

## Parshat Vayeira

November 7, 2014

This week's Shabbat Message was written by NYL Cabinet member Jenny David from Virginia Peninsula.

Dear *Chevre*,

Tomorrow, my son Reilly will become a Bar Mitzvah. The *d'var Torah* that Reilly will give to our congregation has particular meaning for me as a member of NYL Cabinet.

This week's *parsha*, *Vayeira*, tells the story of the binding of Isaac. G-d's directive to Abraham to sacrifice Isaac is presented as a test. Simplistically, Abraham passes the test by having faith in G-d and doing what G-d commands. Many people, however, believe that Abraham actually fails the test in that he is willing to sacrifice his child. In facing this test, Abraham does not seek help, either from himself or others, to try to change the situation.

From an earlier story, we know that Abraham does know how to help himself. When G-d tells Abraham that Sodom and Gomorrah are going to be destroyed, Abraham argues with G-d and tries to convince G-d not to destroy the cities. But, when G-d tells Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, Abraham does not argue, he does not try to help himself.

In his *d'var Torah*, Reilly states that before you can seek help you need to decide that the situation is not hopeless. In other words, if you believe your situation is hopeless, there is no point in asking for help. Reilly believes that Abraham, having received instructions from G-d to sacrifice Isaac, is put in what appears to be a hopeless situation, and therefore he does not think that anyone, including himself, can help.

In this week's *Haftarah*, an unnamed woman is also put in a seemingly hopeless situation. Her husband dies, and, because she is poor and in debt, her sons are going to be taken away as slaves. The woman asks for help from Elijah. Elijah tells her to pour the small amount of oil that she has into jars. She follows his directions and discovers a miracle: her small amount of oil fills numerous jars. This woman is able to sell the jars of oil and pay off her debt, and therefore does not need to sell her sons into slavery. Reilly believes that the woman was able to ask for help because she rejected that her situation was entirely hopeless.

Reilly sums up his *d'var* by saying, "I think that both of these stories show if you are able to believe that you are not beyond help, then you can seek help, either from yourself or others. We have to believe that there is hope even in seemingly hopeless situations. Only if we reject hopelessness, can we look to

ourselves and to others for solutions."

I believe that Reilly is right—it is only when we reject hopelessness that we can look to ourselves and others for help. The Federation system is defined by the Jewish people's rejection of hopelessness. No matter what happens, we will stand together. There is no situation beyond hope. There will be help for you when you need it. We will be there.

Shabbat Shalom,

Jenny

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