

THE WEXNER FOUNDATION

THE TORAH OF LEADERSHIP

Leadership and Callousness | Erica Brown | December 16, 2021



David Colyn, "Joseph Thrown into a Pit," oil on panel, 1644 (51.1 x 71 cm), The Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, MD

Genesis 37:19-25, 30-33

וַיֹּאמְרוּ אִישׁ אֶל-אָחִיו הֲנֵה פֶעַל הַחַלְמוֹת הַלְזָה בָּא:

לְכוּ וְנַהַרְגֵהוּ וְנִשְׁלַכְהוּ בְּאֵמֶד הַבְּרֹזוֹת וְנֹאמְרֵנוּ סִגָּה רָעָה אֶכְלָתָהּ וְנִרְאָהּ מִה-יְהִי חַלְמוֹתָיו: וַעֲתָה

וַיִּשְׁמַע רְאוּבֵן וַיִּצְלָהוּ מֵיָדָם וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא נִכְנֹוּ נַפְשׁ:

רְאוּבֵן אֶל-תְּשׁוּכֹוֹדֶם הַשְּׁלִיכוּ אֹתוֹ אֶל-הַבּוֹר הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר בְּמִדְבָּר וְגַד אֶל-תְּשׁוּלְחוֹ-בְּו לְמַעַן הַצִּיל אֹתוֹ מֵיָדָם: וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם לְהַשִּׁיבֻ אֶל-אָבִיו:



THE WEXNER FOUNDATION

וַיֵּיבֹשׁ בְּאֲשֶׁר-בָּא יוֹסֵף אֶל-אֶחָיו וַיִּפְשְׁטוּ אֶת-יֹסֵף אֶת-כְּתָנְתּוֹ אֶת-כְּתָנֵת הַפָּסִים אֲשֶׁר עָלָיו:

וַיִּשְׁחָדוּ וַיִּשְׁלְכוּ אֹתוֹ הַבְּרָה וְהַבְּוֹר רֶק אֵין בּוֹ מַיִם:

וַיִּשְׁבּוּ לְאֶכְלֵ-לֶחֶם

וַיִּקְחוּ אֶת-כְּתָנֵת יוֹסֵף וַיִּשְׁחָטוּ שְׂעִיר עִזִּים וַיִּטְבְּלוּ אֶת-הַכְּתָנֵת בָּדָם:

וַיִּשְׁלְחוּ אֶת-כְּתָנֵת הַפָּסִים וַיִּבְיֵאוּ אֶל-אֲבִיהֶם וַיֹּאמְרוּ נָא מִצְּאֵנוּ הַכֶּרֶז הַכְּתָנֵת בְּנֵהוּ הוּא אִם-לֹא:

וַיִּפְרָה וַיֹּאמֶר כְּתָנֵת בְּנֵי חַיָּה רָעָה אֶכְלָתָהּ טָרַף טָרַף יוֹסֵף:

They saw him [Joseph] from afar, and before he came close to them, they conspired to kill him. They said to one another, “Here comes that dreamer! Come now, let us kill him and throw him into one of the pits; and we can say, ‘A savage beast devoured him.’ We shall see what comes of his dreams!” But when Reuben heard it, he tried to save him from them. He said, “Let us not take his life.” And Reuben went on, “Shed no blood! Cast him into that pit out in the wilderness, but do not touch him yourselves” —intending to save him from them and restore him to his father. When Joseph came up to his brothers, they stripped Joseph of his tunic, the ornamented tunic that he was wearing, and took him and cast him into the pit. The pit was empty; there was no water in it. Then they sat down to a meal...Then they took Joseph’s tunic, slaughtered a kid, and dipped the tunic in the blood. They had the ornamented tunic taken to their father, and they said, “We found this. Please examine it; is it your son’s tunic or not?” He recognized it, and said, “My son’s tunic! A savage beast devoured him! Joseph was torn by a beast!”

Reflective Question

Describe an interaction when someone treated you callously. How would you have handled it differently?

Leadership Challenge

Barbara Kellerman devotes chapter to callousness in her book *Bad Leadership*. Do you have a leadership opportunity right now to soften the callousness of someone else? How can you act upon it?

