

Parshat Toldot - TBI Waltham - 5772

Shabbat shalom ... If you are among those of us who have been enjoying our thus far monthly Friday night spirited services and delicious dinners, you may recall that Rabbi Nathan often opens the musical offerings of our gathering with the this tune:

<Hinei mah tov u'mah na'im ... shevet achim gam yachad>

Hinei mah tov ... How good it is, and how pleasing ... for brothers - and sisters - to sit together - to dwell together - in harmony.

Oy! yet here we find in our Torah readings, over and over, little it seems but stories of contention and struggles and disharmony ... brother and brother, sister and sister, nation and nation.

Indeed, to me one of the central questions with which the book of Genesis, of Bereshit, of Beginnings invites us to wrestle is the question posed by the very first brother - "Am I my brother's keeper?"

And today, we find ourselves at the very midpoint of the book, enmeshed in the struggles of Esau and Jacob over blessings and birthrights, Rebekkah and Isaac over childrearing practices and favoritism, and Isaac and Avimelekh over wives and wells.

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Oy! ... makes you want to scream out - Enough, already!

Enough indeed - perhaps that's as succinct a statement of the underlying issue as any - is there going to be enough for me? and for my family, and my people? Enough money, enough food, enough land, water, and shelter, enough love, enough time? Am I enough? Enough blessing ... is there enough blessing for all?

So I'm not going to take on any of the ongoing arguments of the "he said / she said"'s, the woulda/coulda/shoulda's - enough of that for now, too ... rather, I would invite each of us to consider for a moment the larger picture and trajectory of the story that Torah is telling us, from a uniquely personal viewpoint: *your own !*

The rabbis of old have likened the stories in Torah to a written recording of God's dreams. And given that part of that divine spirit is implanted in each of us, perhaps a way to find meaning in each portion is to look upon the text as a projection of our own individual stories. Jungian psychology invites us to learn from both stories and dreams by seeing each of the characters not as external entities, but rather as aspects of our own psyche, of our own special soul - in communication, and wrestling with each other - and all seeking to rise to the Higher Light.

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So picture yourself for a moment as Rivkah - feeling the tussle going on in your belly over what in you is struggling to be born ... the questioning of “why am I here? ... what am I to do ... and how can I move forward with what I know to be true?” ... or seek out your internal Jacob ... you know where to find him this week, there he is sitting in the tent studying quietly, alone, contemplating consequences (that’s one of the meanings of his name) but sheltered and not yet ready to emerge into the larger world. How strange that goat skin on your arm must feel! ... And what’s happening with the Esau inside you ... the impulsive doer (that’s the meaning of his name), always in motion, rejected by mother, and crying out “please, bless me too!” ... And where in your being do you find Isaac, meditating in the fields, persistently and peacefully digging and delving into the wellsprings of living waters, of connection to nature, and to the ancestral traditions.

You might, at some point consider entertaining your own conversations among these archetypal characters which occupy your emotional and spiritual being. You might even wish to consider sharing some aspects of this conversation with others close to you, perhaps even at our luncheon following our Shabbat service.

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Before closing, I want to recognize our national observance of Thanksgiving this past week. Now as Morris often points out to me - every day is a day of thanks giving. And this was brought clearly into focus for me this Thursday in my chaplaincy service at Brigham and Women's hospital, when I was visiting a return patient with multiple maladies, who had just returned to the hospital the previous night for six hours of emergency surgery ... and yet, when I stopped by to see him, his first response was to look up at me, and smile, and say: "You know, you have to find the good in everything."

Tov le'hodot ... it is good to give thanks. This is the song of every Shabbat. And to say "***Dayeinu***" - there *will* be enough for us - this indeed is the path to the freedom, and toward realization of the vision of all dwelling together in harmony.

May the insights which arise from our individual and shared wrestlings with Torah, and God, and Life, lead us each to illumination, to harmony and wholeness, and gratitude, and a sense of enoughness for all, so that, through our blessing, may all the families of the earth be blessed.

Shabbat shalom.