

'REMEMBERING SARAH': DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AWARENESS MONTH

Sarah, first of our ancestral mothers, wife to Abraham, mother to Isaac, lives 127 years as we see in the opening lines of this week's parsha. However, 'Chayey Sarah', the title of the parsha, means 'The Life of Sarah' and does not sound like the subject would be her death. Rashi (1040-1105) brings forward a midrash that explains why the death of Sarah follows immediately after the Binding of Isaac (Akedah):

"The death of Sarah follows the Binding of Isaac since the news of the Binding, that her son was designated for sacrifice and just avoided it, [caused her] soul to fly away and she died."

The midrash teaches us that Sarah's soul cannot stand up to the news that she almost lost her only son. Sarah, then, is sensitive and she feels emotional pain in a deep way.

The midrash, though, also raises a question: how does she hear news of what happened with her son and husband in Moriah, at least a several day ride's distance? Perhaps she knows without hearing anything from anyone or perhaps Abraham reveals what has happened. Either way, Sarah suffers, Abraham may also be suffering, Isaac suffers, and so do we.

Domestic violence has a similar effect on families as it makes everyone suffer. Everyone is a victim. During these days of special domestic violence awareness, we remember that the synagogue, the Jewish community, is not a place to be only when we are whole and happy. If there is violence in the home, whether physical or verbal, everyone, the entire community, suffers, and so it is up to us to make sure that we connect those in need of help with the available resources in Bergen County. Please note that the phone numbers for domestic violence support are posted on the inside of each bathroom door on the synagogue's sanctuary/social hall floor.

The Bergen County Alternatives to Domestic Violence 24 hour hotline is (201) 336-7575

As we mourn the death of Sarah this Shabbat, a death that came from pain inflicted on her sensitive soul, let us resolve as a community to connect those who are suffering domestic violence to the necessary resources and then to help the victims to feel the compassion and sense of belonging that they need to heal their wounds.