DVAR TORAH – V'YGASH
"YOU MEANT IT FOR BAD BUT GOD MEANT IT FOR GOOD"
RABBI DAN MOSKOVITZ
DECEMBER 23, 2017

1. I love the story of Joseph and his brothers much more than any other story in the Torah. To me it has so many relevancies for the human experience.
   - **a.** Sibling Rivalry
   - **b.** Filial Love
   - **c.** The human ego as Joseph interprets his dreams to his brothers and father and the cautionary meaning they take from them
   - **d.** Destiny vs. chance and luck
   - **e.** How small events create ripples of change that have lasting impacts for generations
   - **f.** Our history with Egypt – the Joseph story illuminates how we got there and why we stayed for more than 400 years.
   - **g.** Political intrigue and social perception
   - **h.** Loyalty, honor and integrity

   All of this is in these few chapters, not to mention it made a great musical.

2. To review the story of this week's parsha for just a moment. Joseph is seated as second in line to the Pharaoh in Egypt. His brother's have come down to Egypt to seek food and shelter as there is a famine in the land of Canaan. Joseph has concealed his identity from his brothers, in the previous

parsha he fames them for stealing money and his goblet and in this parsha they seek his forgiveness for an offense they didn't know they committed. Joseph holds Benjamin his youngest brother hostage and Judah the oldest pleads with Joseph to release Benjamin lest their father Jacob die from the shock of now loosing yet another son, Benjamin being his favorite second only to Joseph. Joseph seeing his brother's love for Benjamin and their father reveals himself and bestows all manner of favors upon his family. Jacob rushes down to Egypt to see his long lost son and Pharaoh out of respect for Joseph greets the family with open arms and open store houses of goods and land.

3. There are many important moments in the series of events that unfold in this story but perhaps the most poignant and relevant for us tonight is when Joseph reveals himself to his brothers and says to them, "Don't concern yourself with the evil you did to me when you threw me in the pit and sold me to Bedouins. "You meant it for bad, but God meant it for good. Because of that I am here in this position to save your lives and life of our family."

4. This is a Jewish response to suffering. It's the biblical version of everything happens for a reason. But it is more complex than that. The Jewish response is that something good can come from or be made from every challenge or disappointment

or heartache life throws at us. Its lemonade out of lemons.

5. This is not the young Joseph who foolishly taunts his brothers with his egocentric dreams. This Joseph is wise and experienced; he has learned from life and takes the long view of things. Experience is his guide and faith is his support in moments of despair.

6. Cataclysms are often retrospectively seen as fortunate, the gains out weigh the losses. Hanukah – yields a rededicated sanctuary and Jewish people. The sin of the apple in the garden of Eden, brings about knowledge of the human condition. The flood in Noah's day, serves as a reset for humanity and a reset for God's relationship with us, never again will God bring a flood we are told. Even the golden calf and the breaking for the first 10 commandments is met according to the midrash with God saying to Moses, Yasher Koach! You broke them. In the long view the second set of tablets the dynamic in which they are created is more useful and meaningful to the Jewish people psychologically and spiritually.

7. This is not simply lemonade out of lemons, this is recasting the situation to find greater meaning and message. Joseph speaks to his brother with wisdom and comfort. He tells the past is the past,

beyond their control, but they can endeavor to shape the future.

8. The last decade has been called the aught's – some say the aught never have happened. Many have said the same about the events of the past year. But it did, and they did. The Jewish view is to say what can we learn from this, how the past can shape our future.

9. As we look ahead to a New Year, a year ripe with hope, possibility, challenge and lingering discord, we must look backward as well. To see where we have been, what we have done and what has been done to us. Find the lessons in the Torah of past, so that it will give context to our present and direction for our future. Happy New Year.