



Jewish Congregation of Marco Island

A CLOSE LOOK AT TORAH

Focus on a question in the weekly portion

October 31, 2026



“Fostering diverse modes of attention to textual details cultivates correlative forms of attention to the world and divine reality”

Michael Fishbane (1943-), *Sacred Attunement: A Jewish Theology*

ברוך אתה יי, אלהינו מלך העולם,
אשר קדשנו במצותיו, וצונו לעסוק בדברי תורה:

“Tachometer Torah”



...read down to the red line

Parashat-haShavu'a Stats

Weekly Portion: *vaYeira*

Consists of: Genesis 18:1-22:24

Sequence—

in Genesis: 4th of 12

in annual Torah cycle: 4th of 54



A Salient Selection from the Portion -

Selections from the opening of Genesis 18

Context: *Genesis, first of the Five Books of the Torah, is an outline of the Creation of the physical universe; a description of the origin of the human family by their respective nations; and an account of Abraham's and Sarah's lineage through their grandson Jacob as the foundation of the Israelite people.*

Content: *Having, as a sign of his commitment to his Covenant with God, recently circumcised all the males of his household— including himself— the desert patriarch experiences an unusual visitation.*

18:1] - The Eternal One appeared {singular} to [Abraham outside the city of Chevron, in his encampment in] the oak-grove of Mamrei, where he was sitting at the entryway of the tent **around** the heat of the day.

וַיֵּרָא אֵלָיו יְהוָה בְּאֵלֵי מַמְרֵי
וְהוּא יֹשֵׁב פֶּתַח הָאֵהָל כְּחֹם הַיּוֹם

18:2] - Looking up, he saw **three figures positioned near him**. Having seen, he ran from the entrance of the tent to greet **them** {plural} and, bowing to the ground, [18:3a] - he said:

וַיִּשָּׂא עֵינָיו וַיֵּרָא וְהִנֵּה שְׁלֹשָׁה
אֲנָשִׁים נֹצְבִים עָלָיו וַיֵּרָא וַיֵּרָץ
לְקִרְאתָם מִפֶּתַח הָאֵהָל וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוֶה
אָרְצָה וַיֹּאמֶר

18:3b] - “**My lords!** If it please **you**, do not bypass your servant.

אֲדֹנָי אִם נָא מְצֹאתִי חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ אֵל
נָא תַעֲבֹר מֵעַל עֲבָדְךָ

- more over

18:4] - Let a little water be brought, that you may bathe your feet, and recline a bit under the tree. [18:5a] - And let me fetch a morsel of bread, that you may strengthen your hearts—only after which may you continue on, inasmuch as you have passed the way of your servant.”

18:5b] - They replied, “All right; do as you have said.” [18:6] - So Abraham hastened into the tent to Sarah, and said: “Quick, three *sei'ahs* of choice flour! Knead and make cakes!” [18:7] - Then Abraham ran to the herd, took a calf, tender and choice, and gave it to a servant lad, who hastened to prepare it. [18:8] - He took yogurt and milk, and the calf that had been prepared; and, setting these before them, he remained standing over them under the tree as they ate.

18:9] - They said to him: “Where is your wife Sarah?” To which [Abraham] replied, “There, in the tent.” [18:10a] - To which He declared: “I will return to you next year, and your wife Sarah shall have a son!”

18:10b] - Sarah was listening at the entrance of the tent, which was behind him. [18:11] - Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in years; the way of women was no longer upon Sarah. [18:12] - So Sarah laughed inwardly, thinking: “Having shriveled up, should I enjoy such pleasure, with my husband also so old?”

18:13] - At that The Eternal One said to Abraham: “Why did Sarah laugh, saying, ‘How could I really bear a child, as old as I am?’ [18:14] - Is anything too wondrous for The Eternal One? I will return to you at the same season next year, and Sarah shall have a son.”

