

TBS Torah Study 12/23/17

Genesis 44:18-47:27, Vayigash; Haftarah: Ezekial: 37:15-28

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Themes: Family: Alienation, Rejection & Estrangement (Purge from My Sight & Memory) versus Yearning for Connection & Comprehension of Common Roots.

Comment: Joseph seemed to be living the life of a prince in Egypt, with his wealth, position, & even his Egyptian family. Pharaoh gave Joseph a new name, Zaphenathpaneah (Gen: 41:45) (meaning “God speaks, he lives” or “creator of life” per Jewish Study Bible). Pharaoh gave Joseph a wife, Asenath, daughter of Poti-phera, priest of On. Joseph named his first-born Manasseh, meaning “God has made me forget completely my hardship and my parental home.” (Gen: 41:51). He named his second “Ephraim, meaning “God has made me fertile in the land of my affliction.” (Gen 41:52). Joseph was second only to Pharaoh.

But was Joseph content?

Were his feelings for his family pure bitterness and anger?

Did he long for revenge?

Did he want to sever all connection with the tribe of Jacob and the land of Israel?

Was he able to completely forget his hardship and his parental home?

Was there some latent longing for his brothers who threw him into the pit and sold him into slavery?

Did he ever want to see them or speak to them again?

Did he have a feeling that his accomplishments could never be completely fulfilling if his family were not aware of them and if his family could not appreciate all that he had become?

Did he want them to see how he had become such a great man?

Did he have a feeling that the blessings bestowed upon him were squandered if they did not somehow also serve his family in some way?

Was he conflicted in his thoughts about his family?

Was it God’s plan to bring Joseph and his brothers together, and if so, why?

How did Joseph feel after he reconciled with his brothers?

How would Joseph have felt if he rejected his brothers?

How would Joseph have felt if he took revenge upon his brothers?

Questions:

1. Have you had personal experiences which have caused you to want to have nothing to do with family members?
2. Have you had personal experiences which have caused you to estrange yourself from family members?
3. When the family relationship is toxic, is the best (healthiest) strategy to escape the toxic environment?
4. Have you had experiences that have caused you to yearn for and seek family roots that seemed lost to you?

5. Have you ever forgiven a family member (in your own mind, if not openly to the family member) and reopened a relationship to explore what meaning and return may come from the new beginning?
 - a. If so, how did doing so make you feel?
 - b. Did anything positive come from doing so?
6. Do we become different persons as we age and mature, and, if so, is that also true of those we may be estranged from, and if so, how does this affect our willingness to take the risk of re-engaging a family relationship?
7. Does it take the courage to dare greatly when you try to re-engage an estranged family relationship?
8. Have you ever been estranged from God? If so, have you dared to re-engage and, if so, how has doing so affected your life?
9. What are the metaphors we can draw out from the Joseph story?
10. Is there a metaphor to be drawn between the Joseph episode and the divisions among the Hebrew people during the times of the split kingdoms and the need to heal those divisions (see Ezekial: 37:15-28)?
11. Is there a metaphor to be drawn between the Joseph episode and the divisions among the Hebrew people during other times?
12. Is there a metaphor to be drawn between the Joseph episode and the divisions among the Jewish people during current times?
13. Is there a metaphor to be drawn between the Joseph episode and the relationship between the Hebrew people and God?