

Boy do we have a lot of proud parents in this room! Mazal Tov to the Neipris and Wolf families on Jessica and Jon's upcoming wedding. Mazal Tov to the Rodman family - Marcus, you were awesome!

Do we have any Ted Lasso fans in our congregation? (First of all, it is a FANTASTIC show. I highly recommend you watch it. Our community - our entire world - would benefit if we could all be a little bit more like Ted Lasso - more curious than judgmental).

Anyway, there's a character in the show named Roy Kent. He is one of my favorite characters. He is blunt, rather liberal with profanity (but in an English accent), grumpy on the outside but a softy on the inside, and he has a hard time talking about his feelings. There was a great line this season, where, stunned by something someone says to him, he replies slowly, in a way that telegraphs his response, "You. Hurt. My. Feeling".

Friends, unless you're Roy Kent with only one feeling, our feelings (plural) have been on a roller coaster this week. We've got two huge smachot worth celebrating and being joyous over. And we have a second-grade class at Cottage Street Elementary School who lost a classmate a week

ago today. We're a jumble of emotions and we might not know what to do with them.

Fortunately, our tradition has something to say. In the oft-quoted Talmud passage, in Ketubot 17a, we get the instructions that if a funeral procession and a wedding procession meet at an intersection, the wedding procession goes first". This is not to say that the funeral doesn't happen or that the people attending the funeral attend the wedding instead. It just means that when we are holding a multitude of emotions, we try not to let the sadness overtake the joy.

Human-beings are complicated people and we are capable of holding complex - sometimes even competing - emotions. So I can stand here this morning and tell you that my heart is filled with happiness and joy for the upcoming wedding; pride for today's bar mitzvah; and is also, completely shattered for Emma Greenspan's family and friends.

With this week's tragedy as the backdrop, reading this morning's Torah portion, where a parent willingly offered his son up as a sacrifice, is particularly difficult to swallow. But I think there is another read that feels incredibly compelling in this moment.

In any other year, I would read this parsha with a critical academic eye. Perhaps we would discuss what truly caused Lot's wife to turn into a pillar of salt. Maybe I would share with you the dvar torah for the High Holy Days that I scrapped, based around the story of Hagar getting lost in the desert not because it was too long of a walk but because she was furious at herself. And in the spirit of a good machloket (a scholarly dispute), I typically would love to argue with you over whether or not Abraham passed God's test. We could bat back and forth the idea that Abraham so clearly failed the test - or that Abraham passed because he had SO much faith in God that he knew God would stop him from killing Isaac, as long as he had was willing to.

Most of the discussion and traditional commentaries on this weeks parsha focus on the men of the story. This year, however, I can't help but read it from the heart, rather than the head, and I'm finding myself empathizing with the mothers in the story.

Starting from the beginning of the parsha through the first lines of next week's parsha, there are three mothers that I want to highlight.

Lot's wife (doesn't even get a name!) - as she watches her city be destroyed, while knowing that she has grown children still left behind in the city, she looks back, perhaps with longing and the pain of imagining a

life without her children & grandchildren. For this moment of deep emotion, she is punished by turning into a pillar of salt.

Sarah - Sarah's experience as a mother is woven through this entire parsha - first a barren woman, then an overprotective mamma bear, and finally so heart-broken at imagining her child's death that she herself dies from the possibility of a situation that she can not bear.

Hagar - And finally, Hagar - the mother who ran away from Abraham and Sarah's household last week, only to be sent home by an angel, was kicked out with her son this week. Lost in the desert, without enough rations for survival, she sets her weak son down under a bush and walks away, because the pain of watching him die was too much for her to bear.

All three women know the deep, soul-wrenching fear of losing their children. Two of them die from the possibility of it - and the third is ready to, only to be saved by an angel.

Author and educator, Elizabeth Stone wrote, "Making the decision to have a child - it is momentous. It is to decide **forever to have your** heart go walking around outside your body. " It is to look at your child making a

friend on the camp bus and to feel your heart sing. And it is to watch your kid get pushed on the playground, and know that your heart is crying.

When I heard the news that my daughter's friend had died, I physically crumbled. I couldn't wrap my head around the injustice of it - and if I couldn't do it as an outsider, how could her parents even begin to exist in a world where their heart is no longer walking around outside their bodies, but instead is buried in a cemetery?

A loss that deep - even, in Sarah's case, a suspected loss that deep - broke people back in Biblical times and breaks people now .

This week's dvar torah by Rabbi Aviva Richman¹, sent out by Mechon Hadar, includes a beautiful prayer, written in Yiddish, in the 18th century.

The prayer was written for women to say as they visited their ancestors' graves to measure string for wicks and make yartzheit candles ahead of Yom Kippur. Rabbi Richman writes, "In a fascinating departure from traditional high holiday liturgy, where Avraham's willingness to sacrifice

¹ https://mechonhadar.s3.amazonaws.com/mh_torah_source_sheets/RichmanParashatVaYera5782.pdf?utm_campaign=Dvar%20Torah%205782&utm_medium=email&_hsmi=172513231&_hsenc=p2ANqtz-_VJ_mWU8_hTRCUvp_eu-BDdORB9gtGptUcZys158V-r6aaqKMRf3MU6az6zVkC8e2hxlw48QbL1j6Tn5FqGnob9KuRVA&utm_content=172513231&utm_source=hs_email

his son is a source of religious merit...[here the author] associates the Akeidah with Sarah and uplifts her response:

And through the merit which I gain by preparing the wick for the sake of our mother Sarah, may the Blessed God - praised be He - remember us for the merit of her pain when her beloved son Yitzhak was led to the binding. May she defend us before God - praised be He - that we should not - God forbid - be left widows this year, and that our children should not -God forbid - be taken away from this world in our lifetime.

"Rather than glorifying the Akeidah itself, the religious message", Rabbi Richman teaches, "is to turn to God and ask that we should never have to endure anything like it, that there be nothing - even (especially?) God's own command - to cause us to lose a beloved child or partner".

Rabbi Richman concludes by say that, "When we embrace Sarah as a religious role model, rather than Abraham, the Binding of Isaac offers a starkly different set of guiding principle for our relationship with God. The God we pray to is not the God who demands we give up our children, but rather the God who never wants parents and children separated."

The 5th Sheva Brachot, that we'll sing with Jess and Jon next week under the wedding canopy, reads: שׁוֹשׁ תְּשִׁישׁ וְתִגַּל הָעֵקֶרָה בְּקִבוּץ בְּנֵיהָ: לתוכה בשמחה. ברוך אתה יי משמח ציון בבניה: *May she who was left bereft of her children, now delight as they gather together in joy. Blessed are you YHVH, who delights in Tziyon with her children!*

Even in the moments where we are feeling entirely bereft of those that we are missing, may we also be able to delight in our children - in their joy, in their accomplishments, and in their life decisions.

We are capable of holding complex emotions. Mazal Tov to Jess & Jon, Mazal Tov to Marcus, and to all those who are in pain, we are holding you up.

Shabbat Shalom.