

## QUESTIONS ON PARASHAT VAYESHEV

**Q-1.** (a) Why does Yosef's story follow *Eisav's* lineage at the end of *Vayishlach*? (b) (1) Why is the land where *Ya'akov* settled called "megurei aviv" (where his father lived) (6 views)? (2) Why did he, rather than *Eisav*, live where his father lived (2 views)? (c) How did *Ya'akov's* life resemble *Yosef's* (12 ways)? (d) Why did *Ya'akov* (1) love *Yosef* more than his other sons (5 reasons)? (2) give him the *ketonet pasim* (multi-colored cloak), knowing it would arouse sibling rivalry? (e) Why was *Yosef* called *Ya'akov's* "ben zekunim" (4 views)? (*Bereishit* 37:1-3)

**A-1.** (a) *Yosef's* offspring will be the antidote to *Edom's* power over *Bnei Yisrael*, a "flame" to destroy *Edom* like straw – *Ovadya* 1:18 (*Rashi*). (b) (1) *Ya'akov* settled (i) permanently where *Yitzchak* was a "geir" (temporary dweller); (ii) where *Yitzchak* converted *geirim*; (iii) fearing (*gur* = fear) he had not honored *Yitzchak* while living with *Lavan* (*Bereishit Raba*). (iv) where he, unlike *Eisav*, would fulfill *Hashem's* pledge to *Avraham* of ownership of *Eretz Yisrael* (*Ramban*). (v) near *Eisav*, out of fear, to monitor *Eisav's* actions; (vi) in *Chevron* – *megurei aviv's gematria* is "zeh *Chevron*" (this is *Chevron*) (*Ba'al haTurim*). (2) He lived in his father's land since (i) he had the the *bechor's* rights (*Rashbam*). (ii) *Cana'an* is more suited to developing *kedusha* than elsewhere (*Ha'amek Davar*). (c) (1) Their barren mothers each bore 2 sons; (2) both were born circumcised; (3) their brothers hated them, (4) wanting to kill them; (5) *Hashem* made both rich; (6) both married *chutz la'Aretz*; (7) both had prophetic dreams of their greatness; (8) angels accompanied *Ya'akov's* return to *Eretz Yisrael*, and *Yosef's* search for his brothers; (9) their fathers-in-law (*Lavan* and *Potiphar*) were blessed through them; (10) both traveled to *Mitzrayim*; (11) both made *Yehuda* and his brothers swear they would have them buried in *Eretz Yisrael*; (12) both died in *Mitzrayim*; (d) (1) *Yosef* (i) was *Ya'akov's* beloved *Rachel's* firstborn; (ii) was born in *Ya'akov's* old age, 91; (iii) absorbed all of *Ya'akov's* knowledge from *Shem* and *Eiver* by age 17; (iv) looked exactly like *Ya'akov*; (v) had experiences like *Ya'akov's* (*Bereishit Raba*). (2) He thought the cloak would evoke "scholars' jealousy," causing his brothers to seek more wisdom (*Bava Batra* 21a). (e) (1) *Yosef* was the child of *Yaakov's* old age (*Rashi*) – while *Binyamin* was born 8 years later and was a *yeled zekunim* (44:20), *Ya'akov's* love of *Yosef* as a *ben zekunim* was firmly rooted (*Mizrachi*). (2) *Yosef* was a wise son – *zekunim* comes from "zeh *kana chachma*" (this one acquired wisdom (*Onkelos*). (3) He was the son *Ya'akov* selected to attend to his personal needs (*Ramban*). (4) *Yosef* had *Ya'akov's* "ziv ikunun" – the same facial features (*Bereishit Raba*).

