

# GENESIS

(BERE'SHEET)<sup>1</sup>

**CHAPTER 18:1** And YHVH was seen toward him by the oaks of Mamre, and he was sitting *in* the opening of the tent in the heat of the day. **2** And he lifted his eyes, and saw, and look!—three men were positioned by him, and he saw, and he ran to meet them from the opening of the tent, and he bowed himself down land-ward. **3** And he said, “ADONAI<sup>2</sup> if please, I have found favor in your<sup>s</sup> eyes, do not, please, pass over from upon your<sup>s</sup> servant. **4** Let, please, a little water<sup>p</sup> be taken, and wash your<sup>p</sup> feet, and lean yourself under the tree. **5** And I will take a fragment of bread, and you<sup>p</sup> strengthen your<sup>p</sup> hearts,<sup>3</sup> afterwards you may pass over, for thus you<sup>p</sup> have passed over upon your<sup>p</sup> servant.” And they said, “Yes!<sup>4</sup> Do as you have said.” **6** And Abraham hurried tent-ward, to Sarah, and he said, “Hurry! Three measures of fine meal—knead and make<sup>5</sup> cakes.”<sup>6</sup> **7** And toward the herd Abraham ran, and he took a son of the herd, tender and good, and he gave it toward the lad, and he hurried to make<sup>7</sup> it. **8** And he took curd and milk, and the son of the herd that he had made<sup>8</sup> and he gave before their face<sup>p</sup>, and he was standing by them under the tree, and they ate. **9** And they said toward him, “Where is Sarah your woman?” And he said, “Look!—in the tent.” **10** And he said, “Returning—I will *surely* return toward you!<sup>9</sup>—at the time of life,<sup>10</sup> and look!—a son will be to Sarah your woman.” And Sarah was hearing *at* the opening of the tent, and it *was* behind him. **11** And Abraham and Sarah

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<sup>1</sup> The books of the Hebrew Bible are named from their opening words: here *Bere'sheet*, meaning “At *the* first of . . . .”

<sup>2</sup> Here and in vv. 27, 30, and 32 tradition holds that the original text was actually YHVH. This is one of 134 places where the Sopherim (scribes) of the MT are said to have substituted ADONAI for YHVH, out of reverence for the Divine Name.

<sup>3</sup> Hebrew idiom, “refresh yourself.”

<sup>4</sup> Lit “*let it be so!*”

<sup>5</sup> Or “do.”

<sup>6</sup> Round flat-bread, baked on hot stones.

<sup>7</sup> Or “do,” i.e., prepare it.

<sup>8</sup> Or “done.”

<sup>9</sup> Double use of the verb indicates emphasis.

<sup>10</sup> I.e., in the spring.

were old, coming into the days;<sup>11</sup> it ceased to be to Sarah a path as the women.<sup>12</sup> **12** And Sarah laughed<sup>13</sup> in her middle<sup>14</sup> saying, “After my wearing out, has there been to me delight<sup>15</sup>—and my master old?” **13** And YHVH said toward Abraham, “Why *is* this—Sarah laughed, saying, ‘Will I indeed, surely bring forth, and *I* have become old?’ **14** Is a thing, being wonderful, beyond<sup>16</sup> YHVH? At the appointed time, I will return toward you<sup>s</sup>, at the time of life,<sup>17</sup> and to Sarah *will be* a son.” **15** And Sarah failed,<sup>18</sup> saying, “I did not laugh,” for she feared. And he said, “No, for you did laugh.” **16** And the men rose from there, and they gazed down upon the face<sup>p</sup> of Sodom; and Abraham was walking with them to send<sup>19</sup> them. **17** And YHVH said, “Will I cover from Abraham, what I am doing? **18** For Abraham will be—*surely* he will be!<sup>20</sup>—for a nation large and strong, and all the nations of the land will be blessed<sup>21</sup> in him. **19** For I have known him, so that he charge his sons, and his house after him, that they guard the way of YHVH, by doing<sup>22</sup> justness and judgment, so that YHVH may make come<sup>c</sup> upon Abraham that which he spoke concerning him.” **20** And YHVH said, “The outcry of Sodom and Gomorrah! Because it *is* abundant, and their error, because it is weighty exceedingly—**21** let me go down, please, and I will see whether they have done completely according to its outcry that has come toward me, and if not I will know.” **22** And the men turned from there, and they walked toward Sodom; and Abraham *he* still was standing before the face<sup>p</sup> of YHVH.<sup>23</sup> **23** And Abraham drew near and he said,

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<sup>11</sup> Idiom meaning they were old, having experienced many days, or the latter days.

