Hinneni* (הִנְנִי), an expression of attentiveness and receptivity, is the only word spoken by Avraham to HaShem during the entire episode. HaShem's entreaty is put forth to Avraham in ascending order of endearment, just as was his first call in 12:1. The first use in Torah of the Hebrew term, love (*ah-hev* – אָהַב) appears in the father/son relationship (v. 2). The second use is in regard to the husband/wife relationship (24:67). The specific mountain location is yet to be revealed. Sarah is not mentioned, and Avraham makes no verbal response, in contrast to the S'dom episode. Preparations are made emphasizing the unknown destination (will there be wood?). 3 days indicates a significant segment of travel time, allowing time for reflection and to challenge Avraham's resolve. Yitz'khaq queries Avraham in the unbroken harmony of the father/son bond.
6. **Gen. 22:9-19** The term for "binding" (*aqad* – אָקַד) appears nowhere else in scripture. Intense anguish is captured in the silent, laconic preparation details. The critical urgency of the moment dictates the mode of intervention: a voice from heaven (see also 21:17). The repetition of Avraham's name emphasizes both the urgency and the special relationship between the one addressed and the One who calls. The potential of Avraham's character is now actualized in demonstrated action. Avraham understands the "ram behind / the one ram" (see also v. 7) as a substitute offering to HaShem in place of Yitz'khaq. The altar is named and the previously promised blessings are reaffirmed.
7. **Gen. 22:20-24** The 12 sons of Nakhor are listed, including Rivkah, suggesting the fulfillment of the promise to Avraham will occur through the family that Yitz'khaq and Rivkah will found.

Thought focus

Be here now: Torah clearly connects the first test of Avraham in chapter 12 – to leave home and family – with his last test in chapter 22 – the binding of Yitz'khaq. They both begin with the biblically unique call "to go forth..." (*lekh I'kha*) to an undisclosed location. Both require a separation from the immensely valued: "your land, your home, your father's house," and, "your son, your only son, the one you love, Yitz'khaq." Both confirm the same blessings. Altars are built there. Genealogies of both introduce main characters of the continuing story.

The first test appears as a separation from the past while the second as a release of the future. The life of faith is lived in "the now," in the present moments of our lives. Perhaps this is the essence of Yeshua's words in Mat. 6:25-34. Avraham sought the Kingdom of HaShem and his righteousness above everything. His faith was expressed in his character, which resulted in his actions.

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Daily Devotional questions for reflection and application

1. (18:1) Has God appeared to you in the pressures and pain of your life? He desires to visit you in the “heat of the day!” (Psa 139:7-12)
2. (18:15) Have you ever been “afraid” when God speaks a possible outcome in your life? Did you laugh? Did you cry? Or did you respond in faith? (Luk 1:8-20)
3. (19:1) Are you responding to His messengers? Is it time to turn from something in your life before it is too late? He desires restoration! (Isa 55:6-7, Amo 5:4-6, 2Pe 3:9, Heb 9:27, 2Co 6:1-2, Psa 69:13-15)
4. (19:24) God is patient, but ultimately judgement will come (Luke 12:20, Acts 5:5). He will come when you are not expecting Him, but you can be ready. Are you? (Mat 24:44-46)
5. (21:6) Are the signs of God’s Kingdom evident around you? Don’t look for flash and hype, but rather the fruit of changed lives!
6. (21:22) Is God “with” you? If He is, who can be against you ? (Rom 8:31, Phi 2:13, Zec 8:23)
7. (22:2) What is more important to you, God, or His promises? (Rom 4:19-12, Psa 27:4-5, Mat 22:37-39)