

# OHRNET

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## SPECIAL FEATURE

### TEHILLIM 91: “YOU, HASHEM, ARE MY REFUGE!”

An elucidation of a psalm whose recital is especially appropriate at this time, based on the classical commentaries

by Rabbi Shmuel Kraines

**T**he 91<sup>st</sup> psalm of Tehillim, which our Sages call *Shir shel Pegai'm* (*Song of [Protection from] Calamities*), was composed by Moshe when he ascended to heaven to take the Torah in face of the fierce opposition of powerful angels. He returned unscathed, glowing with Divine splendor, and holding the prized *Luchos* in his arms. In this psalm, he speaks about how he merited to be sheltered under Hashem's wing, and he encourages us to do the same.

One might ask: This is all true when Hashem dwells amongst us, but now that the *Beis HaMikdash* has been destroyed and we were sent into exile because of our sins, does He still care so much about us? The Sages say He certainly does, and they explain this with a parable: An expectant woman quarreled with her mother, who ascended to the loft. When she heard her daughter scream upon the onset of the birth pains, she screamed along with her. The neighbors asked her, “Why do you scream? Are you giving birth?!” She explained, “Even though my daughter has angered me, I cannot bear to hear her scream, so I scream as well.” So too, Hashem says: “My House has been destroyed and My children have been taken away in chains — shall I not feel their distress?”

We recite this psalm in the bedtime *Shema* in order to confer protection upon our souls as they ascend to heaven for the night, and we recite it several times when escorting the soul of the deceased. The Zohar advises reciting it whenever the forces of evil dominate in the world. It is especially suitable for wartime: the Chashmonaim would recite it when they went out to battle and thereby merited supernatural victories. Now our Gedolim have directed us to recite it regularly as we go through the present hazardous period of war and troubles. Let us explore its meaning.

1. יֵשֵׁב בְּסִתְרֵי עֲלִיוֹן בְּצֶל שְׁדֵי יִתְלוֹן

*He who resides in the concealment of the Most High, in the shade of Almighty shall he lodge. Hashem is above all beings, and mightier than any power; He can do as He pleases. Even if a person deserves to be*

punished for his past sins, Hashem may choose to grant him sanctuary and to conceal him from the eye of the Accusing Angel.

2. אָמַר לֵה' מַחְסֵי וּמְצוּדָתֵי אֱלֹהֵי אֲבֹתָי בּוֹ

*I (Moshe) say of Hashem, "My refuge and my fortress, my God in Whom I trust!" You should do the same. The Sages teach that when a person places his trust in Hashem alone, He declares: "You have trusted in My name; I swear that this merit will stand for you!"*

3. כִּי הוּא יִצִּילְךָ מִפַּח יְקוּשׁ מִדְּבַר הַוּוֹת

*For He will spare you from entrapment and from devastating pestilence.*

4. בְּאַבְרָתוֹ יִסֹּךְ לְךָ וְתַחַת כְּנָפָיו תִּחְסֶה צְנָה וְסַחְרָה אָמַתּוֹ

*With His pinions shall He cover you, and beneath His wings shall you shelter; His faithfulness is like a shield and armor! [Alternatively, the latter phrase means: Hashem's Truth (i.e., the Torah) is a shield for whoever is involved with its study.]*

5. לֹא תִירָא מִפַּחַד לַיְלָה מִחַץ יְעוּף יוֹמָם

*You shall not fear from the dread of night, from the arrow that flies by day. Hashem will protect you even from calamities that come unseen and without warning.*

6. מִדְּבַר בְּאִפְלֵ יִהְיֶה מִקְטֵב יְשׁוּד צְהָרִים

*From devastating spiritual forces that strike at night and in the afternoon.*

7. יִפֹּל מִצְדָּךְ אֶלְךָ וּרְבֵבָה מִיְמִינְךָ אֵלֶיךָ לֹא יִגָּשׁ

*A thousand shall fall by your left side, and a myriad by your right side, but they shall not approach you. The left hand, which performs only the mitzvah of tefillin, has the power to overcome one thousand spiritual forces; the right hand, which is primary in the performance of all other mitzvos, has the merit to overcome ten times that number.*

8. רַק בְּעֵינֶיךָ תִּבְיֹט וְשִׁלְמַת רָשָׁעִים תִּרְאֶה

*You shall but gaze with your eyes, and the retribution of the wicked you will behold.*

