

1968

JOSEPH AND HIS COAT OF MANY COLORS

A sermon for children delivered
Jan. 4, 1968 at Temple Beth Am,
Miami, Florida by Rabbi Dr.
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THIS SATURDAY, AS FOR A FEW WEEKS PAST, WE ARE READING FROM THE TORAH IN THE MORNING SERVICE, THE STORY OF JOSEPH. YOU ALL KNOW THE STORY, I AM SURE. WHEN JOSEPH WAS ONLY 17 YEARS OF AGE, HIS FATHER GAVE HIM A VERY SPECIAL PRESENT. IT WAS A BEAUTIFUL COAT MADE OF MANY DIFFERENT COLORS. JOSEPH'S FATHER, JACOB, HAD GIVEN HIS OTHER CHILDREN COATS ALSO, BUT ONLY JOSEPH'S COAT WAS BRIGHTLY COLORED. IT WAS MADE OF A NICE, SOFT MATERIAL, AND ITS COLORS WERE BLUE AND WHITE, WITH PURPLE ADDED FOR ACCENT.

WHEN JOSEPH SHOWED HIS LOVELY NEW COAT TO HIS BROTHERS, THEY WERE VERY JEALOUS. "WHY HAS FATHER GIVEN HIM SUCH A BEAUTIFUL COAT", THEY ASKED THEMSELVES? "I'LL BET HE LOVES JOSEPH MORE THAN HE LOVES US", THE BROTHERS THOUGHT. SO HIS BROTHERS HATED JOSEPH, THE BIBLE SAYS. THEY HATED HIM BECAUSE THEY THOUGHT THAT THEIR FATHER LOVED HIM "SPECIAL".

WE CAN UNDERSTAND HOW JOSEPH'S BROTHERS FELT. WHEN OUR BROTHER OR SISTER GETS A PRESENT WE DON'T GET, WE GET JEALOUS, TOO. WE THINK TO OURSELVES, "I BET MOTHER AND DADDY LOVE BROTHER OR SISTER BETTER THAN THEY LOVE ME." WE ALL GET VERY UPSET WHEN WE SEE SOMEONE GETTING SOMETHING WE DON'T GET.

BUT SHOULD JOSEPH'S BROTHERS REALLY HAVE BEEN JEALOUS? THIS IS THE QUESTION. HAD THEY NEVER RECEIVED PRESENTS FROM THEIR PARENTS? DID JOSEPH ALWAYS GET WHAT THEY GOT? THE ANSWER IS THAT THE BROTHERS HAD RECEIVED MANY GIFTS FROM THEIR PARENTS, GIFTS THAT JOSEPH COULD NOT RECEIVE, SIMPLY BECAUSE HE WAS YOUNGER THAN THEY. AND JOSEPH WAS GIVEN GIFTS THAT THE OLDER BROTHERS COULD NOT GET, SIMPLY BECAUSE THEY WERE OLDER. THIS IS WHAT BROTHERS AND SISTERS CAN'T SEEM TO UNDERSTAND. CHILDREN GET DIFFERENT PRESENTS OFTEN BECAUSE THEY ARE AT DIFFERENT AGES. YOU CAN'T GIVE A 15 YEAR OLD BOY A TOY TRAIN, BUT YOU CAN GIVE A TOY TRAIN TO A 5 YEAR OLD. YOU CAN'T GIVE A 5 YEAR OLD A BEAUTIFUL SPORT COAT, BUT YOU CAN GIVE A SPORT COAT TO A 15 YEAR OLD. CHILDREN DON'T SEEM TO UNDERSTAND THESE THINGS. IF ONE CHILD GETS ICE CREAM, WHILE HIS BROTHER GETS A COOKIE, THE FIRST CHILD IS ANGRY, AND IF HE GETS A COOKIE WHILE HIS BROTHER GETS ICE CREAM, HE'S ANGRY AGAIN. IN THE CHILD'S WORLD, EVERYTHING HAS TO BE THE SAME, BUT AS YOU GET OLDER, YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO UNDERSTAND THAT IT IS NOT POSSIBLE FOR EVERYONE TO GET THE SAME GIFTS IN THIS WORLD.

FATHERS AND MOTHERS SOMETIME SUFFER IN THE SAME WAY AS SMALL CHILDREN, I'M AFRAID. A MAN WHO MAKES \$10,000 YEAR MAY BE VERY JEALOUS OF THE MAN WHO MAKES \$15,000 A YEAR. A WOMAN WHO HAS A LOVELY BROWN MINK COAT MAY BE VERY DISTURBED WHEN SHE SEES A FRIEND WITH AN EMER MINK COAT. EVEN GROWN PEOPLE ARE THE VICTIM OF CHILD-LIKE JEALOUSY.

Joseph And His Coat of Many Colors

Page 3

ONLY IT IS WORSE WITH GROWN PEOPLE. WE SOMETIMES GET DEPRESSED AND BITTER, WHERE CHILDREN CAN GET RID OF THEIR JEALOUSY WITH THE GIFT OF A TRINKET OR WITH THE GIFT OF AN ICE CREAM CONE. THE STORY OF JOSEPH AND HIS BROTHERS REMINDS US NOT TO WORRY SO MUCH ABOUT WHAT THE OTHER PERSON IS GIVEN. INSTEAD, WE SHOULD BE THANKFUL FOR THE PARTICULAR GIFTS WE HAVE. IF WE START TO COUNT OUR OWN GIFTS, WE WILL FIND THAT WE HAVE BEEN VERY LUCKY INDEED.

