

Parashat Vayera

Vayera – G-d appeared.

This is the fourth Torah portion in the book of Genesis. The story begins with Abraham sitting, resting at the opening of his tent, when he notices three "men" approaching. Abraham welcomes them in and he and Sarah offers them hospitality. The men, messengers of G-d, announce to Sarah that she will bear a child in her old age. Sarah (at 90 years old) responds to this news by laughing. Soon after this event, the baby is born. Abraham and Sarah name him Isaac, which means laughter in Hebrew. Abraham, who is now a hundred years old, circumcises their son with great celebration. Sarah, now with her own biological child becomes deeply bitter with the presence of Hagar, her servant, who made for Abraham a son Ishmael, and insists that Abraham send them away. Abraham consults with G-d, who assures him that Ishmael too will be blessed and become the father of a great nation just as Isaac will be, and off they go. After many years, Abraham is put to his greatest test. G-d appears to Abraham and commands him to go and offer Isaac as a sacrifice. They travel together to Mount Moriah (later to be the site of the Temple in Jerusalem) where Abraham binds up Isaac and raises his knife to slaughter him. But he is stopped by G-d, who provides a ram as a substitute.

There are many themes to look at in the original text, which is summarized here. Hospitality, miracle of birth to a woman of 90, laughter, the commandment of brit milah –circumcision, sleeping with your housekeeper -surrogate parenting, sending away your own son and that of your step son, and the great test from G-d, of sacrificing - killing your son. A complex Torah portion for all. Blessings, miracles, uncertainty, challenges, pain, suffering and FAITH! For some of us, the scenarios may not be exactly the same but indeed the emotions and challenges are the same. What kept our ancestors going, it was having the FAITH that G-d would be there to walk the path of the journey – giving love, support and hope. As we continue on our journeys, may we all be blessed with good things, and may we have the FAITH to know ***Vayera – G-d will appear*** to us, to walk with each one of us, each and every day. Amen.