9. כִּי אַתָּה ה' מַחְסֵי עֲלִיוֹן שְׁמַת מְעוֹנְךָ

*For by saying, "You, Hashem, are my refuge!" you have placed your abode on high! By proclaiming Hashem as your only refuge and truly believing this, it is as if you are with Him in heaven, and no being on earth can approach you to cause harm.*

10. לֹא תֵאָנֶה אֵלֶיךָ רָעָה וְנִגַע לֹא יִקְרַב בְּאֶהְלֶךְ

*No evil shall befall you, and no affliction shall approach your tent. Your family, too, will be protected by the merit of your trust in Hashem.*

11. כִּי מִלְאָכָיו יִצְוֶה לְךָ לְשֹׁמְרֶךָ בְּכָל דְרָכֶיךָ

*For He shall command His angels concerning you, to guard you wherever you go.*

12. עַל כַּפַּיִם יִשְׂאוּנֶךָ פֶּן תִּגַּף בְּאֶבֶן רִגְלֶךָ

*They shall carry you upon their hands, lest your foot strike a stone. That is, lest you stumble upon the traps of the yetzer hara, which is called "a stone."*

13. על שחל ופתן תדרך תרמס כפיר ותנין

*Upon lions and serpents you shall tread; you shall trample young lions and snakes. Hashem will grant you victory over all foes, no matter how formidable they may appear to be.*

14. כי בי חשק ואפליטהו אשגבהו כי ידע שמיו

*Says Hashem: He has pined for Me, so I shall rescue him; I shall fortify him for he knows My name. Hashem is especially attentive when someone calls Him by His Four-Letter Name and knows its meaning.*

15. יקראני ואענהו עמו אנכי בצרה אחלצהו ואכבדהו

*He shall call Me and I shall answer him; I am with him in his distress, I shall spare him and accord him honor. Not only does Hashem answer the call of His people and spare them from their enemies, but He will also lead them to victory and glory.*

16. ארך ימים אשביעהו ואראהו בישועתי

*I will satiate him with lengthy days, and I will show him My salvation! Since Hashem shares the distress of whoever seeks shelter with Him, He considers it as if He is saving Himself.*

*The subsequent psalm is Mizmor Shir L'yom HaShabbos. This alludes to the idea that whoever safeguards the Shabbos will merit Hashem's salvation.*

Sources: Midrash Tehillim, Yalkut Shimoni, Rashi, Ibn Ezra, Radak, Rabbi Avraham ben Ramoch, Rokeach, Metzudos, and Malbim; Zohar (Bereishis 48a); Magen Avraham 275:1.

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POB 18103, Jerusalem 91180, Israel · Tel +972-2-581-0315 · Email. [info@ohr.edu](mailto:info@ohr.edu)

Contributing authors, editors and production team: Rabbi Nota Schiller – Rosh HaYeshiva,  
Rabbi Yitzchak Breitowitz - Rav of Kehillos Ohr Somayach, Avi Kaufman, Rabbi Reuven Chaim  
Klein, Rabbi Reuven Lauffer, Rabbi Yaakov Meyers, Mrs. Rosalie Moriah, Rabbi Moshe  
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# PARSHA INSIGHTS

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by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

## The Blessings That Come With A Clothes Dryer

*“...to the Land that I will show you” (12:1)*

**I**n the first week of the war, I got a phone call from a lady who said they wanted to deliver the dryer that I bought before Yom Tov. I told her I was surprised that companies were still working in highly non-essential items like drying machines in the middle of a war. “Sure, we are!” she said. Before we got off the phone she said to me in Hebrew, “Be Safe! May we hear good news soon! Hashem should guard you! May Hashem bless His People with peace!” She wouldn’t let me off the phone until she had completed a litany of blessings for me, my family and the entire Jewish People.

“Who is like your people Israel, one nation in the world!”

The feeling of unity here in Eretz Yisrael is incredible. My son-in-law got back from the South of Israel, where he and his friends were dispensing homemade food and supplies to the soldiers. He told me, “You can’t believe how happy they were to see us.” It wasn’t the homemade cakes; it wasn’t the homemade sandwiches – it was the homemade love!”

We say in the Mincha prayer on Shabbat afternoon, “You, Hashem, are one, and Your name is One, and who is like Your people Israel, one nation in the land.”

