

VAYEISHEV



ALIYA-BY-ALIYA
SEDRA SUMMARY



**Rabbi Reuven
Tradburks**
Director of
RCA Israel Region

The sale of Yosef in Parshat Vayeshev is one of the most famous stories of the Torah. Yaakov settles, finally, in the land of Israel. Yosef is favored. Yosef has 2 dreams. Yaakov sends Yosef to inquire of his brother's welfare. The brothers sell Yosef to merchants traveling to Egypt. Yehuda is confronted by Tamar and accepts responsibility. Yosef achieves great success as a servant to Potiphar. After being framed by Potiphar's wife, Yosef ends up in jail. His success continues in jail. He interprets the dreams of the butler and baker but remains in jail.

The story of Yosef is the longest in the Torah, spanning 4 parshiot. It's panoply of human emotions and conditions are

May the Torah learning in this issue
be in memory of and לעילוי נשמת
our beloved

Sharon Horowitz z"l

on her 49th Yahrtzeit
on the first night of Chanukah

*Mina and Howard Millendorf
Sharon, Shlomo, Elior, Amiad,
and Yagel Rabinowitz*

gripping: a favored child, dreams, jealousy, isolation, sexual struggle, success. And later; tears, confrontation and brotherly responsibility. It is the story that lays bare human foibles and eventually human triumph; hence its appeal and fame.



1st Aliya (37:1-12) Yaakov settles in the land of Israel. Yosef is 17, brings negative reports of

his brothers to his father. Yaakov loves Yosef. He gives him a special coat, provoking the jealousy of his brothers. Yosef has 2 dreams. The brothers are gathering sheaves of wheat; their sheaves gather around and bow to Yosef's. The sun, moon and 11 stars bow to him. The brothers feel hatred. Yaakov, while criticizing Yosef, takes note of the dreams.

The first verse, while eminently simple, introduces this entire story. "Yaakov settled in the Land of his father's sojourning." As if to say: they were sojourners, but not me. I am going to be a settler. Avraham was promised the Land of Israel. And that his children would be strangers in a strange land, returning wealthy to Israel. Yaakov figures, "hey, that was me. I was the stranger in a strange land. Long years with Lavan. Returned wealthy. Now on to the next stage of Jewish history: settling and ruling this Land".

The time to settle and eventually rule this Land has arrived. Building a state requires an economic change, from shepherding to farming. A state cannot be built by shepherds: agriculture roots one in the Land and can sustain a nation. And rule requires power.

When Yosef dreams not of sheep but of bundles of wheat, Yaakov's ears perk up.

Why a dream of wheat when we are shepherds? Is this a new world dawning?

And then a dream of power, of the sun, moon and stars. Is this a Divine message, through dreams, that the promise of the land is about to happen, with agriculture and power facilitating the building of our nation? Yaakov takes note of these dreams.



2nd Aliya (37:13-22) Yaakov sends Yosef to inquire of the welfare of his brothers. A man

directs him to Dotan. The brothers plot to kill Yosef and put an end to his dreams. Reuven objects to spilling his blood, suggesting to merely throw him into a pit. He saves Yosef, hoping to return him to his father.

The single best known aliya in the Torah (ok, because of Broadway – such is our world). Brothers wanting to kill their brother? This is unprecedented. Well, except for the first brothers in the Torah, Cain and Abel. Rivalry, competition, jealousy is an inescapable part of life. Brothers struggle (as the Midrash says re Cain and Abel) over inheritance money, religion, marriage or here, parental love and jealousy. Had the Torah avoided this sibling rivalry, it would have lacked the reality of life. But what is of much greater import is

May the Torah learned from this issue
of Torah Tidbits be לעילוי נשמת

Our Father, Grandfather,
Great-Grandfather

Rabbi James I. Gordon z"l

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the response to rivalry. The response of sibling loyalty, brotherhood and responsibility (and lack of it) is the story of the Torah. Now, it does take quite a while until that loyalty prevails, but so be it. Human failures will happen – how to respond is the concern of our Torah.



