



SPRING-TIME DAILY ENCOURAGEMENTS

Carstairs-Bancroft United Church

May 16, 2023



Photo: Our Daily Bread

STOLEN GODS

You have struggled with God and with humans and have overcome.

Genesis 32:28

READ Genesis 31:19 - 21; 32:22 - 30

A carved wooden figure—a household god—had been stolen from a woman named Ekuwa, so she reported it to the authorities. Believing they had found the idol, law enforcement officials invited her to identify it. “Is this your god?” they asked. She said sadly, “No, my god is much larger and more beautiful than that.”

People have long tried to give shape to their concept of deity, hoping for a handmade god to protect them. Perhaps that’s why Jacob’s wife Rachel “stole her father’s household gods” as they fled from Laban (Genesis 31:19). But God had His hand on Jacob, despite the idols hidden in his camp (v. 34).

Later, on that same journey, Jacob wrestled all night with “a man” (32:24). He must have understood this opponent was no mere human, because at daybreak Jacob insisted, “I will not let you go unless you bless me” (v. 26). The man renamed him Israel (“God fights”) and then blessed him (vv. 28–29). Jacob called the spot Peniel (“face of God”), “because I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared” (v. 30).

This God—the one true God—is infinitely larger and more beautiful than anything Ekuwa could have ever imagined. He can’t be carved, stolen, or hidden. Yet, as Jacob learned that night, we can approach Him! Jesus taught His disciples to call this God “our Father in heaven” (Matthew 6:9).

By Tim Gustafson

PRAY & REFLECT

Heavenly Father, forgive me for seeing You as smaller than You really are. Help me embrace the reality of who You truly are. Amen

How would you describe God? How might your ideas of Him be too limited?

SCRIPTURE INSIGHT

Rachel stole her father's "household gods" (Genesis 31:19). The Hebrew word used here is *teraphim*. This word is used several times in the Old Testament (see Judges 17:5; 18:14; 1 Samuel 15:23; 2 Kings 23:24), but scholars are uncertain about what such household gods or idols were used for. It's possible they were used in everything from divination practices to status symbols denoting who was the rightful heir of the household. It's further unclear why Rachel stole them from her father, as these idols aren't mentioned again in the rest of the story of Jacob or his offspring. — **By J.R. Hudberg**

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