

Religious Traditions and Genetic Counseling

For this particular assignment I chose to read *Tuesdays with Morrie*. I very much enjoyed the book and was touched by Morrie and what he had to teach the reader. Even though I cannot say that I have met Morrie, I feel that from his story I know him very well. I would have to say that he is one of the most selfless, caring, and intelligent individuals that I have met. He has one of the best outlooks on life that I have ever heard. It is too bad that there are not more people in this world like Morrie because we can learn a lot from him. I think it is wonderful that so many people have been exposed to Morrie and his story. I hope that it has touched them as much as it has touched me.

In reviewing Judaism, I found that Morrie practiced and believed in many of the tenants and traditions of the religion. Judaism encourages good works and involvement in the community. Morrie was very active in his community until he fell ill, but even then he gave back to the community by agreeing to do the interviews with Ted Koppel so that the world could learn from him what it is like to die. He also gave to the community by responding to all of the letters that he received from people, who had seen him on TV, and either wanted to thank him for what he was doing or to say that they had been through a similar experience with a parent or loved one. Up until the day that he died, he would entertain friends, family, and guests. In addition to his own service to the community, he encouraged others to give and become active. He continually told Mitch that there is nothing better and more rewarding than to help and give to others. It

seems that Mitch listened to him because he now serves on multiple charitable boards and has started two charities of his own.

Another main view of Judaism is that marriage is a major cultural expectation and there is a strong emphasis on procreation as the natural outcome of marriage. Again Morrie followed these beliefs very closely. His family was extremely important to him. It seemed that he was prouder of nothing more than his two sons and his wife. He even said, "There is no experience like having children," and "I would not have missed that experience for anything." He also felt that marriage was a very important thing to do and that you would be missing a lot if you did not try it. He had a very good relationship with all his family members. When it came to his final hours of life, he wanted them all there by his side much as he lived his life with his family close by and surrounded by their pictures. He spoke highly of his family. It was clear that he loved them very dearly. In fact one of my favorite passages from the book is, "The fact is, there is no foundation, no secure ground, upon which people may stand today if it isn't the family. If you don't have the support and love and caring and concern that you get from family, you don't have much at all. Love is so supremely important. Love each other or perish."

That passage really made me think. He is right. If you don't have family, then what do you have? It seems that some of the most unhappy people in this world are those without a family or those who did not have a good upbringing. Family and what you receive from family is the basis of our lives. It shapes us and makes us who we are. It is the love that is so important. There cannot be

any worse feeling in the world than to feel like you are not loved. It is what we all want and for which we all strive. As Morrie said, "Without love, we are birds with broken wings." I also like what Morrie referred to as "spiritual security," which is knowing that your family will be there watching out for you. He said that it would have been much harder for him to cope with his illness if he did not have family. I believe that too. Family and the love that a family provides are what help you get through the hard times.

Another passage that affected me and made me think was when Morrie said, "To know you're going to die, and to be prepared for it at any time. That's better. That way you can actually be more involved in your life while you're living it. Everyday ask 'Is today the day? Am I ready? Am I doing all I need to do? Am I being the person I want to be?' Once you learn how to die, you learn how to live." I think that this concept is a hard one to grasp for many people including me. As Morrie stated, "We all know that we are going to die, but nobody believes it." Well, isn't that the truth? We do all know that we are going to die someday, but it is very hard to fathom and it scares us. However, what Morrie is telling us is that we should live each day to its fullest doing what we need to do to make ourselves happy and satisfied with our lives so that we are the person that we want to be. If we do that, then we can die happy and fulfilled. We won't feel like we missed out on life. Sometimes we are too concerned with the little things in life and we let those little things dictate our lives. We take our loving relationships and the world around us for granted. We need to start appreciating those things. It really got to me in the book when Mitch would keep referring to

the OJ Simpson trial. I kept thinking, "Why is it that we care? There are more important things going on right now. Who cares about OJ Simpson?" But then it occurred to me that the OJ Simpson trial is what people care about and that is sad. Perhaps we should all listen to Morrie and focus on what really matters.

This book was truly amazing. I was moved by how Morrie was so accepting of death and the wonderful outlook he had on life. The book was definitely thought provoking and made me analyze myself. I hope that I can incorporate into my life all that I learned from him and I hope that others will too because he seems to understand life better than anyone. Remember this, "The way that you get meaning into your life is to devote yourself to loving others, devote yourself to your community around you, and devote yourself to creating something that gives you purpose and meaning." I think that that about sums it up.