

**Parsha Rosh Ha Shannah (Vayeira): A Four-in-One Woman Drash**  
**By Imani Romney-Rosa Chapman for Kolot Chayeinu, RH1 5780**

**¡Shana Tova!**

Genesis 21 shares the good news of Sarah's pregnancy long-awaited. During the years where she felt hopeless about conceiving at her advanced age, she asked her handmaid Hagar to conceive a child with her husband Abraham. Upon conception there was a lot of tension between the two women, but eventually she birthed Ishmael. Ishmael was a teenager when his younger brother Isaac was born. Again, tension arose when Sarah witnessed Ishmael's behavior at the weaning party for Isaac. Sarah asked that Hagar and Ishmael be "driven out" of their land and Abraham complied.

Reading and researching this parshah, I heard an internal uproar of reactions and responses. I want to thank fellow congregants Molly Rae Bock, Sierra Mohamed, and Shelly Weiss for breathing life into these internal voices. In order of appearance: I'mRight--the judgy one; Peacemaker- the harmonizer; Mother/Wife--the empathizer; and Gossip--the pot stirrer.

<b>I'mRight (Imani)</b>	(To all) You're kidding me, right? At the moment that Sarah has everything she ever wanted, everything she was <i>promised</i> , "so much joy that the world will laugh with her" <sup>1</sup> , she exiles her husband's first son and his mother?!-
<b>Peacemaker (Molly Rae)</b>	(Trying to interrupt I'mRight) -Well-
<b>I'mRight (Imani)</b>	(Without stopping, to All) Sarah, "woman of valor"?! "mother of the Israelite people"?! a priestess?! "timeless beauty"?! "a generous soul"?! "the personification of kindness"?! <sup>2</sup>
<b>Peacemaker (Molly Rae)</b>	(Calmly, to I'm right.) You're yelling.
<b>I'mRight (Imani)</b>	(Yelling to Peacemaker) No tone policing! (Urgently, quieter) Listen to what I'm saying: she epitomizes privilege. Her station in life is impressive, not the 1%, but impressive all the same. She has, land, camels, love, and handmaids to do her bidding... Gd promises her a baby, she doubts, she gives up-
<b>Sierra (Wife/Mother)</b>	(interrupting softly, speaking to the air) You don't know. You don't know. You don't know what it's like to wait and wait and wait to become pregnant. You don't know what it's like when what were once mumbled words become clear as daggers reminding you that as a woman, you are built to birth, and if you can't do that... (shaking head)
<b>Peacemaker (Molly Rae)</b>	(Gently to wife/mother) What <i>is</i> that experience like?

<sup>1</sup> "Bereishit - Genesis - Chapter 21 (Parshah Vayeira)." *Judaism*, 2019, [www.chabad.org/library/bible\\_cdo/aid/8216/jewish/Chapter-21.htm](http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8216/jewish/Chapter-21.htm).

<sup>2</sup> "Sarah." *Wikipedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, 28 Sept. 2019, [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sarah](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sarah).

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<b>Sierra (Wife/Mother)</b>	(to the air, remembering) Brutal...like I was useless, a waste. It doesn't matter that that doesn't make sense. Feelings may not be facts, but they certainly don't answer to logic!
<b>Peacemaker (Molly Rae)</b>	(quietly making eye contact now) That must've been painful.
<b>I'mRight (Imani)</b>	<p>(empathizing with Wife/Mother) Youright. Youright.</p> <p>(To all) BUT imagine being in that kind of pain and <u>not</u> having a slave (or a reproductive endocrinologist) who can sub in for you, who can give your husband an heir. Imagine that the pain alone is all you have.</p> <p>Then imagine when, once your servants have outgrown their usefulness to you, now that you've become pregnant, <u>as promised</u>, you ask your husband to "drive them out of the land". This is not just out of your household and theirs, it's away from their community and all of their resources.</p>
<b>Peacemaker (Molly Rae)</b>	(Pauses, then to I'mRight) What is it that you need?
<b>I'mRight (Imani)</b>	(Earnestly) I need someone to say that it's not ok to treat children any old kinda way. I need someone to call out this abuse of power and dominance for what it is!
<b>Peacemaker (Molly Rae)</b>	(Cautiously) Can you tell me whom you are protecting?
<b>I'mRight (Imani)</b>	The child--the Children. (Starting to get revved up). What Sarah did was not ok!!
<b>Peacemaker (Molly Rae)</b>	(To I'mRight) There is a clear differential of power. You are right. Protecting children is important and what you say makes me wonder what might have led to her reaction.
<b>Gossip (Shelly)</b>	(Knowing this is her cue.) *I* heard that Sarah saw Ishmael "metzahek".
<b>I'mRight (Imani)</b>	(Puzzled) Well, driving someone from their home for "laughing" or "playing" makes no sense to me. Who <i>does</i> that? I think she didn't want the competition. She even tells Abraham that she doesn't want Ishmael to share the inheritance.
<b>Gossip (Shelly)</b>	(Gleeful to have the inside scoop.) Well, *I* heard that "metzahek" <i>can</i> mean laughing, but also has a sexual connotation <sup>3</sup> .
<b>Peacemaker</b>	(Stretching...)Maybe Sarah was protecting Isaac. (Hopeful) Maybe you

