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Sons and daughters of the Bible, 1952.

## SONS AND DAUGHTERS OF THE BIBLE

May 4, 1952

The Bible, my dear friends, is a gallery of the most interesting people - a gallery of people - not of plaster saints nor of stereotyped figures. It is a whole world of teeming human beings, young and old, rich and poor, wise and simple, saints and simpers - a veritable album of humanity. You turn the pages of the Bible, and you soon become a fascinated spectator to a veritable procession of all kinds of human beings - the proud and the humble, the heavy-hearted and the merry-hearted, the scheming, the greedy, the ambitious, the loving, the loyal, the resigned, the bereaved, the stricken, and the defeated. Every possible human relationship ishere revealed in the pages of the Bible, and not simple relationships, but the most complex - relationship of parents and children, and brothers and sisters, husband and wife, friends. And they are all very modern, these characters of the Bible, though they are dressed in ancient garb, and though they speak an ancient idiom.

They may be your next-door neighbors. They may be your own children who are taking part in an emernal drama of human relationships. In the very first pages of our Bible we are brought face to face with a vast moving and tragic drama of two sons, the children of the first parents of the human race, Cain and Abel. The first human family is a tragic family. Parents and children alike are caught in the web, are entangled with the tragic web of human existence, as if to warn us that all life can never be entirely free from sorrow. Here are, the first parents of the human race, fashioned unto immortality, placed in the Garden of Eden, a paradise of abundance and pleasantness, and here they are tempted into sin by the serpent of disobedience, and they are driven out from this paradise, driven out into mortality, driven out into toil and suffering, and a flaming sword will forever bar their return to their lost beat itudes.

But an even greater tragedy awaits their children, their sons. Cain, the elder, grows up to be a tiller of the soil, and Abel, the younger, becomes a keeper of sheep, and there these two brothers have the whole world before them and a feud develops between them. Jealousy and enmity, to use the Biblical phrase, "come to crouch at their door". One brother thinks that his occupation is less acceptable to God than that of his brother, that to be a tiller of the soil, a farmer, is not as noble a profession as to be a shepherd, and so he is filled with hot jealousy and anger and bitterness, and so it came to pass, when they were in the field one day, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him.

Here are the first two children in the Bible, first two sons. One is killed by
the hand of his brother, and the other is forever cursed and becomes a fugitive and a
wanderer upon the earth, forever haunted by his guilt, forever pursued by a punishment which was greater than he could bear. Cain did not wish to be his brother's keeper
and so he become his brother's killer.

And time and again, as we shall see, the Bible, so very forcibly and dramatically, presents this recurrent family tragedy of disruption within the home, of disaster and of death caused by jealousy among \*\*EXTREMENTAL SONS and daughters in the home.

There is a note of wistfulness and yearning in that beautiful exclamation of the Psalmist: "How beautiful and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity." It's a very wistful and yearning and exclamation, for it frequently does not respond to the actualities of life.

Sometimes the rift is caused by a difference in temperament between the brothers and because they are in such close proximity to one another so much of the time, and are competing for the favor of the parents or for the acclaim of playmate or neighbor or friend - this difference in temperament causes frightful friction, resentment and bitterness.

Our Bible soon introduces us to two other sons, the sons of Abraham, the father of our people - Isaac and Ishmael. Isaac is the son of Sarah, the wife of Abraham, but Ishmael, is the son of Hagar, Sarah's handmaid, whom Sarah urged Abraham to take to him as his wife when she bore him no children. And this difference in status in the home poisoned the relationship between the two sons. Sarah is jeal ous of Hagar and deals harshly with her, and when her own son, Isaac, is born, she forces Abraham to drive Hagar and her son, Ishmael, from the house lest the son of the bondwoman should come to inherit with her son, Isaac. And though this is very grievous in the sight of Abraham, he was constrained to complay with the insistent demands of Sarah, but not until he had received the assurance from the Lord that Ishmael, too, would become the ancestor of a great nation. And so, in this story again we have the case of jealousy which fans the fire of enmity, this possessive and frightful jealousy of Sarah, but we have also here a difference in temperament between the two sons. Isaac followed in his father's footsteps and in his father's strong faith. When Abraham took Isaac to Mt. Moriah at the bidding of the Lord, Who was testing him to sacrifice him upon this altar, Isaac was ready for the sacrifice. He was of the spirit and of the vision of Abraham. But Ishmael is described in the Bible as, "a wild ass of a man whose hand is against every man and every man's hand is against him".