To the extent we are one nation, so too Hashem’s Name will be One. The world will see that there is a Divine Being Who runs everything, and that nothing is random. It is axiomatic that Hashem is One, and thus the unity of the Jewish People is a mystical and spiritual imperative.

If we do not unite in love and joy, Hashem will unite us in grief and war. May Hashem protect His people. May He protect the soldiers who defend His People. May He protect Klal Yisrael in all the places of our Diaspora.

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# Q & A

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## Questions

1. What benefits did G-d promise Avraham if he would leave his home?
2. "And all the families of the earth will be blessed through you." What does this mean?
3. Who were the souls that Avraham and Sarah "made"?
4. What were the Canaanites doing in the Land of Canaan when Avraham arrived?
5. Why did Avraham build an altar at Ai?
6. What two results did Avraham hope to achieve by saying that Sarah was his sister?
7. Why did Avraham's shepherds rebuke Lot's shepherds?
8. Who was Amrafel and why was he called that?
9. Verse 14:7 states that the four kings "smote all the country of the Amalekites". How is this possible, since Amalek had not yet been born?
10. Why did the "palit" tell Avraham of Lot's capture?
11. Who accompanied Avraham in battle against the four kings?
12. Why couldn't Avraham chase the four kinds past Dan?
13. Why did Avraham give ma'aser specifically to Malki-Tzedek?
14. Why didn't Avraham accept any money from Sodom's king?
15. When did the decree of 400 years of exile begin?
16. What did G-d indicate with His promise that Avraham would "come to his ancestors in peace"?
17. How did G-d fulfill His promise that Avraham would be buried in "a good old age"?
18. Why did the Jewish People need to wait until the fourth generation until they returned to Eretz Canaan?
19. Who was Hagar's father?
20. Why did Avraham fall on his face when G-d appeared to him?

## Answers

1. 12:1 - He would become a great nation, his excellence would become known to the world, and he would be blessed with wealth.
2. 12:3 - A person will say to his child, "You should be like Avraham."
3. 12:5 - People they converted to the worship of G-d.
4. 12:6 - They were in the process of conquering the land from the descendants of Shem.
5. He foresaw the Jewish People's defeat there in the days of Yehoshua due to Achan's sin. He built an altar to pray for them.
6. 12:13 - That the Egyptians would not kill him, and would give him presents.
7. 13:7 Lot's shepherds grazed their flocks in privately owned fields.
8. Amrafel was Nimrod. He said (amar ) to Avraham to fall (fel ) into the fiery furnace.
9. 14:7 - The Torah uses the name that the place would bear in the future.
10. 14:13 - He wanted Avraham to die trying to save Lot so that he himself could marry Sarah.
11. 14:14 - His servant, Eliezer.
12. 4:14 - He saw prophetically that his descendants would make a golden calf there, and as a result his strength failed.
13. 14:20 - Because Malki-Tzedek was a kohen.
14. 14:23 - G-d had promised Avraham wealth, and Avraham didn't want Sodom's King to say, "I made Avraham wealthy."
15. With the birth of Yitzchak.
16. 15:15 - That his father, Terach, would repent and become righteous.
17. 15:15 - Avraham lived to see his son Yishmael repent and become righteous, and he died before his grandson Esav became wicked.
18. 15:16 - They needed to wait until the Amorites had sinned sufficiently to deserve expulsion.
19. 16:1 - Pharaoh.
20. 17:3 - Because he was as yet uncircumcised.

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# WHAT'S IN A WORD?

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## Synonyms in the Hebrew Language

by Rabbi Reuven Chaim Klein

### Eighth Month

Two of the most significant events in World History were said to have happened in the month of Marcheshvan: Firstly, when Hashem brought a *mabul* (“flood”) to wipe out humanity in the time of Noah, this calamity began in the eighth month from Nissan – what we call Marcheshvan (see *Rosh Hashanah* 11b, Rashi to Gen. 7:11-12; 8:4-5, and Targum Jonathan to Gen. 7:11), sometimes abbreviated as just Cheshvan. Secondly, the Bible reports that the construction of the first Holy Temple in Jerusalem was completed in the eighth month, which the Bible explicitly calls the month of Bul (I Kgs. 6:38). Thus, we have two names for the same month, Marcheshvan and Bul. Elsewhere in the Bible, this month is referred to generically as *chodesh ha’shemini* (I Kings 12:32-33, Zech. 1:1), which literally means “the eighth month.” In this essay, we explore the possible origins and meaning of these different terms for the same month.

