



Daniel Jeremy Silver Collection Digitization Project

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MS-4850: Daniel Jeremy Silver Papers, 1972-1993.

Series III: The Temple Tifereth-Israel, 1946-1993, undated.

Sub-series B: Sermons, 1950-1989, undated.

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Jacob, 1978.

Jacob
Daniel Jeremy Silver
December 10, 1978

If my voice holds out I want to stroll with you this morning through the tra-
ditions of our people. I want to ^{begin by taking} ~~take~~ a look at our people's attitudes towards names.
Specifically, I want to talk about one man's name, Jacob; and ^{to raise the question} ~~suggest~~ why names were
^{no ancient's changes} changed. ~~No anticipated names were changed~~ to designate growth and accomplishment, ^{an}
^{new interest in} The process of name-changing speaks to the reach of character and personality of which
we are capable.

The ancients set great store by a person's name. Names were ultimately
significant. ^{usually} A parent chose for his child a theophoric name, a name which bound the
child to the clan's god, ^{and placed him under the protection of a god} ~~a name which would protect the child~~. A king, on ascending
the throne, accepted a royal name which invoked the protection of the gods ^{natural} or promised
great glory to the royal person. When a youth became an adult ^{he} they were given a new
name which suggested their rank, ^{his} ~~some~~ special talent which they had shown or a special
quality of person. ^{names simply as} ~~Names were not simply as we use them~~, convenient labels, to dis-
tinguish one person from another. ^{no individual used} Your names defined ~~something~~ essential and basic
^{characteristics} ~~about you~~. ^{on to establish critical protective links}

When ~~Pharaoh~~ Amenhotep IV ascended the throne of Egypt he received ^{his}
royal name which means ^T "he who pleases the god Amon." Several years later, when
the young pharaoh became involved in a bitter political ^{first} ~~battle~~ ^{unsuccessful} to ~~depose~~ the established
~~royal~~ priesthood of Amon (he stripped them of their hereditary privileges, destroyed
their temples and rededicated the kingdom to the solar disk, ^E Aton), he took a new name,
Aknehaten, "he goes will with the god Aten." This is the famous Iknehaten, the Pharaoh,
who brought to Egypt a first brief vision of ^{as single} ~~one~~ over-reaching and over-arching god.
^{at birth} Jacob called ~~his~~ son, Joseph, ^{the evocation} ~~which means~~ "may he have increase"; ^{the} ~~may~~
^{prophecy, he will have} ~~his future be a good one, may there be many descendants from him~~. When Joseph re-
^{a senior officer} ceived authority in the Egyptian hierarchy the Egyptians gave him a new name symbolizing

now ^{from the fact that} his rank and his position within their society. The Bible tells us he was called Zaphenath-

^{Askenaz} Paneah which means "the god ~~Askenaz~~ protects." When Terah named his ^{boy} son, ~~the first~~

~~of patriarchs~~, he called him Abram which means "my father is mighty." Later, ^{at the} when

^{making of a} God ^{God} enters into a covenant with Abram he lengthened the name to Avraham which is in-

^{A promise of no covenant.} interpreted by the Bible as meaning "the father of multitudes." ~~Abraham's seed will in-~~

^{Names were not} ~~clude many generations of descendants.~~ No one changed his name offhandedly. You

^{you} changed your name when you changed your rank, ^{one of} married into another tribe or

achieved great ^{victory} deed or evidenced some strong personality trait. Names retain a certain

^{at essential essence of no man.} amount of significance.

^{change} We tend to change our last names ^{rather} than our first ones. Our immi-

grant grandparents shortened their European names or assimilated European names ^{deemed}

^{more assimilated} to this environment. ^{Jews} Those who went from Europe to Palestine did the same thing.

Gerwin became ben Gurion, Meyerson became Meir and Shertok became Sharet. They

^{gave to themselves} ~~gave to themselves~~ Hebraized names which signified removal from the diaspora and all

^{the new independence of the Jewish State.} ~~the new independence of the Jewish State.~~ I have noticed, as you must have, the number

^{of young women who when they marry are unwilling to give up their maiden names, and}

^{so devise} ~~so devise~~ a hyphenated last name for their new family composed of their husband's

family and ~~theirs~~. These hyphenated names can become quite a mouthful, but they

do assert the understandable position that my roots are as important as your roots.

