

SF Jewish Women's Fund
D'var Torah
December 1, 2016
By Susan Dossetter

- 1) In our last session, we engaged in a deep and lively debate discussing who we are, what we stand for, and what we would like to accomplish. While this is an ongoing discussion, what we all agree upon is that we are a group of Jewish women, and we are here to give of our time, effort, and funds. After all, we are called the "San Francisco Jewish Women's Fund." In that spirit, I would like to speak about the four most important Jewish women in the Torah: Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah, how they gave of themselves, and what we can learn from them.
- 2) Our "forefathers" and "foremothers" are meant to be role models for us.
- 3) Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah, the Jewish foremothers, are the four women mentioned in the blessing we give to our daughters on Shabbat ("May G-d make you like Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah..."). Why these four women (the men we mention in the blessing to our sons are Ephraim and Menashe, not the forefathers)?
- 4) Three of the four women had difficulty bearing children:
 - a) Sarah: she did not give birth to Isaac until age 90 (it took her approximately 70 years!)
 - b) Rebecca: it took her 20 years to give birth
 - c) Rachel: it took her 7 years to give birth

*This was THE thing for women to do then, bear children and produce an heir, so it must have been extremely difficult for them. But, they NEVER GAVE UP. They tried for years and years, and never gave up hope or FAITH.

*Their perseverance was what made them great, because they grew from it. They not only did not despair, they used the challenge to become better people.
- 5) How were they great? They were great because they all, including Leah, were GIVERS. They acted GODLY, by giving selflessly.
 - a) Sarah: opened her home to strangers, was the ultimate host.
 - a. When she couldn't conceive, she insisted her husband Abraham take a second wife.
 - b) Rebecca: model of kindness. She was chosen by Eliezar, Abraham's

servant, for Abraham's son, Isaac, because of her kindness. She not only offered Eliezar water at the well, she also offered water to his camels. There were other girls from much "better" families. Her family was one of idol worshippers, but it's not what you believe that is ultimately important, it's what you DO that is most important. Rebecca became the mother of the Jewish people, bearing Jacob who became "Israel."

- c) Rachel: was supposed to marry Jacob. Rachel and Jacob had a secret code that she was supposed to say to him on their wedding night so that he would know for sure he had the right wife. When Jacob was tricked into marrying Rachel's sister, Leah, Rachel told that code to Leah to save her from humiliation. She shared her husband with her sister!
- d) Leah: didn't protest when Jacob also married Rachel after one week. She continued to be kind when she knew she was the second choice.

Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah were all kind and selfless, and were all true givers, which is what we should wish for our daughters, and for ourselves.

So, my blessing to all of us here is that we may all be like Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah. May we persevere through any and all obstacles so that we may grow into the kindest and most generous givers.