

THE MEN WHO HAD ONE ARM -- Rabbi Dr. Herbert M. Baumgard, Nov., 1965

Once upon a time a man, by the name of Daniel, went to a strange and distant place. He noticed that in the village there were two kinds of people. Some people were unusually skinny and very tired looking. They seemed to be sad all the time. The other people were pleasantly plump and they seemed to be all smiles and gay. The most unusual thing, however, was that all of the skinny people had two arms, while all of the happy people had only one arm. Daniel couldn't understand this at all. Why were the one-armed people so happy? You would think that the people with two arms would have a reason to be happy, but they weren't at all happy. They looked like they wanted to cry.

Daniel was getting very hungry as he walked along, and he hoped that someone would invite him home for dinner. He hadn't gone very far when one of the happy one-armed people came up to him and said, "Hello, stranger, how would you like to come to dinner with my family?" Daniel didn't know how it would be to have dinner with one-armed people but it was impossible to say "no" to this wonderfully warm invitation. So Daniel accepted.

Dinner wasn't at all what Daniel had expected. At first, there seemed to be very little food. Why, there was hardly enough for 2 people, much less for the five who were seated at the table. Yet, after a few minutes, there seemed to be more than enough food for everybody. That is to say, after a little while, you were more interested in the laughing and the singing than you were in the food.

First the soup was passed around, and everybody had about two

spoon fulls. Then, came the meat, sliced into many small pieces. There seemed to be more salad than anything else. In spite of the small amounts of food, everytime Daniel looked up, somebody was passing him another dish and inviting him to have still more. Altogether, Daniel didn't have very much, but he seemed to be satisfied, and he felt warm all over.

When Daniel finally left his newly-found friends for the evening, he thought to himself, how lucky these people are! They have everything that really matters in the world. They have goodness, and love, and laughter. Daniel hoped that he could find more people like this in his future travels.

The next day, Daniel walked about the village, trying to see all of the interesting sites, because he didn't have much time to spend there. As it grew dark on the second day, he almost fell over a man who was lying on the sidewalk. The man was groaning. Daniel asked if he could be of help. The man seemed to be surprised that Daniel, a perfect stranger, should want to help, but he told Daniel that his name was Fishman, and that he lived just a block or so away. Daniel helped Mr. Fishman to his feet, and placing the man's arm around his neck, Daniel helped the man to his house. Daniel wasn't sure that the people in the house were glad to see Mr. Fishman, although he found out that they were all relatives of Mr. Fishman. The table was already set for dinner, and Mr. Fishman asked to be placed in a chair at the table. Nobody asked Daniel to sit down, but since there was an empty chair, and since he was very tired, Daniel sat down, if not to eat, at least to rest.

It was only then that Daniel noticed that he was in a house of the

skinny people. Everybody seated around the table was very thin and most unhappy looking. The food, however, looked wonderful. There were big bowls of fruit, layers of steak, plenty of soda, and mounds of cake. Daniel could hardly wait for some of the food. His mouth began to water. Then, it started! Each person took the bowl right in front of him and helped himself. The person near the fruit took the fruit; the person near the soda, took all of the soda; the person near the steak, took all of the steak. Daniel hoped that someone would pass ~~him~~ him a bowl of something, a bowl of anything, but nobody passed a thing or said anything. Each one ate from the food which happened to be placed in front of him. Slowly, Daniel realized that no one was going to pass anything to anybody - ever! They each looked at the other, suspiciously. They were each afraid that the other would take something from him, and absolutely no one was willing to pass around some of his food. They refused to share with the next one. Now Daniel understood why these were all skinny and unhappy people. Even though they had two arms and plenty of food, nobody had really quite enough to eat, and nobody had the kind of diet to be healthy.

How different, thought Daniel, from the house where the people had only one arm. The one-armed people were handicapped, in one way, he thought to himself, but they were very lucky, in a more important way. They knew how to share. They weren't afraid to share, and so they more than made up for their handicap. In fact, after you spent a little time with these wonderful one-armed people, you forgot that they had only one arm.

Daniel had learned a great deal in this peculiar village. Very

politely, he asked permission to leave the table of the Fishmans.

As he went out the door, he noticed the name of the owner of the
Selwyn
house, ~~Selwyn~~ Fishman. People probably called him Sel, Sel Fishman.

This little story about Daniel is based on a very old story
that the ancient Rabbis used to tell, but you and I know that it is
a true story even today. Some people have everything, but they are
unhappy, because they haven't learned how to share what they have.
Other people have many problems to start with, but they soon solve
those problems by sharing whatever they do have with others.

It is written in the Talmud - - better a morsel of bread where
love is, than riches where no love is.