

THE QUESTION OF THE WEEK

“I will return to you around this time next year and Sarah will surely have a son.”
Genesis 18: 10

Abraham and Sarah were old and they had no children. Abraham had received a word from God that he would have an heir and that he was to leave his homeland and travel to a new land where God would bless him with land and with offspring. But they are in their seventies. Who believes such a word about progeny in your seventies? Well, Abraham did and off he went with his clan and their servants. To the new land. There he is sitting by the Terebinth of Mamre. This terebinth tree was an old and giant Oak Tree and was considered a holy place. (Think of the giant sequoia trees in California that are two thousand years old.) There is something so quiet and the atmosphere is almost one of reverence, even holiness.

In this holy spot, beyond all human expectations and possibilities, God intervenes. And Abraham and Sarah do conceive a son and when the visitors return the next year, she and Abraham have a son—Isaac. With God all things are possible. And that is precisely where our faith began almost four thousand years ago. Who can do such things? Only the Lord our God. Abraham we call our father in faith. He was a Semite, of the Hebrew people. He is the father of the Jews, He is also recognized as the father of the Muslims who trace their ancient origin to the same origin to Abraham but through the child of his wife's slave woman, Hagar whose son was called Ishmael. The Muslims see themselves growing through the offspring of Ishmael via Abraham. And so the Jewish Religion and the Muslim Religion and the Christian faith all trace their origins to this man Abraham sitting by the Oak Tree of Mamre near the ancient town of Hebron south of Jerusalem.

After centuries of destructive behavior among all people on account of the original and then personalized sin of men and women of every age, God has decided to begin anew and right in the midst of the old creation, a new shoot has been born. And in that tradition, through all those who believe in the promise made to Abraham by God, eventually Jesus comes to be born. And the salvation of the world assured. It probably is not the way I would go about bringing salvation into our world but it is God's way of doing things. Can you accept that, believe that? The question of the week.