

# LBT's From Light to Liberation: *Reconciliation*

Week of February 14, 2021 / 2 Adar 5781

*(this is a longer one - we believe it is worth the read)*

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**Framing:** The Book of Genesis is fraught with conflict between family members. As we all know, relationships with loved ones can be extremely rewarding and/or extremely difficult. Siblings and family members often know one another more intimately than anyone else, opening the relationship to deeper love and deeper suffering. From the biblical period until today, family members can find themselves competing with each other over status in the family, relationships with other loved ones, and even portions of an inheritance. The story of Joseph and his brothers is particularly powerful.

Joseph, as the favored of Jacob's 12 sons combined with a cocksure disposition, is less than beloved by his brothers. To remove his agitating arrogance from their midst, they plot to kill him and toss him in a pit. But at the last second, Judah switches gears and decides the better move is to sell him into slavery to some traders, who haul him off to Egypt.

Then the plot thickens. Joseph rises out of the dungeons by interpreting Pharaoh's dream, which predicts seven years of abundance followed by seven years of famine. His interpretations make him a hero of Egypt, as he becomes Pharaoh's right hand man and manages the grain supply to prepare for the coming famine. When the famine strikes the region as Joseph predicted, his brothers and family in the land of Canaan find themselves on the brink of starvation. The brothers decide to sojourn to Egypt to plead for grain. Unknowingly, they find themselves face-to-face with the brother they betrayed, but they do not recognize Joseph, and he does not reveal his identity to them. After testing his brothers' loyalty to each other over an extended period of time, Joseph finally reveals himself. The scene below concludes this episode with an epic cry of the heart, revelation and reconciliation.

## **Genesis 45:1-8**

(1) Joseph could no longer control himself before all his attendants, and he cried out, "Have everyone withdraw from me!" So there was no one else about when Joseph made himself known to his brothers. (2) His sobs were so loud that the Egyptians could hear, and so the news reached Pharaoh's palace. (3) Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Joseph. Is my father still well?" But his brothers could not answer him, so dumbfounded were they on account of him.

(4) Then Joseph said to his brothers, "Come forward to me." And when they came forward, he said, "I am your brother Joseph, he whom you sold into Egypt. (5) Now, do not be distressed or reproach yourselves because you sold me hither; it was to save life that God sent me ahead of you. (6) It is now two years that there has been famine in the land, and there are still five years to come in which there shall be no yield from tilling. (7) God has sent me ahead of you to ensure your survival on earth, and to save your lives in an extraordinary deliverance. (8) So, it was not you who sent me here, but God; and He has made me a father to Pharaoh, lord of all his household, and ruler over the whole land of Egypt.

### Questions for Reflection:

1. When have you needed to release, whether it is in anguish, rage, joy, or another emotion, like Joseph? What does it feel like to let go after having held on to it for so long?
2. What allowed Joseph to reconcile with his brothers? What allows you to invite or receive reconciliation in your life? Share a story when you were able to reconcile with someone after a falling out.
3. How is your meditation practice, noticing what is arising, returning to your breath with compassion, a process of reconciliation within yourself and/or with the divine?
4. OPTIONAL PRACTICE: In this difficult time, so many people are feeling isolated and alone. A simple phone call or text message can go a long way for temporarily alleviating ourselves of the pain of extended isolation. Take one day this week to reach out to a friend or loved one you haven't connected to in a long time. It can be a distant relative, a friend from college, or a member of Leo Baeck Temple that you miss seeing regularly, or even a parent, sibling or child. Consider calling, emailing, or even just texting this person to let them know you are thinking about them or engage in a longer conversation.