18:15] - Sarah lied, saying, “I did not laugh” (because she was frightened); but He replied: “No—you did, indeed, laugh.”

18:16] - At that, the men got up from there and looked down toward Sodom, and Abraham walking with them to send them on the way.

יִקַּח נָא מַעַט מִיַּם וְרָחֲצוּ רַגְלֵיכֶם
וְהִשְׁעֲנוּ תַּחַת הָעֵץ וְאַקְחָה פֶּתַח
לֶחֶם וְסַעַדְוּ לְבָבְכֶם אַחֵר תַּעֲבֹרוּ כִּי
עַל כֵּן עֲבַרְתֶּם עַל עַבְדְּכֶם

וַיֹּאמְרוּ כֹּן תַעֲשֶׂה כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְתָּ
וַיִּמְהַר אַבְרָהָם הָאֱהָלָה אֶל שָׂרָה
וַיֹּאמֶר מַה־רִּי שְׁלֹשׁ סְאִים קֶמַח
סֹלֶת לִישִׁי וְעָשִׂי עֲגוֹת וְאֶל הַבָּקָר
רֹץ אַבְרָהָם וַיִּקַּח בֶּן בָּקָר רֶדֶד וְטוֹב
וַיִּתֵּן אֶל הַנֶּעֶר וַיִּמְהַר לַעֲשׂוֹת אֹתוֹ
וַיִּקַּח חֲמֵאָה וְחֶלֶב וּבֶן הַבָּקָר אֲשֶׁר
עָשָׂה וַיִּתֵּן לִפְנֵיהֶם וְהוּא עֹמֵד
עֲלֵיהֶם תַּחַת הָעֵץ וַיֹּאכְלוּ

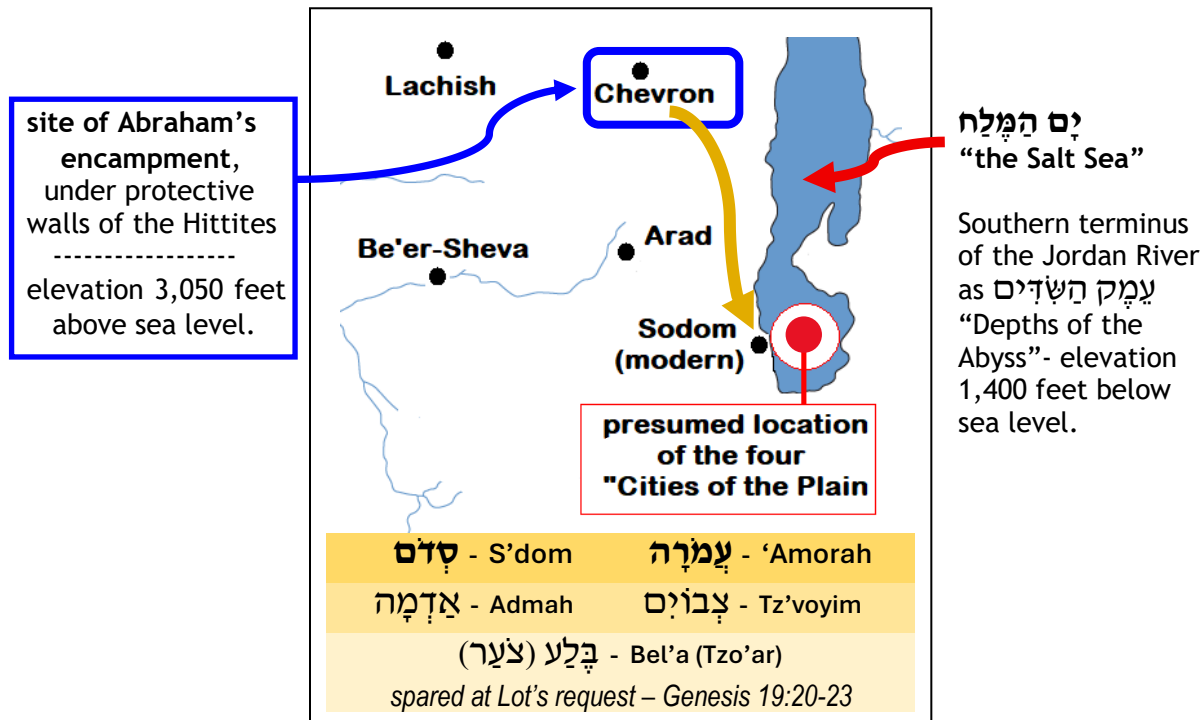
וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלָיו אַיֵּה שָׂרָה אֲשֶׁתְּךָ
וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֵּה בְּאֵהָל וַיֹּאמֶר שׁוּב
אָשׁוּב אֵלֶיךָ כָּעֵת חַיָּה וְהִנֵּה בֶן
לְשָׂרָה אֲשֶׁתְּךָ

