

Every year this congregation is warm and welcoming and Rick and I are so pleased to be here with all of you.

This talk is a series of questions that I never asked. I will ask some now, although you need not answer.

I am neither a sceptic nor pessimist. Yet my sensibilities change with time. I understand and then suddenly do not.

We revisit the story of Abraham, Sarah, Hagar, Issac, and Ishmael which is so complex that there are several contradictory ways to examine the family.

1. Sarah was jealous of Hagar because she was a mother to Abraham's child first. We could understand her desire to be rid of Hagar and Ishmael, now that Sarah had her own son, Isaac. The outcome was a great advantage to all of them economically because they each had a heritage and a sense of survival. Issac had Canaan and Ishmael, at around 13 years of age was given a new nation in the desert Paran. Once Hagar left she lost Abraham's care. Ishmael no longer had his father's love as did

Isaac. Was this the beginning of the eternal feud between Jews and Arabs? Was Sarah's jealousy the origin of the convict?

2. What was Abraham's emotional response when asked to sacrifice his son? He put wife, son, Hagar and Ishmael way below God. Was/is God the master of all? Are men, women and children, tiny in the grand scheme of the world? Are earth and the construct of time the greater world that God supervises? (Show chart).

I have been asking many people what they think of Abraham and Isaac, Hagar, and Ishmael. A variety of responses from Protestants, Jews, Catholics, Non believers and a daughter of a Lutheran Minister. All believed there is a spirit between people that is beautiful. My best friend, Nancy Denison, died recently. We certainly shared just such warmth about each other, our art work, our dogs, and nature. She was raised Catholic.

4.. Would One God in One World be easier to navigate and more peaceful? Some believe in

the earth, some believe in the Sun. Could our God include Everyone? (Show my “One” images).

3. What part did God take during WWII? Did we learn to open our hearts to others and appreciate what we do have? Is that what we take away from the Holocaust? Do we all have a hard a time with this question?

5. Under God do we trust our country? Especially after America’s historic past continues to unfold?

6. Is the earth killing us or are we killing the earth?

7. How can I identify as being Jewish under the contradiction of being both proud and fearful? Raised in Los Angeles after the WWII, our area of LA was assimilated and Jewish life was primarily a social affair. (Not Berson’s experience). I learned the S’hmah in English. Being dyslectic I

could never learn Hebrew anyway, even later when Bennet tried hard to teach me. I didn't understand the services at Temple Isaiah in Los Angeles where Rabbi Lewis napped between prayers.

Dad said I didn't look Jewish and that sounded like a good thing in his voice. Years later he said that being Jewish was special. My mother-in-law was at an event where I was speaking to a very large crowd at a Museum of Tolerance in LA. She told me I looked too Jewish before I spoke. This was very confusing.

I heard unending and tortuous Holocaust stories throughout my childhood and adulthood. My mother's sister was murdered along with her family of 6. Apparently I resembled one of the children, as my mom often reminded me, especially when my own children were young.

My mother's perpetual Holocaust anger was so extreme that Rick and I had to tell Mom not to mention the Holocaust at our wedding.

So can you see why being Jewish was just plain scary! Part survival guilt, part revoltion, part responsibility.

8. Why are we at Kohelet?

Along came our son, David. Things changed! First he was a Temple Emanuel Stepping Stones, a class for children of mixed religion families. The first day the teacher told the kids if they liked the smell of fresh Challah you are Jewish. As time pasted things changed.

David picked Kohelet after Rabbi Foster refused to bar mitzvah him because David could not be at temple every other weekend, when he was with his father.

David Back and Abe Handler urged him to join them at Kohelet. Rabbi Howard Hoffman was warm and welcoming and was pleased to have an Anderson join the Hebrew school. David was very comfortable at the old house. He loved Steve Kapnik and working with him for two years.

Soon David's knowledge was far beyond ours. So Rick and I gradually learned about being Jewish, what a Torah was, and what was in

it. Through these 27 years we gradually learned a thing or two. Was that possible because of Kohelet's warmth and acceptance?

No questions about that! It was beshert.(sp.)
Thank you!