

SHABBAT SHALOM. Today is 23 Kislev 5782. We bench Rosh Chodesh Tevet which will be next Shabbat and Sunday. The reappearance of the moon, the Molad, will be Saturday at 1:39pm and 14 Chalakim (about 46 seconds), Jerusalem time. We omit Av HaRachamim. Chanukah begins tomorrow night.

TORAH DIALOGUE

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

VAYEISHEV וַיֵּשֶׁב

Genesis 37:1

[Compiled by Rabbi Edward Davis (RED),
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1. Dreams. The Talmud devotes an entire chapter discussing dreams (Berachot chapter 9) and stipulates some very interesting Halachik aspects. Firstly, the far majority of dreams are a result of what you did during that day and are of no consequences to your life. If you have a terrible dream about something that might happen, do not tell anybody about it, and then it will be meaningless. For the most part, the interpretation of a dream is in the hands of the interpreter. In the Torah these dreams of Yosef, Pharaoh, and the Chief Butler and Baker, were all deemed prophetic. The brothers rejected Yosef's dreams as prophecy because they rejected the idea that they would bow down to him. The notion that Yosef will rule over them revolted them. Why did Yosef tell them these dreams if he knew that they would hate him for it? Yosef truly felt that his dreams were divine prophecy and therefore he was required to tell them to his family. (Gra) I would never advise someone to take his dreams too seriously.

2. At this stage in Yaakov's life, he wanted to retire and enjoy life. To live in peace and tranquility. (Rashi on 37:2) Yaakov had already experienced the serious events posed by Esav, Lavan, and Shechem. So what is wrong to desire a more peaceful and restful stage in life? Reality dictates that this world is constantly fraught with serious issues. The rewards of life are reserved for the Next World. Yet, as Rashi notes, the righteous people of the world desire the fruits of this world as well. Yaakov is entitled to a peaceful time of life, but the Torah tells us that a Righteous Person's mission in this world is never done. It is ironic, though, that the best years of Yaakov's life are the last seventeen years, when he is retired and living in Egypt! There Yosef is providing the financial stability for the whole family. His government role gives the whole family prestige and honor. The period of slavery will begin only when all the brothers have died. (RED)

3. Sibling rivalry is inevitable in a family. We are told not to favor one child over another. This will result in problems. The symbol of the issues in the Patriachal family was the colorful garment that Yaakov had made for Yosef. The Talmud says that this garment merely had two pieces of silk attached to each sleeve. Hardly worth talking about, but it obviously caused an issue in the family. The ranking of the sons was constantly an issue. Abel surpassed his older brother Cain. Yitzchak superseded Yishmael. Yaakov went ahead of

Esav. Yosef and Yehudah surpassed Reuven. Ephraim went above Menasheh. And it was not Aharon, but Moshe who was the leader. Yet the Torah mandated a higher ranking of the older brother. The older brother was the religious leader of the house. He was "Kohanic" and required a Pidyon HaBen. The older brother received a double portion of the inheritance given to any other brother. This last issue is still on the books in our day. The Rama of 15th century devised a device to circumvent this issue. The only conclusion is that life has paradoxes, even in the Torah. (RED)

4. If the family was living in the Chevron area, what were they doing grazing their flocks near Shechem? Shechem had already proven itself as a hostile area, considering what had happened with Dinah. They had to be hated by the neighboring tribes in that area. The Radak mentioned that perhaps the Dinah-Shechem issue had been forgotten. I tend to doubt that. Pasturing the flocks so far from home had to be thought out. It was a serious concern, considering the lack of water in the region. Being in the animal business requires a great deal of land. Maybe it was necessary to travel a distance to take care of the flocks. The family had to have had a complete trust in Hashem to spread their resources to such a vast area. That trust in Hashem cannot be overlooked in the Biblical narrative. I think it to be an important aspect to the story.