וְשָׂרָה שָׁמְעַת פֶּתַח הָאֵהָל וְהוּא
אַחֲרָיו וְאַבְרָהָם וְשָׂרָה זָקְנִים
בָּאִים בַּיָּמִים הַזֵּה לְהָיוֹת לְשָׂרָה
אֶרֶץ כְּנָשִׁים וַתִּצְחַק שָׂרָה בְּקִרְבָּהּ
לֵאמֹר אַחֲרֵי בִלְתִּי הִיְתָה לִי עֲדָנָה
וְאֲדֹנִי זָקֵן

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל אַבְרָהָם לָמָּה זֶה
צָחָקָה שָׂרָה לֵאמֹר הֲאִף אֲמָנָם
אֵילָד וְאֲנִי זָקְנָתִי הִיפְלֵא מִיְּהוָה
דָּבָר לְמוֹעֵד אָשׁוּב אֵלֶיךָ כָּעֵת חַיָּה
וּלְשָׂרָה בֶּן

וַתִּכְחַשׁ שָׂרָה לֵאמֹר לֹא צָחַקְתִּי
כִּי יֵרָאָה וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא כִּי צָחַקְתְּ

וַיִּקְמוּ מִשָּׁם הָאֲנָשִׁים וַיִּשְׁקֹפוּ עַל
פְּנֵי סֹדֶם וְאַבְרָהָם הִלֵּךְ עִמָּם
לְשַׁלְחָם



18:17] - Now The Eternal One said [inwardly]: "Should I be hiding from Abraham what I am doing, [18:18] - inasmuch as Abraham is to become a great and populous nation, and all the nations of the earth are to bless themselves by him? [18:19] - For I have singled him out, that he may instruct his children and his posterity so that they may keep the way of The Eternal One by doing what is just and right, in order that The Eternal One may bring about for Abraham what is intended for him."

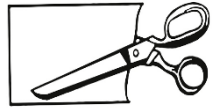
18:20] - So The Eternal One said, "The outrage of Sodom and Gomorrah is great; their sin, heavy, [18:21] - Let me, therefore, go down that I may see whether they have acted altogether in accord with the outcry that has reached Me—and if not, I will know." 18:22a] - At which the men turned away from there and headed on to Sodom,

18:22b] - while Abraham remained standing before The Eternal One— [18:23] - and, stepping up, Abraham demanded: "Will You, then, sweep away the innocent, along with the guilty?"

