

Shabbat Shalom :

This morning I would like to tell you about the Torah Parshat VAYISHLACH- about Jacob and Esau who were twins, born to Isaac and Rebecca.

I will relate this story to modern times and describe - Brotherhood by choice  
The SPS Men's Club

Esau was the 1<sup>st</sup> born. The 1<sup>st</sup> born receives a double portion of the family inheritance and is blessed by the father, Isaac. The 1<sup>st</sup> born is given honor, respect and financial security. Jacob is an obedient Torah scholar, good intentional mind, according to rabbis,. Esau is a wild aggressive hunter resourceful and skilled. . They were born in the state of competition. Isaac loves Esau and Rebecca loves Jacob.

Esau sells his birthright for a cup of lentil soup and bread to Jacob after a hunting trip, when he was hungry.. Esau was short sided to receive immediate gratification from the food. Jacob despised his birthright. . Isaac favors Esau and Rebecca encourages deceit and favors Jacob. Jacob disguise himself as Esau and then receives Isaac's blessing from Isaac who was blind. . . Jacob is fearful of Esau who is furious, and runs away to his uncle Leban. Jacobs also deceives Leban and tricks his uncle out of sheep. He was not happy where he was deceived to marry Leah instead of Rachael, and he was paid low wages.

Jacob wants to return after 20 years of fleeing, but is worried that Esau has an army of 400 men will crush and harm him. Jacob sends gifts, prays and prepares for war. to show his generosity and kindness to try and reconcile their differences. As Jacob got older, he repented and had concern for his family.

Jacob then has a transformative event.

. The night before he is to meet Esau, he camps out in a cave. Suddenly, is a mysterious figure appears before Jacob. They wrestled, and Jacob wrenched his hip. The mysterious figure could be an angel, as a metaphor, although it may have been Esau in disguise., or even G-d. Jacob had wrestled his whole life and he has a disbelief in G-d's ability and willingness to give him the blessing he promised him before birth. Wrestling is similar to the word hugging and embracing. In the struggle, the mysterious figure says that Jacob will now be called Israel. Jacob asks the strong figure, his adversary to bless him, and call him Israel, " you have struggled with G-d and human beings and you have prevailed ", or " he who wins over the devine ". After 20 years absence, Jacob says " To see your face is to see the face of G-d " It's a connection between humanity and divinity. It was a life altering experience, that changed Jacob.

The following day- Jacob and Esau meet .They kissed but never really get along. Did Esau kiss Jacob or did he bite his neck? They can't forget their past and went on separate ways. They only return together to bury Isaac.

The lesson here is that Jacob who was the weaker and Esau who was the stronger finds inner strength in each other and becomes a whole person.

Jacob and Esau's biblical narrative of conflict, deception and and eventual reconciliation arises from the differences in their character and the choices they made. Reconciliation is difficult, But you can agree to disagree. Interpretations may vary, and how we relate biblical narratives to Contemporary discussions.

Esau's forgiveness is a transformative nature of forgiveness and resolution. The story inspires us to confront conflicts and pursue genuine reconciliation. In doing so , it can restore the sacred bonds of brotherhood in our lives.

There is rivalry in family relations – some times unrepairable despite our best efforts. Sibling rivalry goes both ways and may be driven by envy and jealousy. Sometimes there is the perception that a parent favors one child causing emotional pain to the other . A parent who favors one child may have negative effects on the others.

When someone is offended, hurt and angry, radical action may be needed, but sometimes it is better to separate or establish boundaries for their well being. Both parties can choose to engage in dialogue, but irreconcilable differences may preclude a satisfactory conclusion.

Examples :

Marx Brothers: The perception that they didn't get along – the truth being they worked well and there was affection between them

Wright Brothers ; much closer than most – “ from time to time, we were little children”- they Worked together, played together and thought together

William and Harry – although they bonded after the death of their mother – there was a roe when Harry met Megan

From a social justice perspective, we learn about privilege, inequalities, reconciliation and responsibility for a more just society. Systemic imbalance of privilege has disadvantages in a just society. We need to better communicate to overcome divisions despite past injustice.

Sibling relationships on built on mutual respect and it is a sign of emotional well being. For each of us we must decide if the pain can be overcome, or at times not reconcilable . How do we negotiate a previous relationship of behaviors and mistrust? Did Esau attempt to bite Jacob's neck, but at the last minute they kissed and wept. G-d was able to soften hearts and make

forgiveness and restoration possible. We also recognize that there are circumstances that can't be repaired.

Men's club:

We come from different stages and have our own perspectives based on our family values.

1. the men's club is supportive and mutual understanding
2. with diverse opinions and personalities, we learn about conflict resolution and move to unity And lead to compromises.
3. we learn about leadership and the qualities of a leader with integrity and responsibility.
4. Open and honest communication, mutual respect . We learn to recognize in ourselves and others their strength and weaknesses.
5. Forgiveness and humility are transformational and growth personally and spirituality.
6. We learn generosity and support in an inclusive environment.

What have we learned :

Actions have consequences. After he deceived his father, there were consequences, he had to run away and his deception yielded nothing.

Deception leads to dejection and one may feel depressed in life.

As a mens club / brotherhood we have responsibilities to each other and to our community at large. We support our members who have physical and mental challenges , and more widely We advocate for social justice issues such as gun control and climate change . We are united in fighting antisemitism and anti Zionism .

In summary we have learned 5 principles :

Forgiveness and healing in our lives

Transformative power of facing one's past

Humility, Honesty and Trust.

Compromise of shared values and kindness

It is our wisdom and power that will prevail. It is our moral compass.

On behalf of Joel Arthur, Daniel Gross, we would like to thank the leadership of SPS - Cantor Catan, Rabbi Dave Levy and Rabbi Ain.

Our SPS men's club is strong . We are committed to leadership, innovation, and community. WE thank everyone at SPS for their encouragement and support

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