I am intrigued that while in earlier times name changes tended to involve the

first name, the thing which most distinguishes us, today these changes of names have

dealt with last names, our background, our family ties, rather than with personality.

Clearly, this relates to the ^{as to} family and class which the ancients

face and we have lost, but there is something more. When you look at ancient clans or

American ~~Indian~~ tribes you discover a rite of passage when the young person passed an

initiation into adulthood. He won a new name based on adult skills. ^{IN SO DOING} ^{PREVIOUS} ^{Now} ^{adult} This might depend upon speed or strength or ^{STATUS AND THE ACTUAL} ~~good looks and remained the adult name.~~ The naming process symbolized that the child ^{had been} was left behind and a new ^{new adult} adult person had emerged. I wonder if our indifference to ^{the} ^{OR NO} ~~first name changing~~ may not relate to the fact that ^{most modern} we really do not believe that ^{from} we can overcome ~~our~~ conditioning and environment, that we remain throughout adulthood very much what ~~we were conditioned into becoming~~ ^{allowed us to be} in our childhood. This is the age of Freud. We are what our childhood allows us to be. We see ourselves as emerging slowly, ^{changing} ~~as growing up~~ rather than at a point of time ^{Now is no sudden} being transformed, ^{then - is} changed into another person requiring another name. ^{at least we do not believe that to be}

The ancients believed that the adult was more than a grownup child. To be sure, the child is in the adult, but ^{he} ^{has remained as} ~~an adult is something~~ more than a tall child with a few years of experience. I believe ^{to be} ~~that~~ this perception is valid. I believe that our contemporary conventional wisdom has ^{Must be seriously questioned in no less if} ~~been displaced~~ by that process of emergence which some modern psychologists are beginning to call an identity crisis, a period of intense inner turmoil ^{From which we} ^{break out as no butterfly out of its cocoon} which is ultimately resolved when ~~our purpose falls~~ into place. Once identity confusion has been resolved we gain our adult identity and are, in fact, quite different from that ^{child or adolescent} ~~person~~ ^{than} we were before. The Bible's phrase, ve'ne he pachiti le-ish ahen ^R - I have become another. ^{describes what can now happen}

No greater mistake can be made ^{to} ~~by friends~~ than not recognizing ^e that the forty-year old is far different than the child we knew thirty years ago. I know this from my own experience with turkeys. A turkey, ^u ^{"u"} ^{"u"} in contemporary jargon, is a youngster who is always out of step, never quite with it, whose neck ^{like no turkeys} is ~~always~~ awkwardly craning ^{Flaps} and ~~looking around~~ ^{what no eyes seek on side} as if they are never quite sure ~~what they are seeing or where they~~ are going. The turkeys of my youth have, ^{most of} ~~for the most part~~, turned into competent human beings. ^{adults now purposes are clear and their nature controlled} If I were to judge them by what I knew them to be when we were all young ^{or they} or they were to judge me by what they knew of me at that time, ~~our~~ ^{on them} assessments would

~~sometimes~~ be ~~incorrect~~ and misleading. We do change. Our level of confidence changes, ~~even our~~ ^{as does} temperament. What is surprising is that despite these changes something deep down in the modern psyche prevents us from going down to Probate Court and changing our name to correspond to ~~the~~ perceived changes in our personality. Little Sammy simply became ^o big Sammy.

All this is simply by way of prologue to a discussion of a name change described in the Bible; ^{When} ~~how~~ Jacob became Israel. ^{To Bible} ~~This name change, I would suggest,~~ speaks to ~~the reach of human possibility and potential and rather effectively describes the changes~~ ^{Some thing unworkable in the human experience and} which, in fact, take place as individual personality emerges. ^{OUR}

