

Torah Portion: **Lech Lecha** (Book of Genesis)

The Book of Genesis is personal. The God of the Book of Genesis is a personal God. Beginning with this Torah portion, Genesis relates a brave story of a family's faith in One God through four generations: Abraham to Isaac to Jacob to Joseph. God's role is that of a nurturing parent imparting lessons of morality and ethics to a family whose lives will encounter challenges to their very existence; the first and foremost challenge being parenthood.

Abraham and Sarah are unable to become pregnant. Ancient Near Eastern tradition assigned the blame for not bearing children to the wife. It then became her responsibility to provide her husband with another woman who could bear a child in his name. In keeping with this tradition, Sarah brought her servant/handmaid Hagar to Abraham. Hagar became pregnant and gave birth to Abraham's first child who was named Ishmael. Years later Sarah would become pregnant and give birth to Isaac. Sarah's jealousy toward Hagar and her son Ishmael would force Abraham to expel them from his home. God would make Ishmael the father of the Arab people and his half-brother Isaac the father of the Jewish people. Two brothers from a common father. The next time they would meet would be to bury their father Abraham and then never again to encounter one another. How sad! What might have been had Sarah and Abraham been more attentive to their role as parents.

In 1995, Hillary Clinton wrote a book entitled *It Takes A Village*. In it she included the following teaching: "Parenthood has the power to redefine every aspect of life-marriage, work, relationships with family and friends. Those helpless bundles of power and promise that come into our world show us our true selves-who we are, who we are not, who we wish we could be."

At one time or another, we probably asked ourselves, "What can I do to make this a better world?" The daunting task of reigning in hatred and enmity may appear hopeless, but promoting the simple act of good parenting through personal example can bring together sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, husbands and wives, Ishmael and Isaac. The ripple effect can change a world-one generation at a time!

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