וַיְהִי וְאָמַר הַמֶּלֶכֶת אֲנִי מֵאַבְרָהָם
אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי עֹשֶׂה וְאַבְרָהָם הָיוּ יְהִיָּה
לְגוֹי גָּדוֹל וְעָצוּם וְנִבְרָכוּ בוֹ כָּל גּוֹיֵי
הָאָרֶץ כִּי יִדְעֻתּוֹ לְמַעַן אֲשֶׁר יִצְוֶה
אֶת בָּנָיו וְאֶת בֵּיתוֹ אַחֲרָיו וְשָׁמְרוּ
דֶּרֶךְ יְהוָה לַעֲשׂוֹת צְדָקָה וּמִשְׁפָּט
לְמַעַן הִבִּיא יְהוָה עַל אַבְרָהָם אֶת
אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר עָלָיו

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה זַעֲקַת סְדֹם וְעֲמֹרָה כִּי
רַבָּה וַחֲטָאתָם כִּי כִבְדָּה מְאֹד
אֶבְדָּה נָא וְאַרְאֶה הַכְּצַעֲקוּתָהּ
הַבָּאָה אֵלַי עָשׂוּ כָּלָה וְאִם לֹא
אִדְעָה וַיִּפְּנוּ מִשָּׁם הָאֲנָשִׁים וַיֵּלְכוּ
סְדֹמָה

וְאַבְרָהָם עוֹדְנוֹ עֹמֵד לִפְנֵי יְהוָה
וַיִּגַּשׁ אַבְרָהָם וַיֹּאמֶר הֲאֵף תִּסָּפֶה
צַדִּיק עִם רָשָׁע



TORAH Snippet as a warm-up

וַיִּגַּשׁ אַבְרָהָם וַיֹּאמֶר

18:23 - ..and, **stepping up**, Abraham demanded...

verb root נ-ג-שׁ	3 rd -person singular future tense of ל / קל / simple active יִגַּשׁ	with conjunction “and” converting verb to narrative past tense וַיִּגַּשׁ
“to draw near; approach; come close”	“he will draw near; approach; come close “	“he drew near; approached; came close”

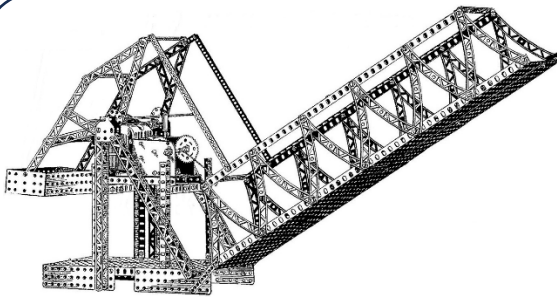
- A Narrative Hallmark of Destiny Achieved -

Intentionally -

- Genesis 27:22 - Jacob approaches his father, Isaac, to claim the birthright.
- 1 Samuel 17:40 - David approaches the Philistine giant Golyat to do battle.
- 1 Kings 18:36 - Elijah approaches the altar of Israel at Mount Carmel.

Incidentally -

- Genesis 44:18 - Judah approaches the Prime Minister of Egypt to save Benjamin.
- 1 Samuel 9:18 - Saul approaches an old man in the gateway of Ramah.
- 1 Kings 20:22 - Elisha approaches the king of Israel to foretell defeat of Assyria.



FOCUS: A Question of Narrative Structure



- 1) Genesis 18:1 God appears to Abraham.
- 2) Genesis 18:2-16 Abraham invites, and entertains, three individuals.
- 3) Genesis 18:17-33 God discusses with Abraham the fate of S'dom.

- continued

Three Separate Narratives -

מאי כחום היום

1) Babylonian Talmud, Baba M'tzi'a 86b - What does it mean, when Scripture says that "[Abraham was sitting at the entryway of the tent] like the heat of the day"?

אמר רבי חמא ברבי חנינא אותו היום יום
שלישי של מילה של אברהם היה ובא הקדוש
ברוך הוא לשאול באברהם

Rabbi Chama, son of Rabbi Chanina, says: That day was the third day following Abraham's circumcision [when he was sore, and feverish with infection], so The Holy And Blessed One had come to inquire into Abraham's welfare.

Genesis 34:25 –
וַיְהִי בַיּוֹם הַשְּׁלִישִׁי
Then, on the third day,
בְּהֵיוֹתָם כְּאַבִּים
when they were in pain. . . .