^{Jacob's name} ~~Now~~ the Hebrew word, Yakov, ~~probably~~ ^{however, offers} comes from ~~the~~ root which means yakub al, may God protect; ^{Explanation} ~~but the Bible gives it a different entymological base.~~ ^{leaves YAKUB FROM EKOT,} It takes ~~from the noun, yakav,~~ ^{When} which means heel. And we are first introduced to Jacob as ^{The} ~~one of twins~~ a younger of ~~the two~~ twins, ^{was delivered to Mary her 71 not he} Jacob and Essau, who ~~as he is being de-~~ ^{came} ~~livered~~ comes out holding ^{on to the heel} of Essau. And if you remember your Greek mythology you remember that Achilles had only one weak spot, one place where a spear or a sword could enter his body. ^{He} ~~Achilles,~~ according to Greek legend, was the son of ^{a prince} ~~the noble man,~~ Pelius, and of ^{the} ~~the~~ goddess of ~~the rivers.~~ ^{How noble} Thetis, ~~and Thetis~~

11/11/576

The heel had a reputation as
the body's weakest spot.

SON FROM ALL LIVES SO she wanted him in, to do
 wanted to protect her mortal offspring and so she took him and held the infant baby
 when he was ~~born~~ over the river Stix, the sacred magical river. She held him

by the heel and she dunked him in the river and wherever the waters covered the child
 the child was impregnable, but where she held the child, by the heel, the child could
 be wounded. And when Achilles went off to the Trojan wars and proved invincible, so
 finally, as you know, someone discovered his Achilles heel.

Now, the Biblical story of the ~~two twins~~ is nothing more than a statement, in
 legendary form, that the younger twin would somehow discomfit the older. He knew
 the older's weakness. He would best the older throughout life. It's a storyteller's
 warning to us of what is yet to come. But the word heel, as applied to Jacob, is true

in another sense, in the modern sense, he was a heel, he was not a nice person being.

Young Jacob was a rather overly shrewd young man, conniving, timid physically.

We were introduced to Jacob first off in a scene which is almost impossible if you

put it in the context of ancient times. We find him in the kitchen, his mother's kit-
 chen, with an apron around his waist, cooking. Now today a young man has to learn to

cook or he's going to starve, but in those days for a young man to enter the kitchen was

a statement of effeminacy. It was not his role. There were sex-differentiated roles

and this was not the place for the young Jacob. But there he is, puttering around with

the pots and the pans, making lentil soup. And Esau is out in the fields doing what

young men are supposed to be doing, hunting, riding horses, being very very physical.

And he comes in hungry, famished from his exertion; He sees his brother with the lentil

soup and it smells good. He says, 'let me have some,' and immediately we find

the shrewdness of the young Jacob emerging. Jacob says, 'certainly, I'll give you

some, but you must first promise me the birthright, that is, the double portion of

the inheritance, the leadership of the clan.'

Now, Esau does not possess the birthright as yet, his father hasn't given it to him. I think he probably felt that Jacob was bantering with him and he says, 'of course, I'll sell you my birthright for the mess of pottage.' And Jacob says, 'swear to me' and he swears to him and he sells the birthright in a symbolic way for the soup which satisfies, at the moment, his hunger. And all this, again, is an introduction to the actual conniving by which young Jacob gets the birthright.

Young Jacob was not only a shrewd, manipulative human being, effeminate, but he is also a very pliable, malleable person, without a mind of his own. His mother preferred the youngster with smooth skin and he was always around the kitchen. He didn't smell of the field, of the hunt. The father preferred the more athletic, the more masculine, of the boys and there seems to have been some kind of bitterness in the house between the two parents. But, in any case, one day when they were in their early twenties the mother, Rachel, overhears the father, Isaac, now an elderly man whose eyes are going bad on him, call Esau to him and say to Esau: "My son, the time has come for me to speak the ritual blessing which invests you with the birthright. I have decided that you are to be the chief of the clan and my heir, but I must have some venison in order to eat the sacred meal, the ritual meal, prescribed before I pronounce the blessings. Go out in the fields, hunt down a deer, bring in the deer, cook it, prepare for me the meal and I will give you my blessing." Rachel overhears this conversation. She summons her younger, the younger of the twins, Jacob, and she says to him. This is what has transpired. I want you to go to the flock and find me a couple of goats and we'll slaughter the goats and I'll make a fine stew for your father and you will go in, and since he can hardly see any longer he will give you the blessing, believing you to be Esau.