3rd Aliya (37:23-36) Yosef is stripped of his coat, thrown in an empty cistern. Merchants appear. Yehuda objects to killing their brother, convincing the others to sell Yosef to these merchants. Yosef is sold to the merchants and brought to Egypt. Reuven finds the cistern empty and rends his garments. Yosef's coat is dipped in blood, brought to Yaakov. Yaakov rips his clothes and is inconsolable. Yosef ends up in the home of Potiphah.

Yosef dreamed of the sun, moon and stars – as high as you can get – and ends in the pit, as low as you can get. Yaakov, who dreamt of a ladder ascending to the heavens, now says he will “sink to the netherworld in mourning”. Yaakov deceived Yitzchak with goatskin on his arms; Yaakov is deceived by Yosef's coat dipped in goat's blood.



4th Aliya (38:1-30) Yehuda descends. He has 3 sons. 1 son

marries Tamar and dies, as does the 2nd. He delays the 3rd son from marrying her. Tamar disguises herself. She becomes pregnant from Yehuda. Yehuda orders her to be put to death. She sends his identifying possessions. Yehuda admits. She has twins, Peretz and Zerach.

Yehuda descends. But ends up with Zerach – shine. Yehuda withheld his 3rd son from Tamar, as he withheld Yosef from returning to Yaakov by selling Yosef. But here he took full responsibility whereas there he didn't. When the brothers wanted to kill Yosef, Reuven told them to throw him in a pit. Ok, don't kill him with a knife; kill him passively, of starvation. Yehuda stood up; let's not kill him, let's sell him. That certainly was better than killing him. But he really should have objected more vociferously and said: “I will not let you harm Yosef. I will return him to Abba.” Here he takes full responsibility. This is a harbinger of the full acceptance of responsibility he will demonstrate later in guaranteeing Bin-yamin's return to Yaakov.



5th Aliya (39:1-6) Yosef descends to Egypt. G-d is with Yosef and he is successful.

Yosef's owner sees that G-d is with him and that all he does G-d makes successful. G-d blesses the master's home because of Yosef; all that is his in his home and field, G-d blesses. He gives Yosef total control of all that is his.

A little wee aliya of 6 verses. And G-d's name appears 6 times. G-d's name did not appear in the 66 verses until here in the parsha (save for the death of the 2 sons of Yehuda: “they did bad in the eyes of G-d”). This is very similar to the absence of G-d

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ברוריה בת שלמה ע"ה
 Our beloved Wife and Mother
 On her 1st Yahrzeit
 May the learning from Torah Tidbits
 that she loved so much
 לעילוי נשמתה
 Families Wulwick & Sheldon

in the beginning of Sefer Shemot until He finally sees their affliction.

Man does just fine spiraling down all by himself – Yosef at the hands of his brothers, Yehuda with his mishandling of Tamar, the Jews in Egypt at the hands of Paro. When he hits bottom, G-d appears.



6th Aliya (39:7-23) Potiphar's wife propositions Yosef. Yosef resists, for as much as he has

complete authority in the home, this would be a sin to G-d. With no one around, she grabs him. He flees, leaving her holding his garment. She frames Yosef as having approached her. Yosef is thrown in jail. G-d is kind to him and the jail keeper puts Yosef in charge. All that he does, G-d makes successful.

Note the parallels: The brothers take Yosef's coat from him; Mrs. Potiphar is holding Yosef's garment. The brothers deceive their father with the coat; Mrs. Potiphar deceives her husband with the coat. Yosef is sold as a slave; Yosef ends up in jail.

From dreaming of the sun, moon and stars, and brothers bowing to him, Yosef has gone down to Egypt, down in status to a slave, and now down yet again to jail.

Yosef earns the title of Yosef HaTzaddik from his resistance to Mrs. Potiphar. He is alone, in a foreign land, no one around, being propositioned; yet, his thoughts are sinning to G-d.