In most of the Bible, the months are named ordinally – that is, the “first month,” the “second month,” the “third month,” etc. – with the first month starting from the spring month that we now call Nissan. The Jerusalem Talmud (*Rosh Hashanah* 1:2) explains that the names of the months in the Jewish Calendar as we know it are of Babylonian origin, but that before the Jews were exiled, a different nomenclature was in use (see also Nachmanides to Ex. 12:2). One example of this is the aforementioned verse that refers to the completion of the Solomonic Temple in the month of Bul. It seems that the original names of the months in the Jewish Calendar mirrored the names of the months that the Canaanites used. Indeed, in the inscription found on the sarcophagus of the Tyrian (Canaanite) King Ashmunezer II, the king refers to the month Bul.

Nonetheless, the Jerusalem Talmud (there) expounds on the name Bul to explain that it refers to the month when the leaves are falling (*novel*), the earth is made into wet clumps (*bul*) because of the onset of rainfall, and one must mix (*bolel*) feed for animals indoors because the grass has already disappeared from the field (see also Targum Yonatan to I Kings 6:38).

Similarly, Rabbi Yeshayah of Trani (to I Kgs. 6:38) likewise connects the month-name Bul to the Hebrew word *yevul* (“produce”), alluding to the idea that in the month of Bul, one has already gathered all of one’s produce indoors. Menachem Ibn Saruk (in *Machberet Menachem*) likewise traces Bul to the biliteral root BET-LAMMED, explicitly connecting it to *yevul*. Rabbi Shlomo Pappenheim (1740-1814) elaborates on that biliteral root, offering a whole slew of derivatives and declensions. When it comes to the month-name Bul in particular, he connects it to the term *bilui* (“wearing out”) because the eighth month always occurs in the autumn/fall, when the various plants and leaves begin to get “worn out” and withered.

The prophet Isaiah criticizes those idolaters who bow to the *bul* of a tree (Isa. 44:19), which the Radak (there) explains as referring to a tree’s “branch.” Based on this, Rabbi Yosef Teomim-Frankel (1727-1792), author of the *Pri Megadim*, writes that the eighth month is called Bul because it “branches off” from the previous month of Tishrei, which is the first month of the Jewish calendar (and is called *rosh Hashanah* in Ezek. 40:1).

Rabbi Aharon Marcus (1843–1916) takes a different approach, explaining the “*bul* of a tree” as referring to an extraordinarily thick tree. In line with this, he argues that *bul* in general refers to “extraordinary increases,” thus explaining *mabul* (“flood”) as an excessive increase in water. Consequently, he explains the month-name Bul as referring to the surplus in the amount of grain and produce in one's house and storage facilities after the harvest season.

\*For more about the name Bul for the eighth month and the etymology of its more common name Marcheshvan, check out the complete version of this article, available online at: [http://ohr.edu/this\\_week/whats\\_in\\_a\\_word/](http://ohr.edu/this_week/whats_in_a_word/)

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## TALMUD TIPS

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by Rabbi Moshe Newman

### Kiddushin 72-82

#### Conservation of Righteousness

“A *tzaddik* (righteous person) does not depart this world until another *tzaddik* like him is created (i.e., is born into this world).”

This teaching in a *beraita* on our *daf* follows a statement made by Rebbi as he was on his deathbed (he was given a prophecy to tell – Rashi). Rebbi, who was in the Land of Israel, told of a number of terrible events that were occurring on that day in various cities throughout Bavel, concluding with the passing of Rav Ada bar Ahava on that day (according to one of two explanations cited by Rashi and Tosefot) in a city called Akra Diagma in Bavel. However, Rebbi “ended on a good note” and concluded with a statement of consolation that on that same day the Sage Rav Yehuda was born in Bavel.

The *gemara* follows up on this statement of Rebbi with a *beraita* that expresses a final message from Rebbi, which states that a *tzaddik* does not depart this world until another *tzaddik* who is like him comes into it. (According to the other explanation in Rashi and in Tosefot, Rav Ada bar Ahava was circumcised on that day, and did not die – “he was dwelling in the lap of our Patriach Avraham” – and it was Rebbi who died on that very day when Rav Yehuda was born.)

The idea being conveyed in this *beraita* is that Hashem ensures that there is a “conservation of *tzadikim*” in the world, in order that the righteousness, Torah study and the ethical Monotheism of Judaism should continue to exist in the world – for the sake of the continued existence of the world.