<sup>3</sup> Zucker, David J. "What Sarah Saw: Envisioning Genesis: 21:9-10." *Jewish Bible Quarterly*, Jewish Bible Association, 2016, jbpnew.jewishbible.org.

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<b>(Molly Rae)</b>	two share the desire to protect the children.
<b>Sierra (Wife/Mother)</b>	You can be certain that if that were the case Ice Cube <i>and</i> I would be standing next to Sarah at the gates calling out to their backs "Farewell, Felicia!" <sup>4</sup> (Waving into the distance.)
<b>I'mRight (Imani)</b>	(Laughing and waving at their backs) Mic Drop! (Collecting herself) Seriously, though, the Torah doesn't even say Isaac was there. Next!
<b>Gossip (Shelly)</b>	(To I'mRight) Well, you <i>*know*</i> that the word "matzahek" has the same shoshen--linguistic root--as the word Yitzaach, Hebrew for Isaac. <i>*Some*</i> people say Ishmael was "Isaacing"-- you know, trying to take Isaac's place. And the reason Gd co-signed on the exile is because "Gd doesn't want the Gd-made reality of the miracle of Isaac to be replaced with a man-made reality of Ishmael; <i>man-made</i> and <i>Gd-made</i> are not to be confused or mixed." <sup>5</sup>
<b>I'mRight (Imani)</b>	(Dubious) I don't know about you, by my Higher Power is not that insecure. Plus, as miraculous as conception is, I believe Gd must've had a little something to do with Ishmael's birth as well.
<b>Sierra (Wife/Mother)</b>	(Thinking aloud) It <i>*is*</i> pretty hard to blend a family, though...
<b>I'mRight (Imani)</b>	TRUTH!
<b>Sierra (Wife/Mother)</b>	(continues to self in a dreamlike voice) ...to balance all of the relationships--spouse to spouse, child to spouse, child to child and, (overwhelm mounting) it gets more complex with every parent and child added to the mix. There are so many needs and it seems like they can't all be met...it's a game of whose needs get to be met today. I often wonder if I get to have needs...I remember reading something once about "standing up for myself without standing against anyone else." <sup>6</sup>
<b>Peacemaker (Molly Rae)</b>	What would it be like if you could do that?
<b>Sierra (Wife/Mother)</b>	(lightening) Magic!! (deep breath) What <i>*do*</i> we know about Sarah's position? For some reason Sarah, and perhaps Abraham, felt a threat toward Isaac and stepped in to protect him.

<sup>4</sup> Cube, Ice, and DJ Pooh. *Friday*. New Line Cinema & Ghetto Bird Productions, 1995.

<sup>5</sup> Blum, Julia. "The Story Of Isaac And Ishmael: Sarah (Peshat)." *Israel Institute of Biblical Studies*, Eteacher Ltd., 23 Aug. 2018, blog.israelbiblicalstudies.com.

<sup>6</sup> "Joy Is Our Birthright." *From Survival to Recovery: Growing up in an Alcoholic Home*, Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, 2007, pp. 265–268.

