

Torah Portion for Vayeira

Shabbat beginning November 11, 2022

Diverse stories in Vayeira (God declaring “I appeared”) urge us to use multiple sources to find rich themes. There, God kindly rebukes Sarah for laughing at promised hope and lying about it. The men of Sodom are justly destroyed for their culture of abusive sexual pleasure. God heeds Abraham’s prayer to temper justice with mercy for any good persons in Sodom. Lot’s wife becomes a pillar of salt for regretting leaving Sodom. God faithfully preserves Hagar’s descendants after Sarah and Abraham abandoned her. God first forgives Abimelech’s near adultery with Sarah fostered by Abraham’s deception and later Abraham’s near sacrifice of Isaac.

Four sources stimulate our reflections. ReformJudaism.org teaches us to spot angels by reflecting on Abraham’s healing visitors, Lot’s rescuer, Hagar’s compassionate savior, and God’s enlightening Abraham to not harm Isaac. One *Women’s Commentary* identified how Lot’s daughters, Hagar, and Sarah preserved the generations to come. Another addressed the violence—threatened or committed—in and of Sodom, of Lot to his daughters and daughters to him, by Abimelech to Sarah, by Sarah to Hagar, and by Abraham to Isaac. The *Mussar Commentary* revealed the impetuous character in Abraham’s decisions. Reflecting on benefactors, women’s roles, violence, and decisions enriches wisdom.