

SHABBAT SHALOM. Today is 23 Kislev 5779. We bensch Rosh Chodesh Tevet which will be this coming Shabbat and Sunday. The re-appearance of the moon will be on Friday evening at 10:29 p.m. and 13 chalakim (about 43 seconds), Jerusalem time. We omit Av HaRachamim. Tomorrow night is the first night of Chanukah.

TORAH DIALOGUE

(p. 141 Hz) (p. 229 S) (p. 162 Hi) (p. 198 AS)

VAYEISHEV וַיֵּשֶׁב Genesis 37:1

[Compiled by Rabbi Edward Davis, Rabbi Emeritus (RED)  
Young Israel of Hollywood-Ft. Lauderdale]

1. The first line of the sidrah states that Yaakov settled in the land of his fathers, sojourning in the land of Canaan (37:1). Rashi states that Yaakov wished to “settle down in tranquility” but immediately the family dynamics were totally upset by the story of Yosef and his brothers. Yaakov had desired at this time of his life to basically retire. His sons were now of age to conduct the family business, which was raising livestock. Allowing the sons to do all the work, he was now able to concentrate on his learning and on transmitting the traditions of his father and grandfather to his sons and grandsons. Yaakov is the first of the Patriarchs who is described in the Torah as having a relationship with his grandsons. Through computation we do know that Avraham was alive and able to interact with his grandsons Yaakov and Esav. We also know that Yitzchak had more than a decade to interact with his grandchildren, and yet it is only Yaakov who is depicted in the Torah as having a relationship with his grandchildren, especially with Ephraim and Menashe later on in Egypt. Hence in the Midrash and in the Rambam Yaakov is referred to as Yisrael Saba, Israel the Grandfather. Note also that when he is referred to as the grandfather the term is Yisrael. In other words, that act of being a grandparent is important to the transmission of tradition from one generation to following generations, and hence the name Yisrael is used because it is of national importance. (RED)

2. After the brothers sold Yosef they sat down and had a meal. This act has been pointed out before in these pages as a great indicator that they felt no remorse in what they had done. In fact, they probably felt that they were just in getting rid of their brother. The real question is what danger did Yosef represent to the brothers that he should be killed or exiled and sold into slavery? Did Yosef really threaten them? His dreams did not cause that much of a distressful signal of the family's future. The fact that Yaakov favored him also did not indicate a life-threatening situation. The Seforno mentions that the phrase in the Torah “they conspired against him to kill him” (37:18) should be reinterpreted as “they were convinced that Yosef was conspiring to kill them.” This is a very difficult reinterpretation of the literal meaning of the verse but our question initially is definitely the motivation point for the Seforno's reinterpretation. Ultimately the brothers did feel that they were doing the right thing for the benefit of the family.

3. The end result is very clear that the brothers sold Yosef. This sale haunts us throughout time. If you remember the story of the ten martyred rabbis at the hands of the Romans that we recount on Yom Kippur and on Tisha B'Av, the initial charge against the rabbis was that their ancestors sold their brother into slavery, a capital crime. That happened many, many years before. Is it really possible that the Roman government would

hold the Jewish people responsible for an event that occurred that long ago? The answer is that brotherly strife is a plague unto a people. It existed throughout Chumash Breishit, and would continue throughout Jewish history. The truth be stated, if there is dissention among the Jewish people themselves then we are destined to continue the Exile and be denied the coming of Mashiach and the rebuilding of the Holy Temple. Hatred among brothers is the worst thing that can come about in any nation, but it is virtually a death knell for the Jewish people. It exists in our past; it exists in our present; and it probably exists in our future. We are all aware of the evils of this form of discord in a nation. Civil war is the worst type of a war. It brings economic collapse, and every casualty on both sides has to be counted as the nation's loss. The Civil War in America brought the highest price in American lives, and only in recent times have we historically surpassed in all other wars combined the number of Americans lost in the Civil War. In Jewish history we are blessed with a history that has not seen that much civil war. We have not suffered those losses as the one American Civil War, but yet the threat exists and the strife itself keeps us from fulfilling our religious destiny. (RED)

4. In the midst of the narrative the story is told of Yehudah and Tamar. The daughter-in-law would embark on a bold plan, an independent bold plan, taking a striking initiative in order to bond herself with her father-in-law as her new husband. This type of initiative actually paid off. It is reminiscent of the initiative taken by Ruth to invite Boaz into a more serious romantic relationship. Granted there is a limit to the comparison but it is not overlooked by our Sages. In Kabbalistic literature the soul of Tamar is reincarnated into the soul of Ruth. In fact the same soul appeared earlier in the daughters of Lot. In each case there was an extremely bold initiative that brought dividends and changed the course of history. By drawing the comparison and linking these events we also note that the women in the biblical narrative have a greater vision of the national destiny than the men do. For some reason Tamar realized that she was the one who needed to bond with Yehudah, and from them will come the seed of Mashiach. In fact all three cases will be ancestors to King David and the Mashiach. These women saw a vision and acted upon it with great determination, and their actions ultimately were blessed by the Almighty. (RED)

