

Can You Ask God To Wait?

by: Rabbi Jeremy Rosen

“And God appeared to Avraham...and he looked up and saw three men. And he said “If it please you, do not go away.”

The great commentator Rashi gives two very different interpretations. The first is that God appears to Avraham in the form of three men who each will give Avraham information crucial to him and his future. He addresses one of them asking him and his companions to stay and enjoy his hospitality.

The other version is that he is communing with God. He sees three men in the distance. And then says to God, please don't disappear but I need to attend to the passing needs of human beings. God can wait, humans cannot. This does seem to conflict with the tradition that when we stand before God one needs to have the awe and even fear one has when standing before a human monarch.

Yet the message is a profound one. Human needs take priority precisely because we are so fragile and needy. I think this is an important message for all religious leadership. Important as religion is, the needs of individuals has to be given priority one way or another.