



Torah Reflections on *Parashat Vayera*

Genesis 18:1 - 22:24

15 Heshvan 5772

November 12, 2011

“...Let a little water be brought; bathe your feet and recline under a tree. And let me fetch a morsel of bread that you may refresh yourself; then go on...”
- Genesis 18:4

No one gets through life unscathed. Loved ones die and we are in grief. We become ill and life is altered. Whenever we come to die it is too soon. How often in our lives we realize we have not stopped to reflect. Sometimes in grief we just do not take the time we need to let grief take its own time. In illness we can find ourselves only running from one doctor to another, from one care provider to another. Sometimes, as we approach death, we regret we did not slow down enough.

The rush of life can easily overtake us. We are ambitious. We can become impatient. We want to make the world a better place. And then, one of life's universal experiences; grief, illness, death, jolts us. We are stunned. Looking around it is as if we are suddenly in a foreign land without a tour guide. We are confused, frightened, in a state of panic.

We grope for language to express how we feel, what we think, what we need. Oftentimes, the best way to find our innermost expressions is to stop. We need care: some water, some rest, some food. With time we can at least reflect on what we need in grief, in illness, in death. The truth is that if we do not give time to grief we may find ourselves more deeply pained. If we do not give time to illness we may find ourselves more deeply incapacitated. If we do not give time to death we may find ourselves alone at a time we most need company. If we do not give time to life's universal experiences we may be left mute at a time we most need to speak.

Well intentioned loved ones may tell us what we have to do, what we need, where we have to go for help. They may be right, but they may not understand how much we sometimes need to wait before we act. Sometimes we need time to gather our thoughts, to know how we feel, to consider what we want. There is a paradox with grief, illness and death. While we all experience them, we each experience them in our own unique way.

(over)

Certainly, it can be helpful to consider how we might respond to grief, illness and death before they jolt us. Whether we do or not, sometimes all we need in a moment is to receive a little water, to receive a little care, to rest, to eat. And then, with some clarity, to face the future.

May you take the time to reflect, and then go on.

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This Torah Reflection was written by Rabbi Eric Weiss, President and CEO of the Bay Area Jewish Healing Center. Archived Torah Reflections and other healing-oriented resources can be found at www.jewishhealingcenter.org. Bay Area Jewish Healing Center is a beneficiary of the Jewish Community Federation of San Francisco, the Peninsula, Marin and Sonoma Counties.



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- Spiritual support groups for patients, caregivers, and the bereaved
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