These qualities, which never characterized the Jewish people - therefore, the Bible declared: "To Isaac shall the promise be fulfilled." The line of tradition shall pass not through Ishmael, but through Isaac.

Now, this difference in temperament in children and a favoritism in the home which betrays the failure of the parents to attenuate, to reconcile these differences are even more sharply revealed in the Biblical account of two other sons, Jacob and Esau. They were twins, the sons of Isaac and Rebecca. Esau, wo was first to be born, grew up to be a "cunning hunter, a man of the field"; Jacob grew up to be "a quiet man, dwelling in tents". The Rabbis say that Esau was interested in this world, and Jacob

favoritism. Isaac, says the Bible, loved Esau because he frequently ate of the venison which Esau brought from his hunt, but Rebecca, the mother, loved Jacob. And so, the brothers became bitter rivals. Jacob was jealous of Esau's birthright and wheedled him into selling it to him for a pettage of lentile. And then Jacob cheated Esau out of his father's blessing by a cunning strategem advised by Rebecca. And so Esau hated Jacob and resolved to kill. Jacob fled to Haran to escape death.

Years of exile were to atone for Jacob's unworthy conduct, and from his many searching trials and sufferings in exile, Jacob emerged a different and a better man, a new man with a new name - Israel. But Jacob was fated to experience the same tragedy of fraternal jealousy and strife among his own children, andhe was fated to commit the same fatal blunder of favoritism which wrecked the home of Isaac and Rebecca.

The Rabbis frequently warned people: "A man should never single out one son for special favors from among all other sons." Jacob did not apply this sound principle to his own sons. Out of his twelve sons, he loved Joseph most because he was the son of his old age, and he foolishly showed his favoritism, and he gave Joseph, says the Bible, a cost of many colors, which the other children did not have. Joseph was a lovable lad, but very spoiled and very conceited and something of a dandy, the apple of his father's eye, and he knew it. So his brothers hated him and could not speak decently to him. And Joseph bragged about the dreams which he had, what a great man he was some day going to be, and his brothers hated him the more for it, and they decide to kill him - the same hot, resentful, poisoned hearts as the heart of Cain, as the heart of Esau - they want to kill their brother. Reuben intercedes. Why slay him? Throw him into a pit. Reuben had hoped that when the brothers departed, he would rescue Joseph from the pit. And after Joseph was thrown into the pit, in the absence of Reuben, a caravan of Ishmaelite traders was on the way to Egypt, and so Judah suggests to his brothers, why allow Joseph to die in this pit - let's sell him as a slave to

these Ishmaelites, and so they do. They sell their brother into slavery. And this of a goatt coat of many colors they dip in the blood/which they kill and take it to the old father, Jacob. Thexfatheryressgrizesxkhisyxthexgarm Father, recognize this. Is this the garment of your son? And this coat, which was to be the evidence of Jacob's foolish favoritism, becomes the bloody garment of his inconsolable sorrow and mourning for many years.

But fortunately, here the story ends on a heart-warming note of brotherly reconciliation. The sons of Jacob, all of them, come to learn through sorrow and tribulations and loss how beautiful and how good it is for brethren to dwell together in unity. As the story unfolds and Joseph becomes prince in the land of Egypt, second only to the Pharoah, and the sons of Jacob are compelled to come down to Egypt to buy food because there was famine in the land of Canaan, Joseph recognizes them; they fail to recognize Joseph; Joseph puts them to the test; and finally orders them to leave the youngest son, Benjamin, as a slave in Egypt and they can go back free to the land of Canaan. But by now these brothers had learned that one brother must be his brother's keeper or he become his brother's killer.

