

**THE STORY OF JACOB**  
**9 August 2020**  
**Beaverkill Community Church**  
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LAST YEAR I HAD NO PROBLEM COMING UP WITH A TOPIC FOR MY TALK. I THOUGHT I WAS BEING VERY ORIGINAL TO SPEAK OF THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN JOY AND HAPPINESS – ONLY TO FIND OUT THAT I WASN'T THE ONLY ONE. DAVID BROOKS HAD WRITTEN A PIECE FOR THE NYTIMES AND THERE WAS A JUST PUBLISHED BOOK ABOUT THE DIFFERENCE AS WELL AS A NUMBER OF OTHER WRITINGS.

THIS YEAR, I HAD NO PARTICULAR IDEA, I STARTED WITH THOUGHTS OF PASSOVER, WHICH HAS TAKEN ON NEW MEANING FOR ME—WITH HOPES THAT THE VIRUS WILL PASS OVER ME AND MY LOVED ONES.

THEN EASTER -- IDEA OF SACRIFICE— I DID THINK A BIT ABOUT FOCUSING ON THE MEANING OF SACRIFICE—AND TYING IT INTO THE STORY OF JACOB—HIS FATHER ISSAC WAS ALMOST SACRIFICED. JULY 30-31 IS THE MUSLIM CELEBRATION OF EID AL-ADHA, WHICH IS A REINACTMENT OF THIS SACRIFICE, WITH AN ANIMAL BEING SACRIFICED AND A THIRD GIVEN TO THE POOR, A THIRD TO FAMILY AND A THIRD TO NEIGHBORS. BUT I REALLY COULDN'T GO ANYWHERE WITH THE ABRAHAM/ISSAC STORY SO I WENT BACK TO THE LECTIONARY AND READ ABOUT ISSAC'S SON, JACOB.

WE HAVE BEEN READING THE STORY OF JACOB AS IT IS THE SUGGSTED LECTIONARY READINGS. WE'VE BEEN HEARING ABOUT THIS LIFE ALL SUMMER BUT IN BITS A PIECES SO I DECIDED TO TELL JACOB'S WHOLE STORY THIS MORNING.

ISSAC WAS JACOB'S FATHER, AND HE WAS THE SON OF ABRAHAM AND SARAH. WE JUST MENTIONED THE STORY OF ABRAHAM TAKING ISSAC TO BE SACRIFICED BUT WAS GIVEN A SUBSTITUTE AT THE LAST MINUTE.

ISSAC MARRIED REBEKAH—WHOM HE LOVED VERY MUCH. REBEKAH AND ISSAC HAD TWINS; ESAU AND JACOB; ESAU WAS BORN FIRST, BUT THE INFANT JACOB WAS BORN =HOLDING ON TO THE HEELS OF HIS TWIN—A BAD SIGN FROM THE BEGINNING.

JACOB WAS THE YOUNGER BROTHER BUT WAS DETERMINED TO BE THE ONE TO BE HEAD OF THE FAMILY. A COUPLE OF SUNDAYS AGO, MARY TALKED ABOUT JACOB AND HOW HE WAS HARDLY AN ADMIRABLE FELLOW, HE WAS QUITE A TRICKSTER.

FIRST; HE TRICKED ESAU OUT OF HIS BIRTHRIGHT.

THIS IS FROM GENESIS 25. THE BOYS GREW AND ESAU WAS A CUNNING HUNTER A MAN OF THE FIELD AND JACOB WAS A PLAIN MAN, DWELLING IN TENTS. AND ISSAC LOVED ESAU, BECAUSE HE DID EAT OF HIS VENISON, BUT REBEKAH LOVED JACOB.

ONE DAY, JACOB MADE POTTAGE AND ESAU CAME FROM THE FIELD AND HE WAS FAINT; AND ESAU SAID TO JACOB FEED ME, I PRAY THEE, WITH THAT SAME POTTAGE, FOR I AM FAINT; AND JACOB SAID, SELL ME THIS DAY THY BIRTHRIGHT. *AND ESAU SAID BEHOLD, I AM AT THE POINT TO DIE AND WHAT PROFIT SHALL THIS BIRTHRIGHT DO TO ME*—AND HE SOLD HIS BIRTHRIGHT TO JACOB.