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<b>I'mRight (Imani)</b>	Putting myself in her shoes, I would've done the same...
<b>Gossip (Shelly)</b>	(to I'mRight) You know you mentioned <i>your</i> Gd earlier; where <i>is</i> Gd in all of this?
<b>Peacemaker (Molly Rae)</b>	What makes that an important question for you?
<b>Gossip (Shelly)</b>	There's a gaping hole where the information would be...too many lines to fill in and too many people who feel authorized to fill them in. I don't know how to make sense of it all! (Exasperated/incredulous) It's the Torah! Where's Gd?!
<b>Peacemaker (Molly Rae)</b>	What would having the information give you?
<b>Gossip (Shelly)</b>	Freedom.
<b>Peacemaker (Molly Rae)</b>	Freedom to what?
<b>Gossip (Shelly)</b>	Freedom to exhale...to release...to be still...to believe
<b>Sierra (Wife/Mother)</b>	I believe Gd was with them all...with Sarah as she found strength to protect her child...with Abraham as he send them away...with Hagar when the water went dry and she "cast [Ishmael] under the bush and gave up hope" <sup>7</sup> , Gd was there. With them all. Always there.
<b>Peacemaker (Molly Rae)</b>	What do you make of the story then? What is the lesson?
<b>I'mRight (Imani)</b>	It reminds me to be grateful and to have compassion. To ask more questions.
<b>Gossip (Shelly)</b>	To breathe amidst the not-knowing, not to make knowledge my higher power.
<b>Sierra (Wife/Mother)</b>	My wife believes this theory that when you dream, you are every person in your dream--you are the rollercoaster operator and the rider and the clown in the house of mirrors--you are everyone.  If that is true, then, I have been Ishmael and Isaac, Hagar and Sarah, and I have also been Abraham...and Gd lives in me, too.
<b>All!</b>	(deep breath) Ashé

<sup>7</sup> "Bereishit - Genesis - Chapter 21 (Parshah Vayeira)." *Judaism*, 2019, [www.chabad.org/library/bible\\_cdo/aid/8216/jewish/Chapter-21.htm](http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8216/jewish/Chapter-21.htm).

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As we contemplate who we have been this last year and who we want to be moving forward, I want to leave us with a meditation of loving kindness--a Metta-Bhavana from the Buddhist tradition. We can bring Sarah to mind or someone else--a friend, a neutral person, or a person with whom we have difficulty. In your mind you can repeat after me and when we are done, we can thank them.

This person has a body and a mind, just like me.

This person has feelings, emotions and thoughts, just like me.

This person has in his or her or their life, experienced physical and emotional pain and suffering, just like me.

This person has at some point been sad, disappointed, angry, or hurt, just like me.

This person has felt unworthy or inadequate, just like me.

This person worries and is frightened sometimes, just like me.

This person has longed for friendship, just like me.

This person is learning about life, just like me.

This person wants to be caring and kind to others, just like me.

This person wants to be content with what life has given, just like me.

This person wishes to be free from pain and suffering, just like me.

This person wishes to be safe and healthy, just like me.

This person wishes to be happy, just like me.

This person wishes to be loved, just like me.

Now, allow some wishes for well-being to arise:

I wish that this person have the strength, resources, and social support to navigate the difficulties in life with ease.

I wish that this person be free from pain and suffering.

I wish that this person be peaceful and happy.

I wish that this person be loved.

Because this person is a fellow human being, just like me.

Thank you!

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**Part of Parshah Rosh Ha Shannah (Vayeira)**  
**Genesis 21: 1- 16<sup>8</sup>**

1And the Lord remembered Sarah as He had said, and the Lord did to Sarah as He had spoken.	<a href="#">אִיְהוָה פָּקַד אֶת־שָׂרָה כְּאֲשֶׁר אָמַר וַיַּעַשׂ יְהוָה לְשָׂרָה כְּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר:</a>
2And Sarah conceived and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the time of which God had spoken to him.	<a href="#">בִּוְתֹהֲרָ וַתֵּלֶד שָׂרָה לְאַבְרָהָם בֶּן לְזִקְנָיו לְמוֹעֵד אֲשֶׁר־דִּבֶּר אֱתוֹ אֱלֹהִים:</a>
2And Sarah conceived and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the time of which God had spoken to him.	<a href="#">גִּיקְרָא אַבְרָהָם אֶת־שֵׁם־בְּנוֹ הַנּוֹלֵד־לּוֹ אֲשֶׁר־יָלְדָה־לּוֹ שָׂרָה יִצְחָק:</a>
4And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him.	<a href="#">וַיִּמַּל אַבְרָהָם אֶת־יִצְחָק בְּנוֹ בֶּן־שְׁמֹנֶת יָמִים כְּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה אֱתוֹ אֱלֹהִים:</a>
5And Abraham was a hundred years old, when his son Isaac was born to him.	<a href="#">וּבְאַבְרָהָם בֶּן־מֵאָה שָׁנָה בְּהוֹלֵד לוֹ אֶת יִצְחָק בְּנוֹ:</a>
6And Sarah said, "God has made joy for me; whoever hears will rejoice over me."	<a href="#">וַתֹּאמֶר שָׂרָה צָחֵק עָשָׂה לִי אֱלֹהִים כֹּל־הַשֹּׁמֵעַ יִצְחָק־לִי:</a>
7And she said, "Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children, for I have borne a son to his old age!"	<a href="#">וַתֹּאמֶר מִי מֵלֵל לְאַבְרָהָם הִינִיקָה בָנִים שָׂרָה כִּי־יָלְדָתִי בֶן לְזִקְנָיו:</a>
8And the child grew and was weaned, and Abraham made a great feast on the day that Isaac was weaned.	<a href="#">וַחֲנֻכַּל הַיֶּלֶד וַיִּגְמַל וַיַּעַשׂ אַבְרָהָם מִשְׁתֶּה גְדוֹל בַּיּוֹם הַגָּמֵל אֶת־יִצְחָק:</a>
9And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, making merry.	<a href="#">וַתֵּרָא שָׂרָה אֶת־בֶּן־הָגָר הַמִּצְרִית אֲשֶׁר־יָלְדָה לְאַבְרָהָם מִצְחָק:</a>
10And Sarah said to Abraham, "Drive out this handmaid and her son, for the son of this handmaid shall not inherit with my son, with Isaac."	<a href="#">וַתֹּאמֶר לְאַבְרָהָם גֹּרֶשׁ הָאֵמָה הַזֹּאת וְאֶת־בְּנָהּ כִּי לֹא יִירָשׁ בֶּן־הָאֵמָה הַזֹּאת עִם־בְּנִי עִם־יִצְחָק:</a>
11But the matter greatly displeased Abraham, concerning his son.	<a href="#">וַאֲנִיעַ הַדָּבָר מְאֹד בְּעֵינֵי אַבְרָהָם עַל אוֹדֵת בְּנוֹ:</a>

