

Grace Killian: Good morning.

Congregation: Good morning.

Grace Killian: Our responsive reading this morning is Psalm 137 in your Black Appleton Psalter. Please stand.

Grace Killian: "By the waters of Babylon, there we sat down and wept when we remembered Zion."

Congregation: "On the willows there, we hung up our lyres."

Grace Killian: "For there, our captors required of us songs, and our tormentors mirth, saying, 'Sing us one of the songs of Zion.'"

Congregation: "How shall we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land?"

Grace Killian: "If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand wither."

Congregation: "Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth if I do not remember you, if I do not set Jerusalem above my highest joy."

Grace Killian: "Remember, O Lord, against the Edomites the day of Jerusalem, how they said 'Raze it, raze it it down to its foundations.'"

Congregation: "O daughter of Babylon, you devastator, happy shall he be who requites you with what you have done to us."

Choir: (singing)

Jamie Drucker: Good morning.

Congregation: Good morning.

Jamie Drucker: Our reading from Genesis chapter two, verses one through seven. "Now, the serpent was the shrewdest of all the land beasts that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say you should not eat of any tree of the garden?"

Jamie Drucker: The woman replied to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the other trees of the garden. It is only of that fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden that God said, 'You shall not eat of it or touch it lest you die.'"

Jamie Drucker: And the serpent said to the woman, "You are not going to die, but God knows that as soon as you eat of it, your eyes will be opened and you will be like a divine being who knows good and bad."

Jamie Drucker: When the woman saw that the tree was good for eating, and a delight to the eyes, that the tree was desirable as a source of wisdom, she took the fruit and she ate. She also gave some to her husband and he ate. Then the eyes of both of them were opened."

Jamie Drucker: That's a pretty provocative way to start off your week. It's a familiar story. We know what this one is about; it's about sin. And we know what's about to happen. They're about to be banished from the garden and punished. So what's the point of reading a story when you already know what it's about and you already know what's about to happen? What I'd like to think about with all of you today is this idea of reading a story, one that you think that you know, and having your eyes be able to be opened; of being able to understand knowledge, not as something that you can eat and consume, but as something that evolves over time.

Jamie Drucker: We have a tradition at this time of year in the Jewish world called [foreign language Simchat Torah, where we take the Torah, which we read all year long, week by week, and we start over. We return to the same stories every single week to see what it has to say to us anew. We're not in this process to consume knowledge, to consume information, but to have the steadfastness of these words on the page as a means for us to understand the ways in which we have changed and the ways in which we have grown.

Jamie Drucker: A couple of years ago was my first time ever experiencing Simchat Torah. I was student in the divinity school and I didn't know anything about being Jewish, as far as I understood. I had a dear friend who has become a mentor, named Daniel Kraft, who sat with me and taught me how to read through the Torah passages. I was so sure that after an entire year of going through page by page, I would consume enough knowledge that I would finally be able to feel like I was enough. I would know enough to finally feel like I could walk into any Jewish [inaudible 00:08:15] place that I often never felt comfortable, but finally I would know enough to feel welcome.

Jamie Drucker: When I sat with Daniel, who had a very strong Jewish education, around his kitchen table with other friends before this text, I realized that for him, he never walked into that situation thinking that he knew what the conversation was going to be about. He felt that all of us at that table with various levels of prior knowledge had something to offer about that text. There were questions that he hadn't answered yet that he needed all of us together to be able to find the answers for. For him, it wasn't about the knowledge that he possessed, it was about how much change that could happen, how much growth there could be, in the experience of coming together with something familiar and holy to all of us.

Jamie Drucker: Now I find myself three years later hosting my own Torah study at my own kitchen table. And as I was preparing for it this past week, which just started this past Friday, I found myself wanting to be the leader, wanting to be the one who

knew the most. How could you possibly lead other people if you are not the person in the room who knows more than everyone else? And I was very deeply humbled to find out what a gift it is to be with a group of people, to sit with the texts that I've seen many times before, and have new things revealed to me, not least of which, how unimportant it is to be the one who knows the most.

Jamie Drucker: What a beautiful blessing it is to be around a table with people who are bringing new thoughts to thoughts that you've thought before, that illuminate new ways of being: that knowledge is not, that life is not, about the acquisition of knowledge, but the expansion of belonging and welcome. So I stand three years later, not as someone who knows more or who feels unwelcome, but whose responsibility it is to always welcome others. So today, may I invite us all to be able to read this story, this familiar story we think is maybe about sin and punishment, and instead have it be an opportunity to always see the ways in which our eyes can be opened. And in that way, we become like God.

Grace Killian: Now let us join together in the Lord's Prayer. It's written on the reverse of your order of worship.

Congregation: "Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not to temptation, but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen."

Grace Killian: Our hymn this morning is hymn number 208, Eternal Light Shine in My Heart, in your crimson hymnal. Please stand.

Congregation: (singing).

Grace Killian: And now, may the peace of the Lord be with you, wherever God may send you. Amen.

Congregation: Amen.