

At the end of last week's portion, Abraham circumcises all the males of his household, including himself. Then God appears to Abraham. The next thing we know, Abraham lifts up his head and sees three people in the distance.

Since the text doesn't mention Abraham even saying something like, "Excuse me, God, but I see some weary travelers over there" and we are pretty sure Abraham would not disrespect God, the question arises - Where did God go?

There are several potential answers to this.

The whole episode is a vision, so God didn't go anywhere since God wasn't actually there to begin with.

God saw that what God thought would most benefit Abraham in his recovery was instead detrimental, so God got out of the way, so to speak, and put a different recovery plan into motion involving three messengers.

God invited three messengers over, but retained connection with one of them so God could see Sarah's reaction to the good news.

Abraham actually did put God on hold, as it were, and went off to take care of the needs of the people he saw.

Abraham liked sharing what he had accumulated. Being a wanderer himself, he probably remembered some trips where a bit of hospitality would have been most welcome. Among his other work, this gave him a good reason to get out of bed each day, and enabled him to feel useful. Feeling useful helped him in his recovery.

God had thought that Abraham needed private recovery time, when what Abraham needed was other people. Sometimes we think we know what other people need, usually based upon what we think we would like in a similar set of circumstances. Yet when we visit the sick, it is not our needs or expectations that we should be concerned with. We should be engaged in helping the other person feel a bit better in some fashion. This episode shows us that when we are behaving most Godly, we are willing to have our assumptions be proven wrong, and re-adjust our behavior accordingly.