And so Judah, speaking for his brethren, says no, we will not leave Benjamin here. All of us will remain here with him, or make slaves of all of us but let him go back to our old father. Different people, now. They have learned the lesson that a family is cemented in mutual love and in mutual support and in mutual sacrifice, and so they are reunited in forgiveness and in love. "Do not be angry with yourselves," says Joseph, who had real grievances against his brothers, but forgets the grievances, "for God has sent me before you to provide life here. You did not send me, but God."

A magnificent family picture is presented in the Bible in the family of Amram and Jochebet. Amram and Jochebet had three famous children - two sons and one daughter - Moses, Aaron and Miriam. Moses and Aaron also differed in temperament, and the point of this story is that a difference in temperament need not and ought not leed to bit-terness and friction.

The Rabbis seized upon a fine verse in the Book of Psalms, Psalm 85: "Mercy and truth have met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other." And they say in their superb homelitical imagery, this refers to the two brothers, to Moses and Aaron. Moses was truth and righteousness; Aaron was mercy and peace. Moses represented implacable justice. He was the prophet of Righteousness, of Law. He was the Giver of the Law, and if it was necessary, "Let the Law pour through and crash through the mountain. The Law must be vindicated." Aaron, his brother, was less stern; he was more yielding, at times, too much; he compromised at times too much. When the children of Israel demanded of him to make for them the golden calf because Moses had left them, Aaron unfortunately yielded to their insistence, but short of this one lapse, he was, as the Rabbis put, "a lover of peace and one who pursues peace." But in spite of this difference in temperament, the brothers loved one another. They helped one another; they complimented one another. They were not jealous of each other.

Moses was hard of speech and that was a series handicap for a man who had to appear before the king to plead the cause of his people, so Aaron gladly and readily became his spokesman, his mouth, as the Bible puts. Aaron knew full well how much greater and stronger and more profound a man his brother Moses was. He was proud of him. He rejoiced in him, rejoiced to the point where God declared, according to tradition, "The heart that can rejoice in the greatness of his brother as the heart of Aaron did, is qualified to wear the breast-plate of the High Priest in the Holy of Holies."

Two sons, altogether different than the other pair of sons, and Miriam, the daughter, the sister - Miriam tenderly watched over Moses' ark of bulrushes in the Nile. She danced and rejoiced when her brother triumphed in the emancipation of the children of Israel, and though occasionally she was jealous of Moses' wife whom she did not like and was punished for her jealousy, she nevertheless shared in the burdens and the trials of the exodus and the long wanderings in the wilderness, bravely and loyally - a

magnificent family, knit together by solidarity, by love, by devotion.

There are other sons and daughters in the Bible, some noble, some ignoble, some magnificent in their devotion, some lamentable in their betrayals of the hopes of their parents. The sons of Aaron, two of his sons, Nelep and Avil, offered strangerx fires, says the Bible, unto the Lord and were destroyed. The Rabbis say that these two sons were jealous of their parent, parent of their uncle Moses. "When will these two old men die, so that you and I will become the leaders of the people?"

There are children who are envious of their parents, who are eager to inherit their parents.

The sons of Eli, the High Priest, and Shilo, also betrayed the high hopes of their parents. They polluted the holy sanctuary by their gluttony and their immorality, and the old father who had hoped that one of his sons would succeed him in the high office lived to see a stranger take over, Sanuel, and he turned his office over to Sanuel not in bitterness but in great sorrow.

And Samuel, too, was not much luckier with his sons, Hochni and Phineas. There were judges in Israel but "his sons did not follow in his footsteps". They accepted bribery; they were corrupted. Now, frequently parents are compelled to witness sons who stray from their teachings and become lost to them in spirit.