Now, Jacob does not protest. He's ready to take this act, but he says to his

mother: "The scheme won't quite work. I am smooth-skinned and my brother is of hairy skin. My father will feel us even if he can't see us and he'll know that I am not Esau." His mother said, well, that's easily solved; we'll make for you armlets out of the skin of goats which are hairy, we'll put them over your arms and when your father feels your arms or feels your shoulders to put his hands in blessings upon them he will feel that you are, in fact, Esau. And so it transpires and the young Jacob is given the blessing, which cannot be recalled, the birthright which once given cannot be rescinded. He becomes the titular heir of the family.

Esau, of course, feels deceived, but he can't take immediate vengeance upon Jacob because his father is still alive, he has no right to do so. He bides his time, but the mother knows there will be a moment of violent anger, of murder, and she orders young Jacob to flee.

So far we have a perfect description of a young Hebrew juvenile delinquent, nothing to commend him, nothing to suggest that Jacob will turn into one of the fathers, one of the patriarchs of our people. He goes off by himself. He goes off to the mountains, to go north to the homeland of his people in Syria, Labin, his uncle. And that first night when he is away from his father's home, this young man who was always under foot in the home, never out in the fields, he must have felt cold and lonely and frightened, but we are told simply that he lay down without a covering; he took a stone for a pillow; he went to sleep. Suddenly, that night, he had a dream and in that dream he saw a ladder, his foot on the earth, its top reaching into the heavens, and he saw angels of God ascending and descending the ladder, and he heard the voice of God speaking to him from the heavens. The Bible tells us Jacob was frightened, awestruck, overwhelmed and he said, surely God is in His place and I had no sense of it.

There comes a moment in every one of our lives when we are leaving our adolescence and we are entering adulthood when suddenly we recognize that there is reason

to fear. We are now responsible for our own destiny. We are now alone. We know that the voice of God speaks to us. There's nobody to run home to. There's nobody to throw our responsibilities on and the world suddenly becomes an alien, strange, foreboding place. And that's the beginning of the transformation. We've left the home. We've left the womb. We've left the security. We can no longer blame anybody else for what happens to us in our lives. We suddenly recognize that we are alive, that we are independent, that no one will take care of us, that there is this relationship between God and man, between responsibility and myself, and that I must somehow assume that responsibility. And that's the first moment, if you think back to your childhood you can probably remember that moment, that first moment where we begin to transform ourselves into something other than we were as a child, the recognition that the security of the home is shattered forever and that we've got to walk and make our own way.

Now, that's not the completion of the process of becoming an adult. It's only the beginning, the first step. No one begins to become an adult until he's gone through an emotionally devastating experience, when you're suddenly frightened, frightened by life and of all its implications, frightened by the responsibilities. How am I ever going to make my way? How am I ever going to make a living? How am I ever going to decide what to do? There are no answers as yet, only the desperate questions and only the sense that there is an overarching judgment which somehow relates to us.

Now, as you know, Jacob goes on. He returns to the homeland of the people in Syria, to his uncle Labin, and there in a very neat bit of measure for measure, tit for tat justice, the younger who took the elder's birthright is made to take the elder daughter for a wife when, in fact, he proposed to marry the younger daughter and Labin informs him, in our world this is the way we do it, that the elder must always be deferred to. He's made to sense the guilt that was his because of his act.

When he comes to Labin's territory he goes to the well and he sees this beautiful girl come down to draw water for the flocks, this is Rebecca. He falls in love with her and wants to marry her and he says to Labin, what can I do to deserve your daughter for my bride, and Labin says, work for me for seven years. And he works, apparently willingly, for seven years and when it comes to the bridal feast there's a great gathering of the clan and the bride is bedecked, veiled as all oriental brides are, and she is led into the marriage chamber and only the next morning does he discover that he has been sleeping with his new wife who is not the younger daughter, but Leah, the older daughter because the older daughter by tradition must be the first to be married.

