

## Devotion, Week of October 15, 2023

### Rev. Jeanne Simpson

I just watched a news story about the funeral in Chicago for a young Palestinian boy, whose landlord attacked him and his mother with a knife after the landlord's derogatory remarks about her. The community there is in an uproar, understandably. The war in Israel has partly come home to roost in these ethnic communities in America. This war is the most horrific thing we have seen since the Holocaust. But it started all the way back with Cain and Abel. One brother killed the other. Cain's answer when God asked him where his brother was? "Am I my brother's keeper?" Well, yes, he was, because that is what God intended when he made human families. It didn't stop there. There followed Ishmael and Isaac. Isaac became the progenitor of the Israelite clan, and Ishmael of the Bedouin tribes of near Egypt, and the Muslims consider him their progenitor. Then there followed Jacob and Esau – Jacob was actually renamed Israel after wrestling with God/an angel all night and Esau settled in Edom, south of the Dead Sea. Joseph was sold to slave traders and taken to Egypt, away from Jacob and his other brothers. Moses was put in a basket to avoid being killed by Pharaoh because he was a Jewish baby, and ironically enough, was rescued by the daughter of the Pharaoh and raised as an Egyptian. He was later called to free his biological people from Pharaoh and take them back to the land God promised them.

Brother against brother. Muslims and Jews are, in reality, historic brothers. Yet they have spent centuries fighting against each other, even before the Islamic faith was founded in the early 600 A.D. period. Islam means "submission to the will of God." Israel means "God perseveres." Muslims and Jews both worship the same God – called Allah or Yahweh or the Lord. Both groups say "bless his Holy name" after they speak the name of God. The Islamic faith reveres Jesus and Mary, his mother. Both groups claim descendancy from Abraham – one from Ishmael and one from Isaac. Brothers. Brothers who cannot get along and who base their battles on religious and ethnic differences. But these battles are what they've always been, in reality – war over land and water rights. When Israel was formed in 1948 after World War II as a homeland for the Jews who had suffered such horrendous losses in the Holocaust, the native Palestinians were left with no where to go, unless they immigrated to Jordan. Some had lived in the land for centuries, and they were outraged at being thrown out of their native land. They ended up being confined to walled in enclosures and must use internal passports to leave for work or other reasons. We've watched the fallout of the formation of Israel ever since. Brother fighting against brother. Over and over and over.

We are seeing frustration and inbred hatred of two sets of brothers boil over into unrelenting violence. There are no winners – the victims are babies, mothers, young women, and the elderly, primarily. And the politicians in charge, once again, cannot communicate in any fashion to work toward peace. Israel tells Hamas to free the prisoners and they will talk about a ceasefire. Hamas responds to quit firing on them and they will talk about a ceasefire. Impasse after impasse. And here we are, half-way around the world, wondering what will ever make a difference in this war. I have no answers. I grieve and I pray. I hope for insanity to be resolved, and I pray. I pray. And I pray some more. I hope you will pray with me.

*Jeanne*