

It is quite understandable that you may listen to a Bible story—and especially a story like the one of *Abraham and Isaac* today--and wonder to yourself: What in the world is that story doing in the Bible!? On the face of it, the Bible story of Abraham and Isaac ends up in a good place—Isaac is spared by God. Yeah! But *getting to that point...* oh my...it is a bit of a horror story: *God* calls Abraham to *sacrifice* Isaac. Abraham *agrees* and prepares to do so. And only *at the last moment* is Isaac saved by God.

As you might expect, there's long been a lot of debate about what this story is about. And I'm sure it is about more than one thing. But overall, it makes more sense to me, if we think of this as a story that reveals *a pivot point in an evolution of human consciousness*. The story begins with the assumption that human sacrifice is an acceptable and even necessary way to honor god...and then it ends with a startling reversal. The story begins with *what used to be considered normal...*and ends with a dramatic change. It is still a tricky story—definitely not safe for children (and even adults)--but it nevertheless ends up being *an unusual monument to human change*.

We have no idea how long that change in religious practice actually took. It is all compressed into this single, vivid story. *But change on a societal level usually takes a long time.*

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On this Fourth of July weekend I think about *American democracy and change*. It is pretty clear that our democracy is still a work-in-progress...*a complex and vacillating evolution*. It involves *things coming undone* and *new beginnings*. And sometimes it can be hard to tell which is which. The experiment of democracy takes a long time, exceeding the scope of any of our lives. *But we get to have our moment*. And we are having our moment.

What will the future be? Maybe citizens will just get tired of the work of democracy. Maybe the evolution of democracy will continue on in fits and starts to some new beginning. Time will tell. Societal changes seem to take a very long time.

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And, change on a personal level can take a long time too. When you look back over your life...do you have any sense of whether you have changed much?...Are all your habitual ways of being still pretty much the same as long ago?... Perhaps you can identify some sudden pivotal moments that propelled you into change?...It does however seem like, the rest of the time, personal change seems to be measured more by decades, if at all. *It seems that people need a lot of time to be able to change too*. [perhaps part of the wisdom of the idea of “purgatory”?]

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So, the *startling story of Abraham and Isaac* just may be an occasion for us to have a larger perspective today...on God...and country...and our own personal lives. And perhaps that could be summed up as: “God is not done with us yet”!

- Just when we thought we knew what God wanted us to do—*that can change*.
- Just when we thought the American experiment was mostly done—*that can change*.
- Just when we thought we, in our personal lives, could not change—*that can change*.

God is not done with us yet.

Still, in our own time, we get to decide...as seekers after God...as a whole society in the 21st century...and individually in the largely unseen moments of our personal lives...we get to decide, like our ancestors long before us: *What must now change?*