5. The ultimate decision to sell Yosef reflects the deep hatred the brothers must have had for him. At first Reuven advised not to kill him, but to toss him into the pit. Reuven had planned to personally take Yosef back to their father. A noble plan that did not play out. This was probably a result of the fact that Reuven planned to save Yosef because he did not want to be the villain in the story. He was really worried about himself and not Yosef. Yehudah was the real leader of the group, and his decision to sell Yosef was accepted. As a result, the devastation to their father must have been hard to watch. Yaakov took the news very badly. The brothers felt terrible about what they had done. And they demoted Yehudah from his position of leadership. The brothers blamed Yehudah and felt that had Yehudah told them to return Yosef alive to their father, they would have listened. This narrative becomes very eventful, what with Yehudah's relationship with Tamar and then what was occurring with Yosef in Egypt. The Ramban asks a potent question. What is Hashem really doing in orchestrating these events? His answer is very poignant. Hashem is weaving the tapestry of Mashiach!

6. We see the law of Yibum, levirate marriage: when a husband dies childless, his brother will assume the marriage with the widow. This happened twice in the Yehudah family. This was to perpetuate the name of the deceased brother. When the new couple would have a child, the plain reading of the Torah is that the baby will bear the name of the deceased. Furthermore, it provided financial stability for the widow. Obviously the brother and the widow have to agree to this union. In practical life, the Sephardim felt that Yibum is preferred over the Chalitzah, where the widow is allowed to leave the family. Historically Ashkenazim preferred

Chalitzah to Yibum. [Additional note: In Boston in the 1930s, a young couple lived there soon after Rav Soloveitchik arrived there. The husband died childless. The brother-in-law had his right foot amputated, making Chalitzah impossible. After consulting with Rav Heller, who was the Rav's Rebbe in Berlin, the Rav officiated at the Yibum on the condition that immediately after the marriage, the brother-in-law divorced his new wife.]

7. Yosef HaTzaddik, Yosef the Righteous One. Yosef acquired this title in Jewish literature because he did not succumb to the temptation of yielding to Mrs. Potiphar's attempted seduction. Hashem allowed this temptation because Yosef was living the good life and was not exceptionally caring about his faith. Yosef was seriously attracted to his master's wife. Midrashically it was the image of his father that helped Yosef stay firm. Philosophically we believe that Hashem tests us within the limits of our ability to live a righteous Jewish life. It is just that Yosef was center stage in the narrative when this happened to him. The result was that Yosef served more than a decade in the Egyptian prison for being good and living through Mrs. Potiphar's false charges against him. A cruel bit of Hashem's orchestrated life for him. For whatever mistakes Yosef made in his life, he paid for them dearly before rising to great prominence in this story. (RED)

8. MIDRASH. A poor man, a rich man, and a young lad all came in front of the Almighty for their Day of Judgement. Each was asked why he did not learn more Torah in his life. Each had an answer blaming their circumstance in life. The poor person was told the story of Hillel the Elder who was exceedingly poor but displayed tremendous dedication to the pursuit of Torah. The wealthy man was told the story of Rabbi Elazar ben Charsoom who was excessively rich. His father had left him a thousand ships in the sea, and a thousand towns on the land. Rabbi Elazar never inspected any of them. He dedicated himself to Torah. To the young man he was told the story of Yosef HaTzaddik, who was very handsome and yet resisted temptation and stayed righteous. In this way each person was answered.

HAFTORAH

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

AMOS עמו"ב 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)

SHABBAT HALACHAH RECEIVING MAIL AND PACKAGES

One may bring the mail into the house on Shabbat when an eruv permits it. The mail is not muktzeh and may be handled. An individual piece of mail that has no other purpose, like a check or a bill, should not be handled on Shabbat. Therefore, the best course of action is to bring all the mail in and place it in a safe place for after Shabbat. If a delivery of a small package or letter comes on Shabbat, one may receive it and bring it into the house (if the eruv covers possible violations of carrying). If the package must be signed for, it is permissible to tell the non-Jewish delivery person, "I cannot sign for the package today." By saying this, the non-Jew will understand and sign it for him, so that he will not have to come back a second time. If the non-Jew asks "should I sign it for you?" one may answer "I am agreeable." It is preferable that one ascertain (if possible) whether the person delivering the parcel is indeed a non-Jew and not a non-observant Jew. If he is a Jew or there is reason to believe that he is Jewish it is of course prohibited to tell or hint to him to sign it (as above), rather, one should tell him "I cannot accept delivery today."