

Episode 10 - Exile

Joseph in Egypt

Joseph in Exile

A Metalinguistic Analysis

- I would like to explore:
 - Narrative of Joseph going into captivity.
 - Narrative of Potiphar's wife Zoleikha, and Joseph. There are some especially interesting issues surrounding perspectives.
 - The prophetic voice of dream interpretation, especially the dreams of Pharaoh.
 - Joseph deceives his brothers then welcomes them.
 - Practicalities of Joseph's leadership in Egypt.

Joseph in Exile

A Metalinguistic Analysis

- On the basic level, this is a story of exile, of youth, beauty, temptation, and living within the consequences of events that neither could've been predicted nor prevented.
- On a spiritual level, it is a story about Destiny, and living in the consciousness of God.
- On a linguistic level, it is a narrative annunciated within a patriarchal society with all the expectations of authority, the law, crime, and punishment, and one's place in society.

Joseph in Exile

A Metalinguistic Analysis

- On a historical level, the variety of communities of interpretation, and the layers of interpretation through history, reception history, lend complexity, and obfuscation to some of the issues at hand.
- On a theological level, the Old Testament and the Quran focus on different issues.

Joseph in Exile

A Metalinguistic Analysis

- Qur'an Sura 12:1-3 introduction; 4-20 captivity; 21-35 Potiphar and Zoleikha; 36-42 prison; 43-49 interpret Pharaoh's dream; 50-53 resolve Zoliekha's schemes; 55-57 Joseph set over Egypt; 58-68 Joseph and his brothers; 69-99 Joseph and family; 100-111 conclusion.
- Bible Genesis 37 Joseph's dreams, family conflict and being sold into slavery; 39 Joseph, Potiphar, Zoleikah, and the beginning of prison; 40 prisoner's dreams; 41 Pharaoh's dreams, Joseph leads Egypt, famine begins; 42 Joseph's brothers sent for Benjamin; 43 return to Egypt with Benjamin; 44 Joseph continues deception, extracts promises from brothers; 45 Joseph reveals identity, sends for Jacob who revives on discovery that Joseph lives; 46-47 Jacob and family arrive in Egypt and settle in Goshen; 48 Ephraim and Manasseh.

Joseph going into captivity

A Metalinguistic Analysis

- Narrative of Joseph going into captivity:
 - Naïveté of Joseph in youth telling his dreams to his brothers.
 - Parents' perspective
 - Brothers' perspective
 - Joseph's perspective
 - Historical biblical interpretation, consequentialism, destiny.

Joseph and Zoleikha

A Metalinguistic Analysis

- Narrative of Potiphar's wife Zoleikha, and Joseph.
- The biblical tale is more linear, while the Qur'an tells the story in a different fashion, with different emphases, returning to Zoleikha's part once, more pietistic flourishes.

Zoleikha, Wife of Potiphar

- SEYYED HOSSEIN NASR: I think besides the moral element, which you point to, there's another very important element. I've sort of been brought up with Joseph's story. Because in the Persian language, some of the greatest literary masterpieces of the language are about the love of Joseph and Zoleikha, that is Potiphar's wife was mentioned in the Quran.
- And the element which has always stuck in my mind is a question of beauty. Now this is a story about beauty. It is a very, very central aspect of God's creation that Joseph represents among the prophets, beauty. And it's not here the question of he's simply turning Zoleikha down. But it's an even more profound element, and that is the question of choosing, in a sense, between human beauty and divine beauty.

DIANNE BERGANT:

We're in a 20th, perhaps 21st century world. Why do we want to go back to the world view? The challenge is, how you take a religious tradition or text that originated someplace and continue to have it religiously meaningful in another place.

Zoleikha, Wife of Potiphar

- Perspectives:
 - Patriarchal
 - Historical development of the narrative
 - Misogynist
 - Reading the text as moderns...
- What can we extract from the story? What is the lesson or lessons?

Revelation

- **BILL MOYERS:** Some people would say, how do you read this text and find a revelation of God in it?
 - Let's try to say how we find God's revelation in this text.
- **PHYLLIS TRIBLE:** A text may one day be the word of God, and another day, it may not be the word of God.

The prophetic voice of dreams

A Metalinguistic Analysis

- The prophetic voice of dream interpretation, especially the dreams of Pharaoh.
 - When is it appropriate to recount a dream?
 - Obviously not appropriate to speak to his brothers. Is that event both cause and effect for the dreams? It might have been a little more appropriate to speak to Jacob.
 - Baker and Cup-bearer's dreams... Practice for Pharaoh's dreams?
 - How did Joseph's naïveté/singlemindedness work for him with Pharaoh where it couldn't for Pharaoh's advisors?

Joseph's Secrets

Joseph deceives his brothers

- Are secrets and lies equivalent?
- Joseph as second in command of Egypt does not lie to his brothers. Especially, he does not lie to them like they did to Jacob.
- He keeps his secret from them and his position as ruler of Egypt is not challenged.
- Joseph does play with their heads by returning the grain fees to them, then the silver cup in Benjamin's sack of grain. Is this an unfair manipulation of his brothers?
- Does deserving a consequence justify it?