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MINISTRIES

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Parashah Points: Vayeshev – Reuben’s Regret

Welcome to another episode of Parashah Points—short thoughts from the weekly Torah Portion.

This week’s Parashah Point comes from Vayeshev, which is Hebrew for “and he dwelt,” and it goes from Genesis 37:1 to Genesis 40:23.

This parashah begins by introducing us to Jacob’s son, Joseph, who had dreams of greatness and was despised by his brothers (Genesis 37:1-11).

Joseph’s brothers conspired against him, threw him into a pit, and then sold him into captivity in Egypt. Then they told their father that Joseph had been killed by a wild animal (Genesis 37:12-36).

After that, we read a bizarre story of how Judah wronged his daughter-in-law, Tamar, by not keeping his promise to let her marry his son, Shelah. So she disguised herself as a prostitute and tricked Judah into sleeping with her. She got pregnant and bore twins named Perez and Zerah (Genesis 38).

Then we read about how Joseph served his master Potiphar. But after turning down Potiphar’s wife who was trying to seduce him, she falsely accused him of assaulting her and Joseph was imprisoned (Genesis 39).

The parashah concludes with Joseph interpreting the dreams of two fellow prisoners (Genesis 40).

There’s a lot we can talk about in this Torah Portion. Today we’re going to present just a thought on peer pressure and regret.

It’s hard sometimes to stand in opposition to the mob, to say no to peer pressure. Many of us *really* don’t like confrontation or the feeling of being rejected. And these feelings and insecurities often drive us to give in to sin.

Sometimes we back down from what we know is right and we compromise. Or maybe we don’t do enough to defend or help someone because we’re worried about what others think. We trade our

integrity for the approval of others.

Reuben felt that pressure when his brothers plotted to kill Joseph. He knew that what his brothers wanted to do was wrong, but he also didn't really stand up to them. Instead of boldly opposing the mob and saying, "Joseph is our brother! Your hatred toward him is wrong!" Reuben suggested throwing Joseph into a pit rather than killing him, hoping that he could secretly return to save him.

While Reuben did save Joseph from getting killed, his brothers were still able to get rid of him. Even though they didn't kill Joseph like they originally planned, they sold him as a slave and convinced their father that an animal had killed him.

After realizing Joseph had been sold, Reuben was immediately filled with regret, tearing his clothes:

Genesis 37:29-30

When Reuben returned to the pit and saw that Joseph was not in the pit, he tore his clothes and returned to his brothers and said, "The boy is gone, and I, where shall I go?"

Reuben likely asked himself why he didn't do more to protect his brother. Why didn't he have more courage? Why didn't he stand up to the mob? He could have done more, but he didn't.

Reuben's guilt and shame stayed with him his entire life. Much later in the story, when he retrieved his youngest brother Benjamin to take him to Egypt, he told his father, "Kill my two sons if I do not bring him back to you" (Genesis 42:37). That's how deeply Reuben felt regret for letting his father and brother down all those years ago.

We've all made mistakes. We've all been cowards in the past, giving in to our insecurities and desire to be accepted. We've all hurt others and let people down in pursuit of our own self-interests. This story reminds us that, like Reuben, we all have regrets.

The good news is that when we surrender our lives to Yeshua, we can be transformed. While we might still feel the sting of regret from time to time, God gives us the strength to move forward. We cannot change the past or undo the wrongs we've done, but Messiah can remove our shame and change us into the type of people who no longer do the things that we would later regret—or at least do them less often as time goes on.

Thank you for joining us for another Parashah Point!

We pray you have been blessed by this teaching. Remember, continue to test everything. Shalom! For more on this and other teachings, please visit us at www.testeverything.net

Shalom, and may Yahweh bless you in walking in the whole Word of God.

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