הוציא הקדוש ברוך הוא חמה מנרתיקה כדי שלא יטריח אותו צדיק באורחים
The Holy And Blessed One had unsheathed the sun [to burn with full force], in order that that righteous man should not be imposed upon by [having to offer hospitality to] wayfarers.

תנא אין מלאך אחד עושה שתי שליחות ולא שני מלאכים עושים שליחות אחת
2) Midrash Genesis Rabbah 50:2 - It is a teaching of the Mishnaic sages that one angel cannot carry out two distinct commissions, neither can two angels together perform one.

אלא מיכאל אמר בשורתו ונסתלק

As such[, the reason that Genesis 18 makes reference to "three men" is that the Archangel] MichaEil delivered the annunciation [of Sarah's impending birth], and then departed;

גבריאל נשתלח להפוך את סדום

GabriEil was dispatched to overturn S'dom [and the other cities of the plain];

ורפאל להציל את לוט

and R'faEil [accompanied him] to rescue [Abraham's nephew] Lot.

המכסה אני אשר אני עושה – בסדום

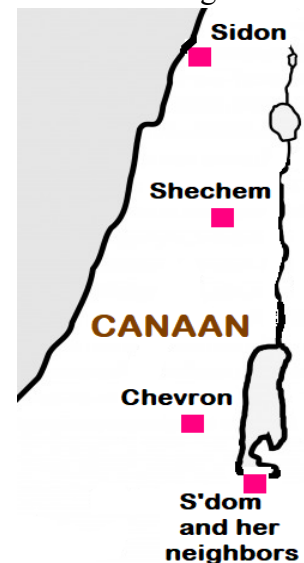
3) RaSHI (Shlomo Yitzchaqi, 1040-1105) on Genesis 18:17 - "Should I be hiding from Abraham what I am doing" to [the city and environs of] S'dom.

לא יפה לי לעשות דבר זה שלא מדעתו אני נתתי לו את
הארץ הזאת וחמשה כרכין הללו שלו הן שנאמר גבול
הכנעני מצידון וגו' באכה סדומה ועמורה וגו'

"It is not right for me to do this thing, without his knowledge; for I have given him this entire land, which means that those five cities are his." (Even as it is said in Scripture "The boundaries of the Canaanites were from Sidon...as far as S'dom and 'Amorah" [Genesis 10:19]).

קראתי אותו אברהם אב המון גוים ואשמיד את הבנים
ולא אודיע לאב שהוא אוהבי

"I have named him Abraham, 'father of a multitude of nations' [Genesis 17:5]— so how can I destroy the children without notifying the father, whom I love?"



- more over

Two Separate Narratives -

ובספר מורה הנבוכים נאמר כי הפרשה כלל ופרט

1) RaMBaN (Bonastruc da Porta, 1194-1270) on Genesis 18:1 - In his *Guide for the Perplexed*, [Moses Maimonides] says that this narrative consists of a generalization followed by itemized details[, in which case, Rabbi Ishma'el's 13 Hermeneutic Principles establish that only those details matter].

אמר הכתוב תחלה **כי נראה אליו השם** במראות הנבואה

Scripture says initially **that The Ineffable One appeared** to [Abraham] in a prophetic vision,

ואיך היתה המראה הזאת כי נשא עיניו במראה והנה ג' אנשים נצבים עליו
ויאמר אם נא מצאתי חן בעיניך זה ספור מה שאמר במראה הנבואה לאחד
מהם הגדול שבהם

and then [more specifically] **how that manifestation appeared**— for “looking up, he saw three figures positioned near him,” to whom he said “my lords! If it please you. . . ,” which is the narrative account of how, in his prophetic vision, Abraham addressed the chief among them.