There is an heroic example of a great, noble, but tragic loyalty of a daughter recorded in the Book of Judges of the Bible, and that is the story of Jephtha's daughter. Her father, a Judge in Israel, on the way to fight the Amonites, foolishly made a vow that if he returns victorious from the battle, the first thing that comes out from the door of his house he would sacrifice unto the Lord. The Rabbis called it a very foolish vow and denounced Jephtha for having made it. Jephtha is victorious and as he returns home, the first one that steps out from his house is his own daughter. And Jephtha tells his daughter what he has done, and the daughter says to her father, "Do unto me exactly as you have vowed. Just give me two months time to mourn for my youth among the mountains." And at the end of two months, the daughter of Jeptha, in

voluntary fulfillment of her father's vow, permitted herself to be sacrificed. Subsequent generations denounced the actions of Jephtha, but the memory of his daughter remained a blessing, and in all subsequent ages, Jephtha's daughter was mourned by the daughters of Israel on the anniversary of her death.

And who can ever forget the story of that son, the son of King David, Absolam, the handsome, the over-indulged son who was so greatly loved by his father, who when he grew up set about to win the hearts of the people away from his father who had now grown old; and who finally raises the standard of revolt against his father. And the old King David is compelled to send his troops against Absolam.

Who can ever forget the moving picture of the old doting father, King David, waiting for news of the battle, hoping that whatever happens, hisson would suffer no hurt, asking for news every few minutes from the watchmen upon the tower. "Is there a messenger come?" And finally is told that a runner is approaching. And eagerly, almost hysterically, the King asks this messenger, what news of the battle. And the messenger says all is well. "Blessed be the Lord, Thy God, Who hath delivered up the men xmx who lifted up their hand against the King." You have won. But is it well with the young man Absalom, the King asks the messenger. I don't know, says the messenger. When I left, there was a great tumult and confusion. I don't know. The King commands him to stand aside and he waits still further. And then a second runner comes. "Tidings for my Lord, the King. The Lord hath avenged thee this day. Victory!" "Is it well with the young man Absalom?" "The enemies of my Lord the King, be as that young man is." King David knows now that his son has been killed in battle, and the King went up to the chamber over the gate and wept. "O, my son Absalom, my son, my s

The greatest blessing, dear friends, known to our people and to the sacred literature of our people, is to have sons and daughters who inherit and transmit what is best and noblest in the lives of their parents. "Thus shall thy seed be," God says unto Abraham, "thus shall thy seed be." And the Rabbis illustrate what is meant by that blessing.

A man set out on a long journey, and for ten days he wandered and he found no city and no inn and no trees and no water and no sign of life. And for ten more days he struggled on into the wilderness, and finally he saw in the distance a tree. And as he approached the tree, he found nearby a spring of clear, cool water, and he looked upon the tree and he saw that the tree was a fruit-bearing tree of lucious fruit and that the tree had wide, deep, shadowing branches. And so the traveler drank of the water of the spring nearby and ate of the fruit of the tree and rested in its shadow and refreshed himself, and then he looked up to the tree and said, "With what shall I bless thee, 0 tree? With wide branches - you have them; with fruit - you have them in abundance; you have shadow; you have water. How shall I bless thee, 0 magnificent tree? May all the trees that will some day spring forth from your seed be like you."

Blessed are parents who have sons and daughters who represent the best that is in them, the hopes that are in them, the aspirations which are theirs, the high levels which they have always sought to reach. For every parent wants his children to excel him and delight when the children excel them. And blessed are sons and daughters who can look back upon the tree from which they sprang and bless that tree for the pride which they have in it.

There are many sons and daughters in the Bible, all kinds. The summary of it all is found in the Book of Proverbs: "A wise son rejoices the heart of the father; when and a foolish son is the grief of his mother."

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