THE BONES OF JOSEPH

Rabbi Dan Moskovitz – Jan 23, 2016

1. When Pharaoh finally agrees to let the Israelites go they are instructed by Moses to take the gold and silver and livestock – all the personal possessions they can carry
    a. We know they have limited time – Matzah – so they take only what is most important to them.
    b. WHAT DOES MOSES TAKE?
        i. Moses takes the bones of Joseph
2. *Moses took with him the bones of Joseph, who had extracted an oath from the children of Israel, saying "God will be sure to take notice of you; then you shall carry up my bones from here with you."*
3. *Midrash Mekhilta* understands this care as a natural reflection of the greatness of both men.
    a. Joseph oversaw the burial of his father Jacob
    b. Moses in turn would later be cared for by God in his own death
        i. BOTH MOSES AND JOSEPH ACHIEVE GREATNESS BECAUSE THEY REGARD THEIR OWN PERSONAL DESIRES AS SECONDARY TO THE NEEDS OF THEIR COMMUNITY AND THE COMMANDMENTS OF GOD.

4. **How do we learn the proper way to relate to others?**
    a. **Are we intrinsically kind and thoughtful, patient and generous or are those values in need of social reinforcement and training?**
5. One school of thought is that human being are naturally good – the Enlightenment and Romantic period that viewed human beings through the lens of 'The State of Nature" – each person noble and self sacrificing.
6. Some would hold that we are born in sin and sinful ways, that left our own devices and self interest we will become corrupt.
7. **Judaism rejected both these philosophies**
    - **a.** We are neither bad nor good, we are *K'dai*, we are worthy
    - **b.** Judaism insists that people must be taught what is good and how to embody righteousness in their lives.
        - **i.** Torah and Talmud are that teaching.
            - **1.** Talmud means teaching
        - **ii.** We teach each other how we want to be treated by offering them practical lessons through how we care for them and for others
            - **1.** Hillel Golden Rule
                - **a.** Do Not Do
    - **c.** Moses Taught this lesson by taking time to worry not about possessions

but about promises and human fidelity.

d. Moses demonstrated that commitments to others don't stop at the grave. Indeed when they reach beyond the grave they may have the most lasting lessons to teach

i. Tzedakkah

ii. Traditions

iii. Continued Values

8. What had Joseph done to deserve this loyalty?

9. *Mekhilta* records: That the ark carrying Joseph's bones was transported next to the ark of the covenant . Nations would ask why this ark next to the tablets. The Israelites (not just Moses) would respond: The one lying in this coffin has fulfilled that which is written on the what lies in the other."

10. Deeds of goodness, acts of fidelity and embodiments of sanctity are the building blocks of the Jewish tradition and the stuff of which real people are made. They will out live you.