THAT WAS BAD ENOUGH, BUT JACOB WENT EVERN FURTHER. HE TRICKED HIS FATHER INTO GIVING HIM THE BLESSING USUALY RESERVED FOR THE FIRST BORN.

AS I SAID BEFORE, ESAU WAS ISSAC'S FAVORITE. AND WHEN HE KNEW HE WAS NEAR DEATH HE SAID TO ESAU: "BEHOLD NOW, I AM OLD, I KNOW NOT THE DAY OF MY DEATH' NOW THEREFORE TAKE ..THY WEAPONS AND GO OUT AND TAKE ME SOME VENISON SO THAT MY SOUL MAY BLESS THEE BEFORE I DIE.

REBEKAH HEARD THIS AND IMMEDIATELY WENT TO HER FAVORITE SON, JACOB.

"GO NOW TO THE FLOCK AND FETCH ME TWO GOOD KIDS OF THE GOATS AND I WILL MAKE THEM SAVOURY MEAT FOR THY FATHER,

JACOB IS A BIT NERVOUS ABOUT THIS DECEPTION THAT HIS MOTHER SUGGESTS. HE'S NOT SURE HE CAN FOOL HIS FATHER. HIS BROTHER ESAU IS A HAIRY MAN, BUT HE IS SMOOTH SKINNED.

HE ANSWERS HIS MOTHER, "MY FATHER WILL FEEL ME AND I SHALL SEEM TO HIM AS A DECIEVER. AND I SHALL BRING A CURSE UPON ME, AND NOT A BLESSING.

AND HIS NOTHER ANSWERED, "*UPON **ME** BE THY CURSE, MY SON; ONLY OBEY MY VOICE*

SO, JACOB, WITH THE MEAT HIS MOTHER PREPARED AND WEARING EASU'S CLOTHES AND ALSO THE SKINS OF THE ANIMALS TO MAKE HIM HAIRY, WENT TO HIS FATHER. ISSAC SEEMS A LITTLE SUSPCIOUS. HE ASKS WHEN JACOB BRINGS HIM THE MEAT; *HOW IS IT THAT THOU HAS FOUND IT SO QUICKLY, MY SON?*

JACOB ANSWERD, BECAUSE THE LORD GOD BROUGHT IT TO ME.

ISSAC IS STILL SUSPICIOUS AND ASKS HIM TO COME NEARER. HE SMELLS THE SMELL OF HIS SON EASU BECAUSE REBEKAH HAD DRESSED JACOB IN HIS BROTHER'S CLOTHES. AND ONCE AGAIN JACOB INSISTS THAT HE IS EASU. SO ISSAC BLESSES HIM.

THEN ESAU COMES BACK WITH HIS VENESON. AND LEARNS THAT HE HAS BEEN BETRAYED.

WITH FURY HE SAYS ABOUT HIS BROTHER JACOB, “IS NOT HE RIGHTLY NAMED JACOB? FOR HE HATH SUPPLANTED ME THESE TWO TIMES: HE TOOK AWAY MY BIRTHRIGHT; AND BEHOLD NOW HE HATH TAKEN AWAY MY BLESSING.

AND ESAU SAID ONTO HIS FATHER, *HAST THOU BUT ONE BLESSING, MY FATHER? BLESS ME, EVEN ME ALSO, O MY FATHER* AND ESAU LIFTED UP HIS VOICE AND WEPT

AND ISAAC HIS FATHER ANSWERED AND SAID UNTO HIM, BEHOLD, THY DWELLING SHALL BE THE FATNESS OF THE EARTH, AND OF THE DEW OF HEAVEN FROM ABOVE;

AND BY THY SWORD THOU LIVE AND SHALT **SERVE** THY BROTHER ; BUT IT SHALL COME TO PASS WHEN THOU SHALT HAVE THE DOMINION, THAT THOU SHALT BREAK HIS YOKE FROM OFF THY NECK.

AND ESAU **HATED** JACOB BECAUSE OF THE BLESSING WHEREWITH HIS FATHER BLESSED HIM: AND ESAU SAID IN HIS HEART, WHEN *THE DAYS OF MOURNING FOR MY FATHER ARE AT HAND; THEN WILL I **SLAY** MY BROTHER JACOB.*

THE OLD TESTAMENT MAKES NO BONES ABOUT THE HATRED THAT ONE BROTHER CAN FEEL FOR THE OTHER.