**Q-2.** (a) Why did *Yosef* tell his brothers his dreams (6 views)? (b) After hearing his 1<sup>st</sup> dream, the *Torah* says, "His brothers hated him even more," but after his 2<sup>nd</sup> dream, "His brothers were jealous of him," – why did their reactions differ (2 views)? (c) How could the 2<sup>nd</sup> dream come true, since the moon (i.e., his mother, who was dead) bowing to him could not take place (3 views)? (d) What does "his (*Yosef's*) father kept the matter in mind" mean (4 views)? (*Bereishit* 37:5-11)

**A-2.** (a) (1) His youthful inexperience (*Sforno*). (2) The dreams featured them (*Malbim*). (3) They hated him – he wanted to pain them (*Radak*). (4) They were prophecies – a *navi* may not withhold *nevu'a* (*Moshav Zekeinim*). (5) They showed his rise to greatness to be *Hashem's* Will (*Chizkuni*). (6) A dream's meaning depends on its interpretation – he hoped his brothers would interpret them favorably (*Ohr haChaim*). (b) (1) They thought the 1<sup>st</sup> dream was a meaningless image of *Yosef's* daytime thoughts – they hated his arrogance, but the theme's repetition showed that the 1<sup>st</sup> dream was meaningful – they were jealous of the dreams prophesying his superiority (*Alshich*). (2) The 1<sup>st</sup> dream's brother's bundles of wheat, signifying material wealth, bowed to *Yosef's*, forecasting their dependence on him for sustenance – the 2<sup>nd</sup> dream's stars symbolizing spiritual achievement, bowed to *Yosef's*, prophesied higher spirituality. They hated him for suggesting they would be materially dependent on him, but were jealous of his rising over them spiritually (*Beit haLevi*). (c) (1) The moon represented *Bilha*, who raised him after *Rachel's* death; (2) no dream is completely true – some untruths are always included (*Rashi*). (3) He thought that since *Rachel* was dead, the dream would be fulfilled at *tehiyat ha-meitim* (the resurrection) that would take place in his days (*Bereishit Raba*). (d) *Ya'akov* (1) waited for the dreams' fulfillment (*Rashi*). (2) respected the dreams' reliability, keeping them in mind (*Radak*). (3) was not upset at bowing to *Yosef*, since no man is jealous of his son (*Ha'amek Davar*). (5) did not fully believe the report of *Yosef's* death due his belief in the dreams' truth (*Rashbam*).

**Q-3.** (a) Why did *Hashem* send an angel (*Gavriel* – *Rashi*) to direct *Yosef* to his brothers, who were plotting to kill him (2 views)? (b) When the *Torah* says, "The brothers went to shepherd *et tzone avihem* (their father's flock)", why does "et" have 2 dots above it? (c) When *Yosef* sought his brothers, what are the meanings of the angel's responses – (1) "They have traveled from this" (2 views)? (2) "They said, 'Let's go to *Dothan*'" (3 views)? (d) Why is "va-yekachuhu" (and they took him) spelled without a middle "va"? (e) Why is the significance of the caravan carrying spices (2 views)? (f) (1) Why did *Yosef's* brothers sell him for 20 silver pieces (3 views)? (2) Which 2 *halachot* did *Bnei Yisrael* subsequently do to memorialize the 20 silver pieces? (*Bereishit* 37:12-13,17,24,28)

**A-3.** (a) To (1) confound *Ya'akov's* wisdom – he knew his sons hated *Yosef* but sent him anyway (*Bereishit Raba*). (2) show that *Yosef's* leading them to *Mitzrayim* was His Will (*Targum Yonatan*). (b) It indicates they shepherded [indulged] themselves (*Rashi*), with food and drink, leading to their sin of selling him (*Gur Aryeh*). (c) (1) They moved from (i) that pasture (*Sforno*). (ii) considering him a brother (*Rashi*). (2) (i) *Dothan* was a place near *Shechem* (*ibn Ezra*). (ii) They sought *datot* (legal pretexts) to kill him (*Rashi*). (iii) *Dotan's gematria* is 454 – since *Yehuda* got merit by selling, not killing him, his offspring, from *David* to *Tzidkiyahu*, reigned 454 years (*Ba'al haTurim*). (d) It is singular – only one brother, *Shimon*, without his brothers protesting, cast him in the pit (*Bereishit Raba*). (e) It shows how *Hashem* rewards *tzadikim* – (1) although caravans carried foul-smelling naphtha – this one had nice fragrances for *Yosef's* benefit (*Rashi*). (2) The caravan had small vials, with room for *Yosef* to ride on a camel, rather than his having to journey on foot (*Ha'amek Davar*). (f) (1) (i) *Ya'akov* gave *Yosef* wool in the *ketonet pasim* worth 2 *sela'im* (*Shabbat* 10b) – his 10 brothers each got 2 *sela'im* to pay for what *Ya'akov* did not give them; (2) one whose ox kills a slave pays 30 *shekalim* (*Shemot* 21:32) – since his brothers sold *Yosef* secretly, they had to reduce his price by 1/3; (3) the *erech* (value) of a male 5 to 20 is 20 silver pieces (*Vayikra* 27:5) – his brothers sold *Yosef* (17) for that (*Ba'al haTurim*). (2) 20 silver pieces equal 5 *shekalim* – (i) since *Yosef's* brothers sold *Rachel's* firstborn for 5 *shekalim*, we atone for their sin by redeeming firstborn sons (*pidyon ha-ben*) for 5 *shekalim*; (ii) his 10 brothers each got 1/10<sup>th</sup> of 5 *shekalim*, i.e., ½ *shekel*, which *Bnei Yisrael* gave to the *Beit haMikdash* annually to atone for *Yosef's* brothers' sin (*Shekalim* 6a).