In anger he explodes at Labin, what must I do, why did you do this to me? Through storms we grow, by being taken advantage of we learn to take care, to a certain degree, of ourselves. Labin said, it's easy, I'll give you my daughter whom you want to be your wife but you must promise to me to work seven more years in order to earn her as your wife. And so he works for fourteen years for these two women and then he works for Labin another six trying to establish himself, to get capital, sheep, goats, camels, all that he will be able to take home. Between the first moment, the first shattering moment when we recognize that we're on our own, that it's a cold alien world and we've got to somehow make it our own, to the moment when we're ready to go back home, that is when we are ready to become adult, to live with other adults, to be with those whom we left behind because at that point we were not yet ready to act the role of the grownup. A number of years have to pass, years when we're away. It's no matter of happenstance that it's part of our common wisdom that children ought to go away to college. They ought to be out from under and probably they ought to remain away for a number of years, however much we would like them to be around, until they can come back and treat with us as equals, as adults, a very difficult role for any child to establish with a parent.

Twenty years have passed before he hears God say, the voice of conscience, return to your land and return to your parents. And he sets out with his large retinue. He has two wives and several concubine and a number of sons and a daughter and he begins to move back south towards Canaan, and as he moves towards the south he begins to wonder how will I be received. Now, he knows that his parents will receive him with open arms, at least his mother will, but what about his brother, the brother who was physically stronger than he, the brother whom he defrauded. How will his brother receive him? And as he moves along through the trans Jordan, down towards the fjord across the Jordan that he will take to enter the Promised Land, he begins to wonder, to worry, to be anxious, and he sends ahead a messenger. He tells the messenger, go to Esau, my brother, tell him I have come with many possessions, to share my possessions with him, and I want to be received well by him. The messenger goes, returns. What said my brother? Your brother said nothing, my Lord. He said only that he was coming to greet you with four hundred armed horsemen. Worry, anxiety, fear. Have I the courage to cross over, to expose myself, to really be an adult? And so as he approaches the fjord in the river he divides his possessions, and he sends ahead at about two-hour intervals, first, a large flock of goats as a gift, and then a large flock of sheep as a gift, and then a large flock of camels as a gift, and then a large flock of horses as a gift, and he tells to the drover, to the man who is guiding each of these separate flocks, tell my brother Esau that these are for him only part of the gifts which I want to bestow upon him. And one by one these gifts are sent out, bribes if you will, and finally the fjord is come to and he orders his household, all his familiars across the fjord. and he remains there alone that night. Shall he cross the rubicon or shall he not? And that night there wrestles with him a man, and they wrestle until the morning. And the man says unto him, I cannot overcome you and you cannot overcome me. What is your name? Jacob.

And the man wrestles further and he cripples Jacob in the thigh. Jacob said, I have wrestled with God and with man, but I have not been fully overcome. And the man says to Jacob, let me go. And Jacob says, I will not let you go until you bless me. And the man says, from now on your name will not be Jacob, heel, but Israel, he who has wrestled with God and with man and has not been overcome.

Now, is this a dream? Was Jacob simply wrestling with his conscience? Was the attempt to portray Jacob wrestling with an angel of God or was he wrestling with God Himself? The story is difficult in the sense that we are not told precisely who this dark, unknown, anonymous assailant was. Surely, we can project ourselves on to this moment, for can we not remember a moment in time when suddenly we wrestled with our conscience; we wrestled with our fears; we wrestled with our anxieties. Oh, they got the better of us for a time, but somehow we overmastered them, we crossed the rubicon, we crossed the fjord, we crossed into adulthood never to return to childhood.

And there you have the beginning and the end of this period of transition, from childhood to adulthood. It does not come overnight in spite of all our children would like to believe. It takes a long time. It takes many many difficult experiences. It begins with the shattering awareness that we are alone, we are on our own. It ends with the awareness that we can wrestle with our fears and not be mastered by them. We have put our need for security of the home behind and can now really direct our energies and develop our energies as an adult. And it's at that point when the identity confusion has become a clear sense of our own identity, to use Eric Ericson's terms, it's at that point that we emerge into ourselves, and it's at that point that in traditional society a person adopted his or her adult name because now they knew themselves. And isn't that what adulthood really is? When you begin, really, for the first time, to understand yourself. The child reacts almost instinctively. The adolescent has a

different crusade every other day, a different passion every other month, but the adult has settled convictions, settled concerns, and knows himself. He has been changed in the process. We are no longer as innocent. We are no longer, perhaps, as sensitive as we once were. Jacob was crippled by this night of wrestling, limped forever after.

