



Lent reflection for February 19, 2024

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A reading from Genesis 37:1-11

Jacob settled in the land where his father had lived as an alien, the land of Canaan. These are the descendants of Jacob.

Joseph, being seventeen years old, was shepherding the flock with his brothers; he was a helper to the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah, his father's wives, and Joseph brought a bad report of them to their father. Now Israel loved Joseph more than any other of his children because he was the son of his old age, and he made him an ornamented robe. But when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him and could not speak peaceably to him.

Once Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him even more. He said to them, "Listen to this dream that I dreamed. There we were, binding sheaves in the field. Suddenly my sheaf rose and stood upright; then your sheaves gathered around it and bowed down to my sheaf." His brothers said to him, "Are you indeed to reign over us? Are you indeed to have dominion over us?" So they hated him even more because of his dreams and his words.

He had another dream and told it to his brothers, saying, "Look, I have had another dream: the sun, the moon, and eleven stars were bowing down to me." But when he told it to his father and to his brothers, his father rebuked him and said to him, "What kind of dream is this that you have had? Shall we indeed come, I and your mother and your brothers, and bow to the ground before you?" So his brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the matter in mind.

Today's Reflection is by Tom Rigney

It's the story of Joseph, the youngest son of Jacob. He is the favorite of his father, who makes for his son a great coat, which causes anger and jealousy among his brothers. Joseph shares two of his dreams with the family, and they, including his father, show fear and concern that he

will rule over them and they will become subject to him. To avert this the brothers sell him into slavery and Joseph spends a long time away from home.

I'm not certain exactly where God is in the story. What resonates for me is the jealousy, and yes fear, I have experienced at the success of others in my world, sometimes a colleague who has achieved a position to which I believed I was entitled. How frequently I've felt that another's achievement compromised and undercut and belittled mine. I even have sometimes the capacity to reimagine and re-experience this resentment toward someone decades later. Whatever is it that occasionally causes me to lose sight of the plenitude there is, to feel that there just isn't enough, to deeply misplace feelings of gratitude for the riches grace has brought me? It is a distortion, a misfocus that robs me of peace and serenity and loving kindness.

Joseph's siblings go to extreme lengths to resolve their problem, and we have to wait until next season to see how it all turns out. If God is anywhere in Josephs' story or mine, it is in providing the opportunity to pray our way to an understanding that there are sufficient riches for both of us, that love (for ourselves and for others) is a practice.



Tom Rigney grew up (literally) in Sunset Park. He is a retired retail exec and NYC educator. He and his wife Robin Bady live in Kensington with their passel of cats.