The *beraita* quotes a verse in Kohelet (1:5) as the source of this concept that when a *tzaddik* departs this world another one enters: “The sun rises, and the sun sets...”. The commentaries explain in various ways how our Sages learned from this verse, which seems to be descriptive of natural, daily sunrises and sunsets, the assurance that the passing of one *tzaddik* will always be accompanied with the birth of a new *tzaddik*.

One approach is that the order of the sun's events is reversed in the verse. According to the Torah, in Creation and for most purposes in Jewish law and practice, evening precedes daytime. “And it was evening, and it was morning, day one.” The change of this order in the verse cited by the *beraita* hints to a completely different

aspect of the world: the daylight preceding nightfall refers to the arrival of a new *tzaddik* in the world before the departure of an already existing one, so that the world should never be lacking “the light of the Torah” that *tzaddikim* bring with them. (Iyun Yaakov)

Another reason for explaining the verse in this manner is the seemingly redundant mention of the word “sun” a second time. The verse could have said “the sun rises and sets” instead of saying “the sun rises and the *sun* sets”. By stating the word “sun” a second time in the verse we are taught that this is a reference to a “different sun” – the *tzaddik*, who illuminates the world with his Torah righteousness and scholarship. Before the “light” of one *tzaddik* is dimmed when he departs this world, the light of a second *tzaddik* who has entered the world has been “lit”. (Maharsha)

I once heard from a great rabbi in Jerusalem that the comparison of a *tzaddik* passing from this world as likened to sunset also teaches another important lesson. Just as the sun after setting is still “there,” and is giving light someplace else in the world even if we don’t see it in a specific place, so too *tzaddikim* radiate an aura of holiness, purity and Torah in our own existence – even after their passing from this world.

- *Kiddushin 72b*

## The Best Doctors

*“The best of doctors are (headed) for gehinom (i.e., deserving of severe punishment in the Afterlife).”*

This teaching in our *mishna* is one that is oft-quoted, especially when a person feels that his doctor is being unfair in some manner (e.g., not giving antibiotics upon request, not writing an opiate prescription for “chronic pain”, or for overcharging), and is the subject of much discussion by our classical Torah commentaries.

One explanation is that a “talented” doctor is often not humble and does not fear Hashem, since he knows how to heal himself if needed, and knows what food is healthy to feed himself in order to prevent disease. As a result of this excessive “pride” and lack of fearing Hashem, he is liable to negligently treat his patients, resulting in their death. In addition, he is likely to refrain from accepting impoverished people who require medical attention. (Rashi)

Another commentary states that a doctor who is (or thinks he is) a great expert in the art of healing will not bother to seek a “second opinion” even when he has a doubt regarding his diagnosis or the treatment necessary. In this way, he may be putting the trusting patient’s life in danger. Likewise, he will brazenly rely on his own knowledge and “genius” and not properly research the medical literature in order to remain up-to-date and aware of the best medical care that he should be able to provide. (Tiferet Yisrael, who also relates a fascinating story with an amazing “twist” on this topic)

- *Kiddushin 82a*

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# COUNTING OUR BLESSINGS

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by Rabbi Reuven Lauffer

## HAVDALAH (PART 7) – FAREWELL, MY BELOVED

*“Hashem, my God will illuminate my darkness”*

(King David, Tehillim 18:29)

**H**avdalah continues with the blessing over the light of a candle: “Blessed are you, Hashem, our G-d, King of the universe, Who creates the illuminations of the fire – *Borei Meorei HaAish.*”

Why do we have a lit candle at Havdalah? The Talmud states (Pesachim 53b) that Rav Yehuda said in the name of Shmuel, “We do not recite a blessing over a flame, except at the departure of Shabbat, because that was when fire was created.”

To what is Rav Yehuda referring? The Midrash (Ber. Rabbah 11) relates that Hashem had mercy on Adam and Chavah after they sinned. Instead of evicting them immediately on Erev Shabbat, Hashem allowed them to remain in the Garden of Eden for the duration of the first Shabbat of Creation. However, as soon as night began to fall, they were expelled from the Garden and commanded to not return. Never having experienced darkness before, Adam was frightened that his life would be in danger once he was no longer surrounded by the protection of the Garden of Eden. To assuage his fears, Hashem taught Adam how to strike two stones together in order to produce sparks that could be used to ignite something flammable and make fire. Thus, on their first night outside of the Garden of Eden, Adam and Chavah lit a fire to keep themselves safe. It is this first fire in world history that Rav Yehuda is referring to.