WHEN ISSAC DIES, THEIR MOTHER, REBEKAH KNOWS JACOB IS IN DANGER AND TELLS HIM TO RUN AWAY TO LABAN, HER BROTHER.

JACOB FLEES----- AND ON HIS JOURNEY HE ENVISIONS THE LADDER—JACOB’S LADDER- WHICH MARY TALKED ABOUT TWO WEEKS AGO.

WHEN JACOB GETS TO ‘THE LAND OF THE PEOPLE OF THE EAST”, HE SEES RACHEL TENDING SHEEP. RACHEL IS HIS COUSIN--- THE DAUGHTER OF HIS UNCLE LABAN. IT WAS LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT. *AND JACOB KISSED RACHEL AND LIFTED UP HIS VOICE AND WEPT.*

LABAN INSISTS JACOB MUST LABOR FOR HIM 7 YEARS BEFORE HE CAN MARRY RACHEL, AND JACOB LABORS 7 YEARS.

BUT THIS TIME – IT IS JACOB WHO IS TRICKED, THERE IS A GREAT WEDDING FEAST—AND I ASSUME THE BRIDE IS VEILED AND AFTER THE FEAST THE BRIDE AND GROOM GO INTO THE MARRIAGE TENT. BUT WHEN JACOB WAKES UP THE NEXT MORNING, IT’S NOT RACHEL BY HIS SIDE, BUT HER OLDER SISTER LEAH.

JACOB SAYS TO LABAN, “WHAT IS THIS THOU HAS DONE TO ME? DID I NOT LABOR FOR RACHEL FOR 7 YEARS?

LABAN INSISTS THE FIRST DAUGHTER MUST BE THE FIRST MARRIED. AND HE TELLS JACOB TO WORK 7 MORE YEARS AND HE CAN MARRY RACHEL, WHICH HE DOES.

(MENTION FATHER DONAHUE TELLING THIS STORY AT KATE AND DUKE'S WEDDING—IN THE CHURCH. THE MESSAGE I BELIEVE WAS PATIENCE AND FORBEARANCE)

IT TURNS OUT THAT LEAH IS VERY FERTILE, BUT RACHEL HAS TROUBLE CONCEIVING. BUT IN THE END, BY VARIOUS MEANS, JACOB HAS 12 SONS AND ONE DAUGHTER.

AN INTERESTING ASIDE IS THE STORY OF DINAH, LEAH'S AND JACOB'S DAUGHTER. THE ONLY GIRL. THIS IS HER STORY FROM GENESIS;

“AND WHEN SHECHEM, THE SON OF HAMOUR THE HIVITE, PRINCE OF THE COUNTRY SAW HER, HE TOOK HER, AND LAY WITH HER, AND DEFILED HER.

BUT THIS IS INTERESTING; IT SUGGESTS THAT SHE WAS NOT ACTUALLY DEFILED—BUT THAT SHECHEM FALLS IN LOVE WITH HER AND PERHAPS SHE IS WILLING. WE NEVER KNOW WHAT DINAH FEELS.

FROM GENESIS: BUT SHECHEM'S SOUL CLAVE TO DINAH, ...AND HE LOVED THE DAMSEL,

SCHHEM OFFERED PEACE, RICHES, WHATEVER SO HE COULD MARRY HER. AT THE OFFER OF MARRIAGE, THE SONS SAID SHE COULD ONLY MARRY A CIRCUMCISED MALE, SO IF ALL HIS MEN WERE CIRCUMCISED, HE COULD HAVE DINAH.

SHECHEM AGREES. SO FROM GENESIS CHPT 34: AND IT CAME TO PASS ON THE THIRD DAY, WHEN THEY WERE SORE, THAT TWO OF THE SONS OF JACOB, SIMEON AND LEVI, DINAH'S BRETHEREN, TOOK EACH MAN HIS SWORD AND CAME UPON THE CITY BOLDLY, AND SLEW ALL THE MALES. “THE SONS OF JACOB CAME UPON THE SLAIN AND SPOILED THE CITY BECAUSE THEY HAD DEFILED THEIR SISTER. AND ALL THEIR WEALTH AND ALL THEIR LITTLE ONES AND THEIR WIVES TOOK THEY CAPTIVE AND SPOILED EVEN ALL THAT WAS IN THE HOUSE.