But whatever the cost, and of transition from childhood to adulthood does demand of us a cost, we have grown, we have matured, we have emerged. You know, I've always been rather proud of the fact that we are called the children of Israel. I often wondered why, of all the patriarchs, they called the Jews Israelites. Why weren't we called Abrahamites or Isaacites or Josephites? Why Israelites? Jacob, when we look at him as a young man, was not a very nice young man, but I suspect that the name was chosen because we, too, as a people have had to wrestle through many a long night, wrestle with our fears, fears of the oppressor, fears of the crusader, fears of the enemy outside, fears of the majority, and we have not been overcome. We've been blooded. We've had our martyrs. We've been denied many things, but we have not been overcome. We persisted. We wrestled the long night. We emerged as a truly committed community, a truly committed Israel, the sons of Israel.

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1st ~~line~~ 2nd ~~line~~ 3rd ~~line~~ 4th ~~line~~ 5th ~~line~~ 6th ~~line~~ 7th ~~line~~ 8th ~~line~~ 9th ~~line~~ 10th ~~line~~ 11th ~~line~~ 12th ~~line~~ 13th ~~line~~ 14th ~~line~~ 15th ~~line~~ 16th ~~line~~ 17th ~~line~~ 18th ~~line~~ 19th ~~line~~ 20th ~~line~~ 21st ~~line~~ 22nd ~~line~~ 23rd ~~line~~ 24th ~~line~~ 25th ~~line~~ 26th ~~line~~ 27th ~~line~~ 28th ~~line~~ 29th ~~line~~ 30th ~~line~~ 31st ~~line~~ 32nd ~~line~~ 33rd ~~line~~ 34th ~~line~~ 35th ~~line~~ 36th ~~line~~ 37th ~~line~~ 38th ~~line~~ 39th ~~line~~ 40th ~~line~~ 41st ~~line~~ 42nd ~~line~~ 43rd ~~line~~ 44th ~~line~~ 45th ~~line~~ 46th ~~line~~ 47th ~~line~~ 48th ~~line~~ 49th ~~line~~ 50th ~~line~~ 51st ~~line~~ 52nd ~~line~~ 53rd ~~line~~ 54th ~~line~~ 55th ~~line~~ 56th ~~line~~ 57th ~~line~~ 58th ~~line~~ 59th ~~line~~ 60th ~~line~~ 61st ~~line~~ 62nd ~~line~~ 63rd ~~line~~ 64th ~~line~~ 65th ~~line~~ 66th ~~line~~ 67th ~~line~~ 68th ~~line~~ 69th ~~line~~ 70th ~~line~~ 71st ~~line~~ 72nd ~~line~~ 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1941

then for me, I can't

The world became a different place -

The scenery of Coastland has been utterly -

We are better - we have to have as new
several - several good - but only one

he will be here - I just need to see to
 get the ~~material~~ - the report to you. I don't
 know - when he comes to see will mean in the field -
 the library - a flute and a corolla junction -
 but of the day - Now to find the day -
 cannot be a day - prophyl prophyl prophyl prophyl prophyl

[Faint handwritten notes, possibly bleed-through from the reverse side of the page.]

These are the things that are not
 good (or bad) in themselves -
 They are good or bad only in relation to
 some other thing.

The ~~will~~ ~~also~~ ~~was~~ ~~also~~ ~~also~~
 the ~~will~~ ~~also~~ ~~was~~ ~~also~~ ~~also~~

but unlabeled - used to know me - Don see

a report from - an adult - a child

not to be - but to grow

Don see an adult to ref - my test -

only see a don - don't know what

when see me unlabeled - because me in

unlabeled unlabeled unlabeled

first: unlabeled

Green some of unlabeled

an unlabeled unlabeled / unlabeled

a number of unlabeled unlabeled - unlabeled unlabeled

[unlabeled unlabeled - unlabeled] - Not see

unlabeled unlabeled - unlabeled unlabeled unlabeled

unlabeled

