

THIS WEEK IN TORAH VA'YERA

Vayera... And he saw. In Genesis 18:2 that verb appears twice in one sentence: “Looking up, he saw three figures standing near him. Perceiving/seeing this, he ran from the entrance of the tent to greet them and, bowing to the ground,” The translation adds a little commentary, “seeing” is looking and “seeing” is also perceiving. The JPS translators are influenced by Rabbinic commentary to help provide an accurate and flowing translation. This verse was shaped by RaSHI who saw a new meaning for what was happening in the text each time the verb appeared.

RaSHI was the great 11th century scholar who wrote that the word of Torah is superfluous. Every word has meaning. In verse 2, the first time, *vayera* is used to say that he saw—looking out he did view these 3 figures. The second time the *shoresh*/root is used he realized that these figures were angels of the Most High.

Isaac Abravanel was a 15th century sage who lived from 1437 to 1507. He was born in Portugal and died in Venice, Italy. He noted this repetition of the verb was important to show the depth of his thinking. He wrote that a prophetic mind is directed by God. He believed that the double appearance of the verb conveyed an intensity to see as well [acknowledge] the potential for holiness—both in what he can do for them as well as the purpose of their mission.

Let's figure out how to apply this lesson to our lives.

Earlier in the week, voters went to the polls to vote. Elections can be contentious. The ugliness of rhetoric can yield to demonize candidates rather than debate the value of ideas and plans. I heard someone say that a vote is not a Valentine's Day card; but rather a chess move for what you think will make the world a better place. Once the votes are tallied, there will be winners and losers—but we will be in the same physical space. We have to embrace the results, trusting the integrity of the system. The winners will assume their office and lead.

Vayera... We saw the candidates and we voted

Vayera... we should realize the potential for holiness is out there, whether or not our candidate won. We should work together to make real that potential.