7th Aliya (40:1-23) The butler and baker of Paro are

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jailed. Yosef takes care of them. They dream. Yosef asks: tell me the dreams for their explanations are to G-d. The butler saw a fruitful vine, squeezing the grapes into the cup of Paro. Yosef says: you will be restored as butler. And, Yosef adds, remember me when things are good again and tell Paro, for I don't deserve to be here. The baker describes dreaming of bread on his head. Yosef says: you will be hung. The butler is restored. The baker is hung. The butler forgets Yosef.

While the Yosef story moves quickly for us the reader, years have passed. 2 years will pass from the butler being restored

until Yosef interprets Paro's dream next week. He was 17 when the brothers sold him. Now he is 28. He will be 30 when he interprets Paro's dreams.

And if Yosef is such a good interpreter of dreams – well, he himself had 2 dreams. What does he make of *his* dreams? He dreamt of the brother's bundles of wheat bowing to him. And of power, all bowing to him. Does he mull over his dreams every once in a while? Every week? Every day? He tells Paro that having 2 dreams implies that they will happen soon. He had 2 dreams. His dreams didn't happen soon. Does he think they will still happen? After all, how soon is soon? A few days? Or 25 years?

HAFTORAH VAYEISHEV

AMOS 2:6 -3:8

This week's *haftorah* contains an allusion to the sale of Yosef by his brothers, which was discussed in this week's Torah reading. Amos opens with a rebuke to the Jewish

May the Torah learning in this issue
be in loving memory of
and לעילוי נשמת my father

Irving (Irv) Herman z"l

לע"נ יצחק בן אליהו יחזקאל ז"ל

כ"ב כסלו - on his tenth yearzeit

Darlene Herman

A SHORT VORT | BY RABBI CHANUCH YERES

Rav, Beit Knesset Beit Yisrael, Yemin Moshe

"And Yosef dreamed a dream, and he told it to his brothers; and they hated him yet more. And he dreamed yet another dream, and told it to his brothers." (37:5,9)

Rabbi Chaim ben Atar (The Or HaChaim 1696-1743, buried on the Mt. of Olives) addresses a seemingly obvious question. If Yosef saw his brother's response of hatred towards him after hearing his first dream, why did he continue to tell them his second dream? Couldn't he expect what their response would have been with more intensity?

One answer given is that Yosef wanted to show them that these dreams were Divinely given, and that Yaakov favoring him more than the others, was Heavenly dictated. Perhaps, Yosef felt that if this truth would be presented publicly, the brothers would have to come to accept that fact and stop hating him.

Another answer offered is that Yosef wanted to convey to his brothers that one day, they would truly be dependent on him just like in the dream of the sheaves all bowing down. Here too, Yosef was trying to convince them that it was in their best interest to treat him well because one day the tables would be turned and they would need him.

In the end, there was so much anger after hearing the first dream, no sense of camaraderie was ever sought afterwards by the brothers.

Shabbat Shalom

People. Hashem had been patient with them notwithstanding their transgression of the three cardinal sins — sexual impropriety, idolatry and murder. Their fourth sin, however, crossed the line — the mistreatment of the innocent, widows, orphans and the poor.

Hashem reminds Am Yisrael how He lovingly took them out of Egypt and led them through the desert for forty years and settled them in the Holy Land. There, He bestowed the gift of prophecy on some and inspired others to become Nazirites. Yet the Jewish people did not respond appropriately, giving wine to the Nazirites and instructing the prophets not to prophesy.

The haftorah ends with an admonition from Hashem, one that also recalls His eternal love for His people: “Hearken to this word which the Lord spoke about you, O children of Israel, concerning the entire nation that I brought up from the land of Egypt. ‘Only you did I love above all the families of the earth; therefore, I will visit upon you all your iniquities...’” As opposed to other nations to whom Hashem does not pay close attention, Hashem’s love for His nation causes Him to punish them for their misdeeds, to cleanse them and prod them back onto the path of the just. ■

STATS

9th of 54 sedras; 9th of 12 in B'reishit
 Written on 190 lines, ranks 28th
 4 Parshiyot; 3 open, 1 closed
 112 p'sukim - ranks 24th
 1558 words - ranks 24th

MITZVOT

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 On her 50th Yahrzeit - 22 Kislev
 Neil Beim