

Torah Portion for the First Day of Rosh HaShanah

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David Kirk Dirlam

On Rosh HaShanah, we read about the binding of Isaac. Abraham took his beloved son into the mountains to be a burnt offering. Isaac was saved at the last moments when a heavenly voice stayed Abraham's knife, and he spied a ram as a substitute. Why should we read a story with such a repulsive motive every year?

The answer is it helps us change. Primitive societies thought ritual sacrifice appeased Gods to win wars, survive famines, or even create community solidarity. The Hebrews of Genesis were central to a world transformation past such cultures. Modern research on transformational learning reveals four DEEP modes of commitments, a disorienting dilemma (D) motivates exploration (E) to find a new solution, which is enabled (E) with community help and finally performed (P). The binding of Isaac was a disorienting dilemma. Each of us can use it as a reminder of the most important dilemmas in our lives this High Holiday. Traditional Rosh Hashanah reflections and discussions can help us explore better approaches. Once we know what we need to do, planning, practice, and relying on others enable us to establish our new approaches. When ready to perform, we change our practices. *L'shanah tovah!*