
November 2019/5779

Congregation Anshe Emeth

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Teen Discussion : Words That Hurt and Words That Heal

This is the theme for the Global Day of Jewish Learning in mid-November. It is based on the Jewish teaching that our tongues are like arrows—once the arrow is shot, there is no way to get it back. Teens have so much more experience with social media than many adults. We are hoping they will share their knowledge of cyber-bullying with us.

We will also discuss words for comforting others and resolving conflict.

We will gather at 6:45 pm, after the Shabbat dinner this week.

Judy Feinstein

Message from our Rabbinic Intern, Caroline Sim



When most people think of the parsha Lech L'cha, they think of Avram and Sarai setting out from their homeland, travelling towards Canaan. Or they might recall the story of Sarai, who is unable to



Upcoming Events

November 15 –

5:30 PM Gathering

6:00 PM Shabbat Dinner provided, in part, by the Libbie Murstein Hospitality Fund

6:45 PM – Videotaping Alan Berman, “Memories of Anshe Emeth” and Teen Discussion

7:30 PM – Shabbat Services

Todah Rabah ...

Barbara Bollenbacher Freed for allowing us to videotape her as a past President of Anshe Emeth

GENERAL FUND CONTRIBUTIONS

Becca Litchfield Thomas

Melissa Reed

OCTOBER ONEG THANKS:

Mark and Jean Young, the Libbie Murstein Hospitality Fund. With special thanks to **Lily Bowman** for baking the challah!

conceive, giving her handmaiden, Hagar, to Avram so that he might sire an heir. All of that (and more) does happen in Lech L'cha. But there is an additional detail within the Hagar story that is often overlooked.

After Hagar runs away, an angel comes to her in the wilderness. This is surprising in and of itself, since it is the first time that anyone in the Bible directly addresses Hagar, and the first time God or a divine avatar talks to a woman since Eve. But what is really interesting is that the angel declares that God will multiply Hagar's descendants, and that they will be too numerous to count (Gen 16:10). If this sounds familiar, it should. This is the same promise that God makes to all of our patriarchs: to Abraham in Gen 13:16 and 15:5, to Isaac in 26:4, and to Jacob in 28:14. However, Hagar is the only woman to whom God makes this promise – none of our matriarchs receive the same courtesy.

Making the declaration to Hagar could be a way to fulfill God's initial promise to Abraham. After all, Ishmael is Abraham's son just as much as Isaac. Conversely, it could be a way of emasculating the Ishmaelites since Hagar, a woman, plays the role of the patriarch of their line. The location where this encounter occurs receives a name, Be'er-lachai-ro'i, because of Hagar's experience, which further parallels Hagar's role as the Ishmaelite patriarch. Every other time that a place is named because of a divine interaction, it is because of a man's

It will likely be impossible to determine definitively what the authors or redactors of the bible intended to say with this text, whether to elevate or diminish Hagar and the Ishmaelites. Historically, biblical commentators have said very little about this passage. Most of the time, when we think of Hagar we think of her only in terms of the strife between her and Sarah, or as the mother of Ishmael, who is a possible threat to Isaac and the inheritance destined for the Israelites. We are predisposed against Hagar and Ishmael because of centuries of tradition, teachings, and established interpretations we have received from generations before us. Because of this bias, we may be blind to other interpretations and readings of the text.

For us, the key may be in two names: Hagar, which could be read "ha ger" meaning "the stranger," and the name that God granted Hagar's son: Ishmael, or "God will listen." Remember, Hagar is an Egyptian (foreign) slave. No one in the bible hears Hagar or considers her, except for God. We should follow God's example and hear not only Hagar's story, but those of others who are not given a voice. We should listen to the immigrant and the single mother as individual human beings and not just as representatives of groups that may or may not be problematic. We should seek them out and see if their children receive the same benefits as our children – as is their right. We should listen to the stranger. We may find more in common with them than we expect.

November Yahrzeits: In Blessed Memory....William Chertik, Edmund Clippinger, Dorothy Kastner, Edna Kastner Feingold, Arthur Litchfield, Millie Simon, Charles Young

Mi Sheberach – Prayers for healing: Mike Swanger, Steve Wyke, Clara Gee Stamaty Ziment