<sup>12</sup> I.e., she is past menopause.

<sup>13</sup> The verb, *tzachaq* means “laugh,” but the context must determine whether it is in the sense of playing, mocking, or even sexual joy, see vv. 13, 15.

<sup>14</sup> I.e., inside herself.

<sup>15</sup> Heb *‘ednah*, luxurious, voluptuous delight.

<sup>16</sup> Lit “from,” in the sense of removed.

<sup>17</sup> I.e., in the spring.

<sup>18</sup> I.e., to fail the truth, deny falsely.

<sup>19</sup> Intensive form of the verb (Piel).

<sup>20</sup> Double use of the verb indicates emphasis.

<sup>21</sup> Or “bless themselves,” the reflexive meaning is possible here and is explicit in Gen 22:18.

<sup>22</sup> Or “making.”

<sup>23</sup> Tradition says that the original reading was: “But YHVH was still standing before Abraham.” This is one of the 18 emendations of the Sopherim (scribes), who reversed the word order of the original Hebrew text, thinking it was inappropriate to have YHVH standing *before* Abraham—as if to serve him, rather than the reverse (see Gen 18:8).

“Indeed, will you sweep away a just one with a wrong one? **24** Perhaps there *are* fifty just ones in the midst of the city; indeed will you sweep away, and not lift<sup>24</sup> for the place, because of the fifty just ones who *are* in its midst? **25** Let it be profane to you!<sup>25</sup>—to do according to this thing,<sup>26</sup> to make die<sup>c</sup> a just one with a wrong one, and it be, as with the just, as with the wrong! May it be profane to you! The one who judges all the land—will he not do<sup>27</sup> judgment?” **26** And YHVH said, “If I find in Sodom fifty just ones in the midst of the city, and I will lift<sup>28</sup> for the whole place on account of them.” **27** And Abraham answered, and said, “Look! please—I am resolved to speak toward ADONAI<sup>29</sup>—and I *am* dust and ashes! **28** Perhaps there will be lacking of the fifty just ones, five, will you bring to ruin for five the whole city?” And he said, “I will not bring ruin if I find there forty and five.” **29** And he added<sup>30</sup> still to speak toward him, and he said, “Perhaps there will be found there forty.” And he said, “I will not do on account of the forty.” **30** And he said, “Please, let there not be burning<sup>31</sup> to ADONAI,<sup>32</sup> and let me speak, perhaps there will be found there thirty.” And he said, “I will not do if I find there thirty.” **31** And he said, “Look! please—I am resolved to speak toward ADONAI, perhaps there *are* found there twenty.” And he said, “I will not bring ruin on account of the twenty.” **32** And he said, “Please, let there not be burning to ADONAI<sup>33</sup>, and let me speak only this time, perhaps there are found there ten.” And he said, “I will not bring ruin on account of the ten.” **33** And YHVH walked, as he finished speaking toward Abraham, and Abraham returned to his place.

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<sup>24</sup> Perhaps in the sense of “lifting” the guilt, see Gen 4:13.

<sup>25</sup> A strong statement of aversion, usually translated “Be it far from you,” which is too mild. It comes from the verb *chahal*, which has two verbal roots, one meaning “to profane,” the other “to pierce,” and thus destroy. The meaning in English is something like “Let it be damned!”

<sup>26</sup> DSS “to do this thing.”

<sup>27</sup> Or “make.”

<sup>28</sup> See v. 24.

<sup>29</sup> Or YHVH, see note at Gen 18:3.

<sup>30</sup> I.e., continued.

<sup>31</sup> I.e., hot anger.

<sup>32</sup> Or YHVH, see note at Gen 18:3.

<sup>33</sup> Or YHVH, see note at Gen 18:3.