EVEN JACOB WAS UPSET AT THIS SEVERE VENGEANCE. “*I SHALL BE DESTROYED, I AND MY HOUSE!* HE LAMENTS. AND THEY (THE BROTHERS SAID, SHOULD YOU DEAL WITH OUR SISTER AS WITH A HARLOT?). NOT A PARTICULARLY PRETTY STORY – NO NEGOTIATION, NO COMPROMISE, JUST VENGEFUL SLAUGHTER

I FIND IT TROUBLING THAT THERE ARE SO FEW WOMEN IN THE OLD TESTAMENT WHO ARE NOT PRIMARILY CHILD BEARERS OR PERHAPS HARLOTS OR TROUBLEMAKERS (SAMSON AND DELEHIA) —BUT THE REVENGE FOR DINAH GETS A FULL CHAPTER. I DON'T THINK SHE IS MENTIONED AGAIN IN THE BIBLE—SO I WONDER HOW THINGS TURNED OUT FOR HER.

HOWEVER, IT'S INTERESTING TO NOTE THAT IN 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY AMERICA, “DINAH” BECAME A GENERIC NAME FOR AN ENSLAVED AFRICAN WOMAN. [12] AT THE 1850 WOMAN'S RIGHTS CONVENTION IN NEW YORK, A SPEECH BY SOJOURNER TRUTH WS REPORTED ON IN THE NEW YORK HERALD, WHICH USED THE NAME “DINAH” TO SYMBOLIZE BLACK WOMANHOOD AS REPRESENTED BY TRUTH:

ALSO, LIZZIE MCCLLOUD, A SLAVE ON A TENNESSEE PLANTATION DURING THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR, RECALLED THAT UNION SOLDIERS CALLED ALL ENSLAVED WOMEN “DINAH”. DESCRIBING HER FEAR WHEN THE UNION ARMY ARRIVED, SHE SAID: “WE WAS SO SCARED WE RUN UNDER THE HOUSE AND THE YANKEES CALLED ‘COME OUT DINAH’ (DIDN’T CALL NONE OF US ANYTHING BUT DINAH). THEY SAID ‘DINAH, WE’RE FIGHTIN’ TO FREE YOU AND GET YOU OUT FROM UNDER BONDAGE’.”

AND THIS BRINGS US TO THE STORY OF THE 12 BROTHERS—THE YOUNGEST BEING JOSEPH, THE SON OF RACHEL. RACHEL HAD ANOTHER SON, BENJAMEN.

NOW JACOB LOVED JOSEPH MORE THAN ALL HIS CHILDREN, BECAUSE HE WAS THE SON OF HIS OLD AGE; AND HE MADE HIM A COAT OF MANY COLOURS. AND WHEN HIS BRETHREN SAW THAT THEIR FATHER LOVED HIM MORE THAN ALL HIS BRETHREN, THEY HATED HIM, AND COULD NOT SPEAK PEACEABLE UNTO HIM.

AGAIN. OUT OF ANGER AND JEALOUSY BECAUSE JOSEPH IS THE FAVORITE BROTHER, HIS BROTHERS PLOTTED TO KILL JOSEPH. AS IT TURNED OUT THEY SOLD HIM UNTO SLAVERY INSTEAD. THEN THEY PUT BLOOD ON JOSEPH’S COAT OF MANY COLORS AND SHOWED IT TO JACOB, WHO BELIVED HIS SON HAD BEEN KILLED.

IT’S INTERESTING TO READ ABOUT JACOB FROM BEGINNING TO END, AND HIS COLORFUL LIFE. SOMETHING STANDS OUT FOR ME IN THIS GENERATIONAL STORY—THE DESTRUCTIVE NATURE OF FAVORITISM. IN THESE STORIES OF THE OLD TESTAMENT, THERE WAS OFTEN A FAVORITE SON.

