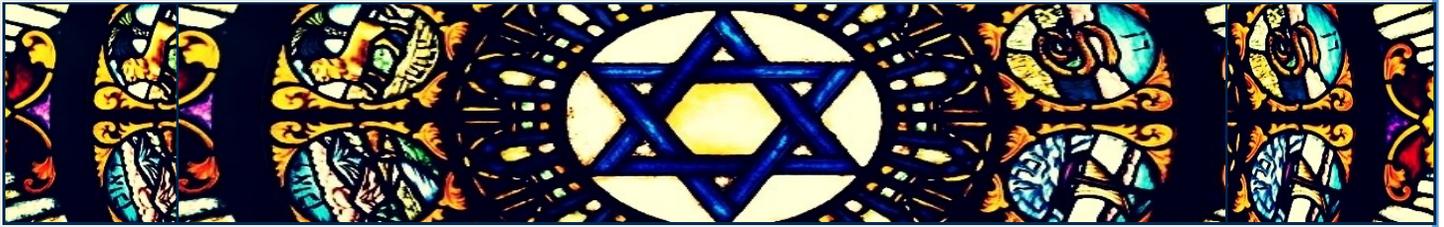


RABBI JACK'S MESSAGE IN A MINUTE



Family relationships are complicated at best. One of the fascinating aspects of our Torah is the way parents, children, siblings, and spouses are so humanly described--with flaws and often with deep emotional scars. We see this type of treatment from the very beginning. Eve and Adam had a challenging dynamic, brothers Cain and Abel ended their rivalry with mortal violence, and Noah towards the end of his life had to deal with the amoral betrayal of his children.

This week we are introduced to Abraham and Sarah. And in typical fashion we are shown characteristics inherent in our first Matriarch and Patriarch that we are supposed to emulate. In *Lech Lecha*, we see their unyielding commitment to faith and a belief in One God. Leaving their entire past behind, they embark on a journey to a place unseen based solely on a promise that a better world is possible.

This is why Sarah and Abraham are considered the mother and father of Judaism. However, we are also shown within the body of the narrative a strikingly difficult intrafamily challenge.

Because Sarah is unable to conceive, she encourages her husband to "go to" Hagar, Sarah's Egyptian maid servant, and indeed their union produces a boy, Ishmael. Soon Sarah sours on the relationship and requests that Abraham banish Hagar and their son. He doesn't want to, the tension in this household is tangible throughout the verses. Abraham, instead of attempting a reconciliation or finding a solution to keeping his home intact, relents and sends Hagar and the child he loves away into exile. This decision ultimately resulted in resentment, hatred, rivalries and contentious feelings among all of their descendants to this very day. By all accounts Abraham made a huge mistake in dealing with the closest members of his family.

Our sacred texts teach us important lessons in many ways, not always how we should copy the behavior of our biblical heroes, but what we can learn from their failings as well.

L'shalom,
Rabbi Jack