

PARSHAT VAYERA
GENESIS 18:1-22:24

15 CHESHVAN 5782/21 OCTOBER 2021



HOW SHALL WE GREET THE VISITORS IN OUR LIVES?

1. God appeared to Abraham by the terebinths of Mamre, as he sat at the entrance to his tent in the heat of the day. He lifted up his eyes and looked, and, behold, three *anashim*/men were standing near him. He saw them and he ran from the entrance of the tent to meet them and bowed down. He said, *Adonai*, if I have found favor in your eyes, please do not pass on from your servant. Let me send for some water so that you may bathe your feet and rest under the tree...God said, The outrage of Sodom and Gomorrah is so great... (Genesis 18:1-20)
2. The two *malachim*/angels arrived in Sodom in the evening as Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom. When Lot saw them, he rose to greet them and, bowing low with his face to the ground, he said, "Please, *adonai* turn aside to your servant's house... (Genesis 19:1-2)
3. Hospitality toward guests is greater than receiving the Divine Presence, as when Abraham invited his guests it is written: "God appeared to Abraham...He looked up and saw three men standing near him. On seeing them, he hurried from his tent door to meet them, and bowed down. [Turning to God], he said, "My God, if now I have found favor in Your sight, please do not leave Your servant [i.e., Please wait until I have given hospitality to these men]." [He then turned to the men and said:] "Let me send for some water so that you may bathe your feet and rest under this tree..." (Shabbat 127a)

4. In verse 2 [of Chapter 18] we read that the visitors are standing above (*nitzavim alav*) Abraham, while in verse 8 we read that Abraham is standing above them (*omed aleihem*). At first, the visitors were higher than Abraham because they were angels and he a mere human being. But when he gave them food and drink and shelter, he stood even higher than the angels. (Rabbi Shalom of Belz)
5. This being human is a guest house.
Every morning a new arrival

A joy, a depression, a meanness,
some momentary awareness comes
as an unexpected visitor.

Welcome and entertain them all!
Even if they're a crowd of sorrows,
who violently sweep your house
empty of its furniture,
still, treat each guest honorably.
He may be clearing you out
for some new delight.

The dark thought, the shame, the malice,
meet them at the door laughing,
and invite them in.

Be grateful for whoever comes,
because each has been sent
as a guide from beyond.

(Rumi, "The Guest House")