STARTING WITH THE FIRST BROTHERS—CAIN AND ABEL. ABEL WAS A KEEPER OF SHEEP AND CAIN WAS A TILLER OF THE GROUND, THEY BOTH MAKE AN OFFERING TO THE LORD, WHEN ABEL BROUGHT HIS OFFERING OF SHEEP, “THE LORD HAD RESPECT UNTO ABEL AND TO HIS OFFERING;

BUT UNTO CAIN AND TO HIS OFFERING HE HAD NOT RESPECT. AND CAIN WAS VERY WROTH, AND HIS COUNTENANCE FELL.

AND IT CAME TO PASS WHEN THEY WERE IN THE FIELD, THAT CAIN ROSE UP AGAINST ABEL, HIS BROTHER, AND SLEW HIM. THE FIRST MURDER.

HERE ALSO IS FAVORITISM IN THAT ONE BROTHER FEELS HE IS CHEATED OUT OF HIS RIGHTS, THAT HIS BROTHER IS MORE LOVED THAN HE IS—AND THIS CAUSES HATRED – HATRED SO STRONG IT CAN LEAD TO MURDER.

CAIN MURDERED ABEL, ESAU WANTED TO MURDER JACOB. JOSEPH’S BROTHERS WANTED TO KILL HIM.

DOES THIS THEME HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH TODAY – WHAT WE ARE EXPERIENCING IN OUR SOCIETY?

WELL, IF YOU'RE FAMILIAR WITH MARY TRUMP'S BOOK, HER FATHER FRED AND HIS YOUNGER BROTHER DONALD EXPERIENCED THIS BIBICAL FAVORITISM BY THEIR FATHER. AND AS FAR AS SHE IS CONCERNED, THE REJECTION OF HER FATHER, FRED, BY HIS FATHER, DESTROYED HIS LIFE.

BUT I SUGGEST IT GOES EVEN FURTHER. THINK OF THE TWO BROTHERS REPRESENTING ELEMENTS OF OUR SOCIETY. IN A GENERAL WAY, THE HAVE'S AND THE HAVE NOTS--- NOT JUST IN AN ECONOMIC SENSE, BUT THOSE WHO HAVE GROWN UP SECURE AND PRIVILEGED ON ONE SIDE AND OTHERS WHO FEEL THEY HAVE BEEN DENIED A SECURE LIFE.

MOST OBVIOUS TODAY IS BLACK LIVES MATTER, BUT IT IS ALSO REFLECTED IN THE – EARLY ON 'WOMEN'S LIB' AND NOW THE ME TOO MOVEMENT. IT IS THE ARGUMENT OF LBGTQ – WHO FEEL THEY HAVE BEEN DESCRIMINATED AGAINST BY THE FAVORED. IT CAN BE SEEN IN THE NOW SELF DESCRIBED DEPLORABLES, AGAINST THE ELITES – MANIFESTED IN THE 2016 ELECTION. AND EVERY DAY WE HEAR ABOUT THE TOP 1% AND THEIR EXTREME WEALTH.

SEEING THIS 'FAVORITISM' CAUSES GREAT ANGER AND EVEN HATE FOR THESE 'FAVORED'. THIS IS POPPING UP EVERYWHERE – EVEN IN RECENT CRITICS INSISTING THAT CLASSICS LIKE BEOWULF AND THE AENIED HAVE BEEN MISUNDERSTOOD OVER THE PAST HUNDREDS OF YEARS BY A PRIVELGGED FEW AND SHOULD BE RE-INTERPRETED. THERE IS A CHALLENGE TO ALMOST EVERYTHING WE HAVE BEEN USED TO.

THE LANGUAGE TODAY IS A LANGUAGE OF GRIEVANCE, WHICH SEES US ALL AS EITHER VICTIMS OR PERPETUATORS.

DOES THINKING ABOUT JACOB—OR BROTHERLY CONFLICT HELP US AT THIS TIME?

I'M NOT SAYING THAT READING ABOUT JACOB'S LIFE WILL SOLVE A PROBLEM, BUT I DO SUGGEST IT MAY SHED A LIGHT ON WHY WE ARE SO DIVIDED. IF WE CAN UNDERSTAND, OR EVEN EMOTIONALLY FEEL TO SOME EXTENT WHAT IT IS LIKE TO BE THE UNLOVED ONE, THE REJECTED ONE, THE ONE WHO IS DENIED WHAT IS CLEARLY GIVEN TO HIS BROTHER—DOES IT NOT HELP IN UNDERSTANDING WHERE WE ARE TODAY?