ואם במראה לא נראו אליו רק אנשים אוכלים בשר איך אמר וירא אליו ה'
כי הנה לא נראה לו השם לא במראה ולא במחשבה

Now if in this prophetic vision there appeared to [Abraham] **only three men eating meat**, **how can Scripture say that “The Eternal One appeared”**? For by no means did The Ineffable One appear to him, either in vision or thought.

הנה בכל מקום יתעוררו החכמים להודיענו כי ראיית המלאך איננה נבואה
ואין הרואים מלאכים והמדברים עמם מכלל הנביאים

For in any event, our sages of antiquity went to pains to inform us that **beholding an angel does not constitute prophecy**; neither are those who see angels and speak with them, regarded as prophets.

וה' אמר

2) RaMBaN on Genesis 18:7 - “Now The Eternal One said” -

אל צבא השמים העומדים עליו
to **the celestial host** in attendance upon Him,
או אל המלאכים השלוחים
or else to the [three] angelic emissaries.

ויתכן שהוא המחשבה

And perhaps [inasmuch as in Scriptural narrative the verb “say” often signifies “to think” or “to intend”] **it simply refers to thought**—

כי חשב שלא יתכסה ממנו מפני הטעמים הללו

for He thought that He could not conceal [His purpose from Abraham,] because of the reasons stated in this verse.

1 Kings 22:19 -

רָאִיתִי אֶת יְהוָה יֹשֵׁב עַל כִּסְאוֹ

I saw The Eternal One, seated upon His throne,

וְכָל צֶבֶא הַשָּׁמַיִם עֹמְדֵי עָלָיו

מִיְמִינוֹ וּמִשְׁמָאלוֹ

with **all the host of heaven** standing in attendance to His right and His left.

- continued

One Contiguous Narrative: Conversation, Interrupted –

וַיֵּרָא אֵלָיו ה' בְּאֵלֵי מַמְרֵי - כִּי שָׁם נִמּוּל אַבְרָהָם אֶזְרָח וְכָל בֵּיתוֹ נִמּוּלוּ אִתּוֹ שָׁם
הוֹפִיעַ הָאֵל יִתְבָּרָךְ שְׁכִינָתוֹ לַעֲמֹד בְּבְרִית

A) OvadYah S'forno (1475-1550) on Genesis 18:1 - “The Eternal One appeared to him at the oak-grove of Mamrei” - Because it was there that Avraham had circumcised himself (and all [the males of] his household with him at the same time), **it was there that the blessed God manifested the Indwelling Presence in confirmation of the Covenant.**

כַּמְשָׁפֶט לְכָל כּוֹרְתֵי בְרִית כְּעֵנֶן אֲתֶם נֹצְבִים וְכוּ' לְעִבְרָךְ בְּבְרִית וּכְעֵנֶן וַיִּכְרַת
לִפְנֵי ה' וַיַּעֲמֵד כָּל הָעָם בְּבְרִית

The same is the outcome for all who keep the Covenant— as in the matter of “You are standing poised this day [to enter in the Covenant with The Eternal One, your God” - Deuteronomy 29:9-11], and in that of “the king entered into Covenant in the Presence of The Eternal One...and all the people stood in the Covenant” [II Kings 23:3].

וַנִּרְאֶה לְאַבְרָהָם שְׁהִיָּה מוֹכֵן מִכָּלם לְאוֹתָהּ הַמִּרְאָה

And yet [God] manifested before Abraham, as **he was the individual most deserving to be the recipient of such a vision.**

וְכֵן עֵנֶן וַיִּפְגְּשֻׁהוּ ה' שְׁלֹא נִרְאֶה שָׁם לְדַבֵּר עִם מֹשֶׁה אֲבָל הוֹפִיעַ שְׁכִינָתוֹ לְקַבֵּל
בְּרִית בְּנוֹ כְּאִמְרוֹ בֵּינִי וּבֵינֵיכֶם לְדִרְתֵּיכֶם

A similar matter occurs in “The Eternal One confronted [Moses” - Exodus 4:24]. He appeared there in order to speak with Moses (without manifesting the Indwelling Presence), in order that he should receive the Covenant [of circumcision] on his son— even as He had said [to Abraham in Genesis 17:11-12 “It is to be the sign of the Covenant] between Me and you for all your generations.”