HAFTORAH

(p. 152 Hz) (p. 248 S) (p. 838 Hi) (p. 1142 AS)

AMOS עֲמוֹס 2:6

The connection to this week's parsha is twofold. On a simple level the opening verse, *selling the righteous for money and the poor for a pair of shoes*, is a direct reminder that the brothers sold Yosef The Righteous for shoes as recorded in the Midrash and echoed in the Yom Kippur Musaf service. On a deeper level the parsha showed us the fine threads of Providence that laid the foundation for the Egyptian exile, while the Prophet opens for us an insight into the conditions which would inevitably result in the exile of the Jews from their land at the end of the First Temple period. The only possibility of averting this doom would be that the trumpet-call of the Prophet would burst asunder the locks of their hearts and give them back their true better selves, so that they could have the courage for a sincere and lasting turning up to God and avoid the impending doom. (Adapted from Rabbi S.R. Hirsch)

QUESTIONS FOR PARSHAT VAYEISHEV 5779  
by Rabbi Edward Davis, Rabbi Emeritus

- I. From the Text
  1. How did Yaakov show favoritism toward his son Yosef? (37:3)
  2. What were Yosef's 2 dreams? (37:5-9)
  3. Which 2 brothers spoke up independent of each other to save Yosef's life? (37:21,26)
  4. Where did Yosef end up when he was first taken to Egypt? (39:1)
  5. What were the dreams of the Butler and the Baker? (40:9-11,16-17)
- II. From Rashi
  6. Why did Yaakov love Yosef more than the other sons? (37:3)
  7. Which 2 brothers did not participate in the sale of Yosef? (37:30) Where were they?
  8. Why did Yehudah not permit Tamar to marry Shailah, Yehudah's third son? (38:11)
  9. What sin did Yosef commit while in service in Potiphar's house that warranted his being imprisoned? (39:6)
  10. For what crimes were the Chief Butler and Chief Baker imprisoned? (40:1)
- III. From the Rabbis
  11. Why did Yosef tell his brothers the dreams, knowing it would antagonize them? (37:5, Seforno, Chizkiyahu, Vilna Gaon)
  12. Where in Scripture do we see men sitting and eating after plotting harm against the Jews, as did Yosef's brothers here? (Midrash Tehillim 10)
  13. What reward did Yosef earn by proudly identifying himself as a Hebrew to the Chief Butler and Chief Baker? (Midrash)
- IV. Haftorah : Amos
  14. The sin for which Hashem will not forgive Israel was the persecution of the poor. For what did the people sell a righteous person? And for what did they sell a poor person?
- V. Relationships
  - a) Bilhah – Zilpah – Rachel – Leah (2 answers)
  - b) Avraham – Yitzchak – Yaakov
  - c) Datan – Aviram
  - d) Milkah – Lot
  - e) Lavan – Rivkah

ANSWERS FOR PARSHAT VAYEISHEV 5779

1. He made him a "multicolored coat."
  2. First Dream: Yosef and his brothers were binding sheaves in the middle of the field. Their sheaves bowed down to his sheaf. Second Dream: The sun, the moon, and eleven stars bowed down to Yosef.
  3. Reuven and Yehudah.
  4. To the house of Potiphar, the Chief Butcher.
  5. Butler: There was a grapevine with 3 clusters of grapes that ripened. The Butler had Pharaoh's cup, took the grapes, pressed them into Pharaoh's cup, and placed the cup in Pharaoh's palm. Baker: There were 3 wicker baskets on his head. In the top basket was some of Pharaoh's food. Birds were eating from the basket.
  6. Rashi offered 2 answers: a) Yosef was born in Yaakov's old age. b) Yosef was a wise son, and Yaakov taught him what he learned.
  7. Binyamin was young, at home. Reuven returned home to attend to his father.
  8. Yehudah suspected Tamar of being the sort of woman whose husbands died for whatever reason.
  9. While his father Yaakov was immersed in grief over Yosef's disappearance, Yosef was eating, drinking, and combing his hair (prettifying himself) as the foreman in his master's home.
  10. Chief Butler: A fly was found in Pharaoh's cup of wine. Chief Baker: A pebble was found in the king's bread.
  11. Seforno: Yosef was young and immature. Chizkuni: If Yosef could convince his brothers that God ordained all this, then maybe they would stop hating him. Vilna Gaon: Yosef felt that a dream is a prophecy, and he would not be permitted to suppress a prophecy from being revealed.
  12. Haman and Achashveirosh after plotting to kill the Jews. (Esther 3:15)
  13. Yosef earned the privilege of being buried in Eretz Yisrael.
  14. The righteous person was sold for silver; the poor person was sold for a pair of shoes.
- Relationships:
- a) (1) They were all sisters, daughters of Lavan. (2) They were the co-wives of Yaakov.
  - b) Grandfather/Father/Son
  - c) Brothers
  - d) Brother/Sister
  - e) Brother/Sister