In a sense, fire symbolizes our ability to create. But it is just an illusion. For those who understand the reality of Shabbat, it is Hashem Who creates. Even when it may seem to us that we are creating, we are not. What we are doing is recreating, using materials that Hashem has supplied us with. This is why on Shabbat we refrain from doing any kind of creative work, which includes the “creation” of fire.

As we make the transition from Shabbat back to the weekday, it is as if we are reliving Adam and Chavah’s experience of leaving the spiritual existence that was the Garden of Eden and entering into a new, stark reality. A reality that requires our collaboration, to imbue the mundane with light and joy.

The Mishna (Brachot 51b) records a disagreement between Beit Shamai and Beit Hillel as to the correct version of the blessing. According to Beit Shamai, the blessing should end with the words “Shebarah Meohr HaAish – Who created the illumination of the fire.” The sages of Beit Hillel are of the opinion that the correct wording is “Borei Meorei haAish – Who creates the illuminations of the fire,” with the word illuminations in the plural. Our Rabbis explore the disparity between the two versions in order to understand the exact difference between illuminate, in the singular, and illuminations, in the plural. Beit Shamai are of the opinion that fire is one entity, which is why the blessing is said in the singular. However, the final conclusion of the Talmud follows the opinion of Beit Hillel, that fire is not one uniform entity. Rather, fire is comprised of different

“illuminations.” As Rashi explains, the “different illuminations” are the various colors that can be seen within the flame, such as red, white and yellow. And that is why it is correct to use the plural form in the blessing.

Because we follow the opinion of Beit Hillel and say “Borei Meorei HaAish,” it is correct to use a candle that has more than one wick, to practically fulfill the word “Meorei – illuminations” in the plural (Orach Chaim 298). This is why many people have the custom to use decorative candles with multiple braids, to fulfill their obligation in the most beautiful way possible.

*To be continued...*

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## PARSHA OVERVIEW

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Ten generations have passed since Noach. Man has descended spiritually. In the year 1948 from Creation, Avram is born. By observing the world, Avram comes to recognize G-d's existence, and thus merits G-d appearing to him. At the beginning of this week's Torah portion, G-d tells Avram to leave his land, his relatives and his father's house and travel to an unknown land where G-d will make him into a great nation. Avram leaves, taking with him his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, their servants, and those whom they converted to faith in G-d. When they reach the land of Canaan G-d appears to Avram and tells him that this is the land that He will give to his descendants.

A famine ensues and Avram is forced to relocate to Egypt to find food. Realizing that his wife's beauty could cause his death at the hand of the Egyptians, Avram asks her to say that she is his sister. Sarai is taken to Pharaoh, but G-d afflicts Pharaoh and his court with severe plagues and she is released unmolested. Avram returns to Eretz Yisrael (Canaan) with much wealth given to him by the Egyptians. During a quarrel over grazing rights between their shepherds, Avram decides to part ways with his nephew Lot. Lot chooses to live in the rich but corrupt city of Sodom in the fertile plain of the Jordan. A war breaks out between the kings of the region and Sodom is defeated. Lot is taken captive. Together with a handful of his converts, Avram rescues Lot, miraculously overpowering vastly superior forces, but Avram demurs at accepting any of the spoils of the battle.

In a prophetic covenant, G-d reveals to Avram that his offspring will be exiled to a strange land where they will be oppressed for 400 years, after which they will emerge with great wealth and return to Eretz Yisrael, their irrevocable inheritance. Sarai is barren and gives Hagar, her Egyptian hand-maiden, to Avram in the hope that she will provide them with a child. Hagar becomes arrogant when she discovers that she is pregnant. Sarai deals harshly with her, and Hagar flees. On the instruction of an angel, Hagar returns to Avram and gives birth to Yishmael. The weekly portion concludes with G-d commanding Avram to circumcise himself and his offspring throughout the generations as a Divine covenant. G-d changes Avram's name to Avraham, and Sarai's name to Sarah. Hashem promises Avraham a son, Yitzchak, despite Avraham being ninety-nine years old and Sarah ninety. On that day, Avraham circumcises himself, Yishmael and his entire household.