**Q-4.** (a) Since *Yevamot* 120b rules that a corpse's identity cannot be established from his clothes since people are liable to lend their clothes, how did *Ya'akov* establish that *Yosef* died? (b) Who were the "daughters" who tried to comfort *Ya'akov* (3 views)? (c) How was *Ya'akov* punished *mida ke-neged mida* when shown *Yosef's* bloody coat? (d) What was *Potiphar's* job (2 views)? (*Bereishit* 37:33-36)

**A-4.** (a) *Ya'akov* knew *Yosef* treasured the *ketonet passim* too much to lend it out – articles not generally lent may be used for identification (*Oznayim laTorah*). (b) *Ya'akov's* (1) 13 daughters – *Dina* and each son's twin; (2) daughters-in-law (*Rashi*). (3) granddaughters (*Ramban*). (c) *Ya'akov* fooled *Yitzchak* by using goats for the meat his father expected and by wearing goatskins – *Bnei Ya'akov* fooled him by saying the goat's blood on *Yosef's* cloak was *Yosef's* (*Chatam Sofer*). (d) *Pharaoh's* Chief (1) Butcher (*Rashi*). (2) Executioner (*Ramban*).

**Q-5.** (a) How could *Yehuda* marry a *Cana'ani's* daughter, since *Ya'akov's* family was banned from intermarrying with *Cana'anim*? (b) With respect to *Tamar*, (1) why did *Yehuda* think *Tamar* on the road "was a harlot since she had covered her face" – *Sotah* 10a says a covered face is a sign of modesty, not harlotry? (2) how was *Yehuda* punished *mida ke-neged mida*? (3) why is "te-omim" (twins) spelled fully, with an *alef* and *yud*, but when *Rivka* gave birth, these letters are missing? (c) Why does the story of *Yosef* and *Potiphar's* wife follow the incident of *Yehuda* and *Tamar* (2 views)? (d) Why did *Yosef* refuse *Potiphar's* wife's attempted seduction (7 reasons)? (e) Why do *Pharaoh's* officers' dreams follow the seduction attempt (2 reasons)? (*Bereishit* 38:2,25-27;39:1,8-12,40:1)