<sup>8</sup> "Bereishit - Genesis - Chapter 21 (Parshah Vayeira)." *Judaism*, 2019, [www.chabad.org/library/bible\\_cdo/aid/8216/jewish/Chapter-21.htm](http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8216/jewish/Chapter-21.htm).

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<p><a href="#">12</a>And God said to Abraham, "Be not displeased concerning the lad and concerning your handmaid; whatever Sarah tells you, hearken to her voice, for in Isaac will be called your seed.</p>	<p><a href="#">יְבוֹיֵאמֶר אֱלֹהִים אֶל־אַבְרָהָם אֶל־יֶרֶע בְּעֵינֶיךָ עַל־הַנָּעַר וְעַל־אִמְתֶּךָ כֹּל־אֲשֶׁר תֹּאמַר אֵלַיךָ שָׂרָה שְׁמַע בְּקוֹלָהּ כִּי בְיִצְחָק יִקְרָא לָהּ זָרַע:</a></p>
<p><a href="#">13</a>But also the son of the handmaid I will make into a nation, because he is your seed."</p>	<p><a href="#">יִגְוָם אֶת־בֶּן־הָאֲמָה לְגוֹי אֲשִׁימֶנּוּ כִּי זָרַעָהּ הוּא:</a></p>
<p><a href="#">14</a>And Abraham arose early in the morning, and he took bread and a leather pouch of water, and he gave [them] to Hagar, he placed [them] on her shoulder, and the child, and he sent her away; and she went and wandered in the desert of Beer sheba.</p>	<p><a href="#">יְדוֹיִשְׁכֶם אַבְרָהָם   בִּבְקֹר וַיִּקַּח־לָחֶם וְחֶמֶת מַיִם וַיִּתֵּן אֶל־הָגָר שֶׁם עַל־שִׁכְמָהּ וְאֶת־הַיֶּלֶד וַיִּשְׁלַחַּהּ וַתֵּלֶךְ וַתֵּתַע בְּמִדְבַּר בְּאֶר שָׁבַע:</a></p>
<p><a href="#">15</a>And the water was depleted from the leather pouch, and she cast the child under one of the bushes.</p>	<p><a href="#">טוּוִיכְלוּ הַמַּיִם מִן־הַחֶמֶת וַתִּשְׁלַח אֶת־הַיֶּלֶד תַּחַת אֶחָד הַשִּׁיחִים:</a></p>
<p><a href="#">16</a>And she went and sat down from afar, at about the distance of two bowshots, for she said, "Let me not see the child's death." And she sat from afar, and she raised her voice and wept.</p>	<p><a href="#">טזוַתֵּלֶךְ וַתֵּשֶׁב לָהּ מִזְגָּד הַרְחֵק כְּמִטְחָוִי קֹשֶׁת כִּי אָמְרָה אֶל־אֶרְאֶה בְּמוֹת הַיֶּלֶד וַתֵּשֶׁב מִזְגָּד וַתִּשָּׂא אֶת־קוֹלָהּ וַתִּבְרֹךְ:</a></p>