FOR EXAMPLE, WHAT IS MORE IMPORTANT A NEW, SHINY CAR OR THE GIFT OF EYESIGHT? WHAT IS MORE IMPORTANT, THE GIFT OF A LARGE HOUSE OR THE GIFT OF HEARING? SO MANY OF US FORGET THAT GOD HAS GIVEN ALL OF HIS CHILDREN THESE MARVELOUS GIFTS EQUALLY. IF WE WERE JUST ABLE TO APPRECIATE WHAT A MIRACLE IT IS TO BE ABLE TO SEE, WE WOULD NEVER BE JEALOUS OF ANYONE ELSE.

THINK ABOUT IT FOR A MINUTE. SUPPOSE YOU WERE BLIND AND COULD NOT SEE THE BLUE SKY! SUPPOSE YOU DID NOT HAVE EYES, AND YOU COULD NOT SEE THE GAILY COLORED FLOWERS, AND BIRDS FLYING SWIFTELY AND GRACEFULLY FROM TREE TO TREE. SUPPOSE YOU WERE NOT GIVEN EYESIGHT BY GOD AND SUPPOSE YOU COULDN'T SEE THE FACE OF YOUR MOTHER OR FATHER, THE FACE OF YOUR FRIENDS? WHAT A WONDERFUL GIFT IS THE ABILITY TO SEE, A GIFT WE ALL HAVE. HOW UNIMPORTANT ALL OTHER GIFTS ARE WHEN WE MEASURE GIFTS LIKE THESE.

BUT SOME PEOPLE ARE EVEN UNHAPPY WITH GOD. THEY SAY THAT GOD GAVE SOME PEOPLE MORE THAN HE GAVE TO OTHERS. I WONDER IF THIS IS SO. ALMOST ALL OF US ARE BORN WITH THE SAME GIFTS. THE ONLY QUESTIONS ARE - HOW WILL WE USE THESE GIFTS AND HOW WILL WE REACT TO THE HAPPENINGS IN LIFE? SOME PEOPLE, FOR EXAMPLE, ARE GIVEN A WONDERFUL BRAIN, BUT THEY ARE TOO LAZY TO STUDY. /YOU KNOW PEOPLE LIKE THIS? THEY DON'T LIKE TO WORK, SO THEY PRETEND THAT OTHER PEOPLE ARE SMARTER OR LUCKIER, BUT THIS IS NOT REALLY SO, IS IT? WHAT HAPPENS TO US IN LIFE DEPENDS A GREAT DEAL ON WHAT WE DO WITH THE GIFTS GOD HAS ALREADY GIVEN US. SOME GIFTS GROW IN SIZE WHEN THEY ARE USED. IF YOU DON'T USE YOUR MUSCLES OR YOUR BRAIN, THEY BECOME SMALLER AND LESS IMPORTANT.

FOR EXAMPLE, YOU MAY HAVE HEARD THE STORY ABOUT THE GLASS OF WATER THAT WAS HALF FILLED. TWO PEOPLE LOOKED AT THE GLASS. ONE OF THEM SAID, "THIS GLASS IS HALF EMPTY". THE OTHER PERSON SAID, "THIS GLASS IS HALF FULL". THE HAPPY PERSON SAYS, " THE GLASS IS HALF FULL", FOR HE IS ABLE TO APPRECIATE ALL THE GIFTS THAT LIFE HAS GIVEN HIM. THE UNHAPPY PERSON SAYS, "THE GLASS IS HALF EMPTY", FOR HE SPENDS A GREAT DEAL OF TIME AND ENERGY IN FEELING SORRY FOR HIMSELF. HE WORRIES SO MUCH ABOUT THE THINGS HE DOESN'T HAVE, HE DOESN'T HAVE TIME TO APPRECIATE WHAT HE HAS.

HOW ABOUT YOU? DO YOU WORRY ABOUT THE THINGS YOU DON'T HAVE? DO YOU SPEND A GREAT DEAL OF TIME FEELING SORRY FOR YOURSELF? DO YOU

PRETEND THAT YOUR PARENTS DON'T LOVE YOU JUST BECAUSE YOUR FRIENDS OR BROTHERS OR SISTERS HAVE SOME THINGS YOU DON'T HAVE? OR ARE YOU THE LUCKY ONE, WHO IS ABLE TO ENJOY WHAT HE HAS, WHATEVER THAT MAY BE.

THE TALMUD, WHICH IS THE BOOK JEWS WROTE AFTER THE BIBLE, HAS THIS TEACHING. THE RABBIS ASKED THE QUESTION, "WHO IS HAPPY", AND THEY ANSWERED THE QUESTION THIS WAY. "THE HAPPY MAN IS THE ONE WHO IS ABLE TO BE THANKFUL FOR WHATEVER HE HAS". "WHATEVER HE HAS". IN SHORT, DON'T BE LIKE JOSEPH'S BROTHERS. DON'T SPEND YOUR TIME BEING JEALOUS. INSTEAD, BE HAPPY ABOUT YOUR OWN PRESENTS. I PROMISE YOU, THAT IF YOU USE YOUR PRESENTS THANKFULLY, YOU WILL FIND THAT YOU WILL SEEM TO GET MORE AND MORE PRESENTS AS TIME GOES ON.