**A-5.** (a) Here, "*Cana'ani*" means "merchant" – *Yehuda* married her since was from a prominent family (*Pesachim* 50a). (b) (1) *Tamar* modestly covered her face all the years she lived in *Yehuda's* home – he did not recognize her as the harlot he saw on the road (*Rashi*). (2) *Yehuda* tormented *Ya'akov* by asking him "*haker-na*" (please identify) *Yosef's* cloak – *Yehuda* tried to get back the cloak he gave *Tamar*, but she tormented him by asking "*haker-na*" his cloak (*Maharsha*). (3) Both *Peretz* and *Zerach* were fully righteous, but since *Eisav* was evil, "twins" is spelled defectively (*Rashi*). (c) (1) It tells us that just as *Tamar* acted *le-Shem Shamayim* to produce *Yehuda's* offspring, *Potiphar's* wife acted *le-Shem Shamayim* when she saw astrologically that *Yosef's* offspring would be hers – *Yosef* refused her seduction but fathered her offspring by marrying her daughter *Asenat* (*Rashi*). (2) It shows that "*Hashem* creates the healing before the illness" (*Megilla* 13b) – before He set in motion sending *Bnei Yisrael* into their first *galut*, He prepared the root of the *Mashiach*, the future redeemer (*Bereishit Raba*). (d) (1) It would be a great sin – the adultery ban is one of the *mitzvot Bnei Noach* (*Rashi*). (2) He visualized his father's face saying to him, "For a moment's pleasure, do you want your name deleted from the *Kohen Gadol's* breastplate?" (*Sotah* 36b). (3) *Yosef* thought that since *Hashem* commanded *Avraham* to sacrifice *Yitzchak*, *Ya'akov* could chose him as a *korban*, and adultery's *tuma* would make him unfit; (4) if he were defiled, *Hashem* would not reveal Himself to him, as He had to the *Avot*; (5) *Reuven* lost the *bechora* to *Yosef* for a lesser sin – *Yosef* thought this sin would certainly cause his losing the *bechora*; (6) since *Adam's* lesser sin brought death to the world, *Yosef* could not commit this more serious sin; (7) if *Potiphar* discovered the adultery, he would have executed *Yosef* (*Bereishit Raba*). (e) (1) Since *Yosef* had become the focus of gossip in the palace, *Hashem* arranged for the officers to anger *Pharaoh* so that people would talk about them, instead of the righteous *Yosef*; (2) their jailing caused *Yosef's* eventual freedom from the imprisonment caused by *Potiphar's* wife (*Rashi*).

**Q-6.** (a) Why, after hearing the *Sar haMashkim's* dream, does the *Torah* say that *Yosef* "said" (*va-yomer*) the interpretation, but for the *Sar haOfim's* dream, *Yosef* "responded" (*va-ya'an*)? (b) Why did (1) *Yosef* merit burial in *Eretz Yisrael*, but (2) *Moshe* did not? (c) What *halacha* do we derive from the 4 times that the word "*kos*" (cup) is used in the *Sar haMashkim's* dream and interpretation? (d) What is the significance to *Bnei Yisrael's* destiny of the 3 *sorigim* (branches) of the grapevine in the *Sar haMashkim's* dream (7 views)? (*Bereishit* 40:11-18)

**A-6.** (a) To teach that one may give good news unasked, but for bad news, one must be truthful, but only when asked (*Oznayim laTorah*). (b) (1) *Yosef* said he came from *Eretz ha-Ivrim* (the Hebrews' land), meriting burial in *Eretz Yisrael*; (2) *Moshe* made *Yitro's* daughters think he was an "*Ish Mitzri*" (Egyptian – *Shemot* 2:19) and did not merit burial in *Eretz Yisrael* (*Devarim Raba*). (c) We drink 4 wine cups at the *Pesach Seder* – just as *Yosef* was rescued from prison with the *Sar haMashkim's* dream, *Bnei Yisrael* will be redeemed through the *arba kosot* (*Kli Yakar*). (d) They represent the 3 whose merit protects *Bnei Yisrael* – the (1) 3 *sarei ge'im* (exalted nobles) in each generation; (2) 3 *sarei goyim* (ministering angels among the 70 nations) in each generation; (3) 3 *avot*; (4) *Moshe*, *Aharon* and *Miriam*; (5) *Beit haMikdash*, king and *Kohen Gadol*; (6) well, *Ananei Hakavod* and *mon* in the *midbar*; (7) *shalosh regalim* (*Chulin* 92a).

**Q-7.** In the *haftara*, the *Navi* says that *Hashem* will send *Bnei Yisrael* into *galut* for which sin? (*Amos* 2:6)

**A-7.** While *Bnei Yisrael* did the cardinal sins of idolatry, murder and immorality, the verdict of exile was sealed for selling innocent people into slavery for silver, and poor people for shoes (*Radak*), like *Yosef's* brothers sold him for silver which they used to buy shoes (*Ba'al haTurim*).