THIS BRINGS ME TO TODAY'S READING ABOUT JACOB WRESTLING. HE NOTIFIED HIS BROTHER ESAU, THAT HE WAS COMING HOME TO BE RECONCILED WITH HIM. BUT ESAU WAS MARCHING TOWARDS HIM WITH TROOPS THREATENING TO KILL JACOB AND ALL HIS FAMILY. JACOB INSISTED HE WOULD TRY TO APPEASE ESAU.

DESPITE SENDING GIFTS OF APPEASEMENT, JACOB WAS AFRAID FOR HIS LIFE AND FAMILY. HE PRAYED TO GOD FOR HELP AND SENT HIS FAMILY AND POSSESSIONS ON AHEAD OF HIM TO

PROTECT THEM. LEFT ALONE IN HIS CAMP, GOD CAME AND WRESTLED WITH JACOB UNTIL DAYBREAK (GENESIS 32:24-29).

BOB READ THIS EARLIER SO I WILL JUST TAKE OUT A COUPLE OF FACTS. FIRST IT IS 'A MAN WHO WRESTLED WITH HIM UNTIL THE BREAK OF DAY. THIS MAN—WHO DIDN'T SEEM TO BE ABLE TO 'PREVAIL' TOUCHED JACOB'S THIGH, WHICH PUT IT OUT OF JOINT. JACOB ASKS TO BE LET GO, BUT THE MAN SAYS 'NO—NOT UNTIL YOU BLESS ME. WHAT IS YOUR NAME''

JACOB GIVES HIS NAME, BUT THEN IS TOLD THAT IS NO LONGER HIS NAME BUT ISRAEL. WHO IS THIS MAN, WHO DOESN'T GIVE HIS NAME, BUT BLESSES HIM. IT'S NOT CERTAIN WHO THIS IS THAT JACOB WRESTLES WITH. BUT IT RESULTS IN AN INJURY TO JACOB. AND IN THE END THE BROTHERS' HATRED IS RESOLVED—BUT ONLY AFTER A NIGHT OF WRESTLING—YOU CAN READ THIS AS JACOB, WRESTLING WITH HIS INNER SELF, OR WRESTLING WITH HIS BROTHER JACOB OR WRESTLING WITH GOD—THE DIVINE—OR PERHAPS DESTINY.

PERHAPS THAT'S WHAT WE ARE DOING TODAY—WE ARE WRESTLING WITH OUR BROTHERS (AND SISTERS) – BE THEY THE FAVORED OR THE UNLOVED. OUT OF THIS CONFLICT WE ARE EXPERIENCING TODAY, THE MARCHES, PROTESTS, ADDED TO THE PANDEMIC ---IS IT POSSIBLE WE WILL COME TO A BETTER PLACE?

THE TWO BROTHERS FIND A RESOLUTION AND GOD GIVES JACOB THE NEW NAME OF ISRAEL. NOW THE NAME OF A NATION—AS THOUGHT THE TRIALS AND PAIN WE'VE BEEN HEARING ABOUT HAS CREATED—SYMBOLICALLY- A NEW OR DIFFERENT NATION.

IS IT POSSIBLE OUT OF THESE DIFFICULT TIMES WE WILL – TOGETHER- CREATE A NEW SOCIETY THAT IS BETTER?

TO END ON A SECULAR NOTE– I LOOKED AT THE COVER OF THE NEW YORKER AND COULDN'T FIGURE OUT WHAT IT MEANT. BLACK CITY TOWERS AND WHAT LOOKS LIKE WATER THEN SILHOUETTED FIGURES STANDING LOOKING ACROSS THE WATER– SO I LOOKED AT THE TITLE OF THE COVER AND IT IS "VOICES OF CHANGE".

WE ALL KNOW CHANGE IS HARD AND CHALLENGING, BUT WE ARE IN A TIME OF CHANGE. LET'S HOPE WE CAN MAKE THIS CHANGE FOR THE BETTER.