וְאוּלֵי בְשִׁבִּיל זֶה נִהְגוּ לְהַכִּין כִּסֵּא בְּעֵת הַמִּילָה וּבַמְקוֹמָהּ

Perhaps this is the reason why a special chair is prepared **at the time of a circumcision, to designate its place.**

Honorary chair of Elijah
for a circumcision

Inviting the prophet to bear witness that— unlike what he told God in I Kings 19:14— the people of Israel have not “forsaken Your Covenant.”



וַיֹּאמֶר אֲדֹנִי אִם נָא וּגוֹ' - וּבִלְשׁוֹן זֶה הוּא קֹדֶשׁ

B) RaSHI (Shlomo Yitzchaki, 1040-1105) on Genesis 18:3 - “My Lord, if it please You” - This expression here [is not the courteous secular usage, “my lords,” but rather] is the sacred form of address[, referring to (and addressing) God].

וְהִיָּה אוֹמֵר לַהֲקַבֵּ"ה **לַהֲמַתִּין** לוֹ עַד שִׁירוֹץ וַיַּכְנִיס אֶת הָאוֹרְחִים

For [in saying “if it please You, do not bypass your servant,”] **he was asking The Holy And Blessed One to hold on**, until he had run to welcome the guests.

- more over

גדולה הכנסת אורחין מהקבלת פני שכינה

C) Babylonian Talmud, Shabbat 127a - Hospitality toward guests is greater than receiving the Indwelling Presence—

דכתיב ויאמר אדני אם נא מצאתי חן בעיניך אל נא תעבר וגו'

even as it is written in Scripture: “He said ‘my Lord, if it please You, do not bypass Your servant’.”

D) Isaac Mei'ir of Ger (1790?-1866), <u>in Si'ach Sarfei Qodesh, 1929 -</u> “Where he was sitting at the entryway of the tent” - Abraham kept an open door, as a standing invitation to all to enter that they may learn the true and pure conception of their Creator. They might also learn that proper path— free from envy, pride, and haughtiness— that leads to the perfection of the spirit.	E) Alexander Zusia Friedman (1897-1943), <u>Ma'ayanei haTorah -</u> “Where he was sitting at the entryway of the tent” - the text uses the present-tense of the verb יֹשֵׁב הוא, signifying “he <u>is</u> sitting.” From this, our sages of antiquity inferred that Abraham is perpetually stationed at the gateway to Gehenna, barring Israelites from admittance. <u>Babylonian Talmud, 'Eiruv 19a -</u> הא דכתיב עברי בעמק הבכא ההוא דמחייבי ההיא שעתא בגיהנם ואתי אברהם אבינו ומסיק להו ומקבל להו “Those who pass through the Vale of Tears” [Psalm 84:7] signifies that for those doomed to pass for even one hour of suffering through Gehenna, our father Abraham comes to raise them up and greet them.
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F) Dov Greenberg, “Remaining Warm and Kind in a World Gone Cold,” in Jewish News of Northern California – November 06, 2025 -

“He was sitting at the entryway of the tent
around the heat of the day.”

The verse is not only telling us when it was, that Abraham was sitting at the entrance of his tent; it is telling us who he was.

Abraham was like the warmth of the day itself. He sat there **k'chom ha-yom— like the sun— radiating warmth to a world grown cold.** He was, to those weary travelers, what the sun is to the earth: a presence of light; of generosity; of hope.

The Torah is showing us **the essence of Judaism before there was Sinai; before there was Torah; before there was nationhood: the call to be k'chom ha-yom, to be like the warmth of day.** It is a summons to see the pain of others, to bring light where there is darkness; warmth where there is loneliness; hope where there is despair.