

PORTION	DATE	HEB DATE	TORAH	NEVIIM	KETUVIM
Vayeishev	9 Dec 2017	21 Kislev 5778	Gen. 37:1-40:23	Amos 2:6-3:8	Matt. 1:18-25

Genesis 37:1-40:23

Genesis 37

This week's parashat, Vayeishev, we see the beginning of Exile as Hashem told Abraham that his descendants "will be strangers in a country not their own" (Gen. 15:13) for 400 years. In this context, the exile began when Isaac was born 25 years later when Abraham was 100 years old. Abraham told Isaac, and he told Jacob. Jacob, then told Joseph and Esau. That is why Esau packed his belongings and moved to Se'ir. He knew his descendants or Jacob's would go to an exile. Esau did not want it and moved away from his family to the mountain area.

The events that occurred to Joseph was a part of plan by Hashem that had to happen. Joseph is known as *hatzadik* (the righteous) who really fought desires and won it. Thus, this parashat teaches us how to overcome it. The forefathers of the Scripture all have titles: Abraham was known as *chesed* (loving / kindness). Isaac known as *gevurah* (severity / strength / judgment). Jacob as *tiferet* (beauty), David as *hamelech* (the king), Moshe *Rabbinu* (the Rabbi), Aaron *hagadol* (the high priest), Shmuel *hanavi* (the prophet). But Joseph is the only with *hatzadik*.

As we read this parashat, we learned about the characteristics of Joseph. He would not seek revenges, but quick to forgive the sins of others as he did to his brothers in later chapters of Genesis. He passed all his challenges with flying colors. So how can we and how do we apply his success that governs us every day which is called *lashon hara* (evil tongue)? It comes to us in every way imaginable while we are awake, even when we sleep it attacks us. It takes us away from doing good things to think of bad things, to act with jealousy, hatred, and to make us stay away from Torah study.

Satan is okay with you praying, fasting, and helping the poor except studying the Torah. The Satan's greatest weapon is *lashon hara* and he uses it well to distract you from studying the Torah. If a person has only *nefesh* (animal instinct), he enjoys of this world. He likes to eat good food, movies, music. This is what Satan wants you to be. He wants you to be part of this world by bowing to him. In the Gospel of Matthew, he said "bow down and worship me." (Matt. 4:9)

It is normal to desire for something better in life. Because the desire drives us to be successful and to better ourselves. However, if the desire goes beyond your control, then it becomes a problem. For example, if you see a warm, glazed donut, you want to have one or two. But to eat a whole dozen can be dangerous to our body. Would you run to study the book of Mitzvoth? Would you run to study the halacha to know halachot? It is the desire that forbids us from doing heavenly work. So, if it is desire, how can we control such powerful emotion? What is the secret Joseph used to overcome his desires and challenges? After all, are we not constantly battling with some type of desires whether it is forbidden or not? How do we control it?

The key is found in the life of Joseph. He was hated by his brothers. He was sold several times before being sold to Potiphar. He was seduced and accused by Potiphar's wife and landed himself in the prison with a false accusation. The Book of Jasher describes how handsome Joseph was. The Potiphar's wife would gather her friends and placed apples in front of them to cut it. As they were cutting apples, Joseph would enter. The women mesmerized by his handsomeness, did not know

they were cutting into their hands. The Scripture as well as the book of Jasher (Joshua 10:3; 2 Samuel 1:18; 2 Timothy 3:8) teaches us it takes a lot of self-control to subdue desires in excess. Also, how did Joseph control himself when Potiphar's wife tried to seduce him? The Talmud tells us that he almost gave in, but the image of his father appeared and the Torah study they had done together kept him from sinning. The blessing, "Evil eye shall not control you" was given by Jacob to Joseph. And that is what we use today to bless our children as well.

Before we go any further, we need to compare lives of Jacob and Joseph. Both were born circumcised. They were born to mothers who were barren for a long period of time. Both their mothers had hard labors during birth. Both mothers only had two children. They were hated by their brother(s). Both of their brothers plotted to kill them. Both were shepherd. Both were experienced spiritual warrior. Jacob fought with Esau's angel and Joseph overcame his inner struggle with Potiphar's wife. Jacob is now 108 years old, so he tells Hashem, "I want to live my life in peace." Hashem said, "Is it not enough for you in the World to Come that you want peace in this world?" Not long afterwards, Joseph, 17 years old becomes the target of jealousy and sold by his brothers.

Jacob began to show favoritism to Joseph. He gave him a colored coat which antagonizes his brothers more. We have seen parents with two more children, showing differential treatment as Jacob did here. We will dig in a little deeper to learn about Jacob. There are three main reasons why Jacob loved Joseph more. First, Joseph was born after many years of Rivkah being barren as Jacob did. Second, Joseph had one brother as Jacob did. And thirdly, as Esau hated Jacob, so did Joseph's brothers to their brother. So, Jacob saw himself in Joseph. And he displayed his love by giving him a three-colored coat which became another cause for jealousy by Joseph's brothers. Jacob should have made same coat for his other sons to wear.

The coat Joseph was wearing had three colors which represents three primary sins committed by Adam Rishon. They are idol worship, forbidden relationship, and bloodshed. For this reason, the forefathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were born. The sin of idol worship comes from listening to the words of serpent (Satan), and not to Elohim. The sin of forbidden relationship comes from mating with other women other than Chava (Eve). There is a tradition of forbidden relationship between Adam and Lilith. And the sin of bloodshed because Adam brought death to the world.

Abraham came to correct idol worship by proclaiming the name of Elohim to the travelers. Isaac came to correct bloodshed by become a sacrifice on the altar. Jacob came to correct forbidden relationships by having complete bed. Now came Joseph who symbolized the completion of Adam Rishon's sins by wearing three colored robe.

The Kabbalah teaches Jacob presents as *tiferet* in the Sefirot, but he comes from *binah*. Thus, he is needed to connect to *sefirah malchut* through Joseph who was the link that corresponds to *sefirah yesod*. It means Jacob needed Joseph to connect to malchut to receive his godly revelation (divine), *shekinah*. Each day, Jacob was connected to that link with Joseph and it manifested into a physical love. Of course, Jacob loved all his sons, but Joseph was exceptional as mentioned earlier. Jacob, being a prophet knew what happened to Joseph because the connection between them was broken. That was one of the reason Jacob was mourning for 22 years because the Divine connection, his *shekinah* disappeared when Joseph disappeared. And Jacob was waiting patiently to reconnect the broken link when Joseph returns.

Joseph, by wearing such coat, knew that he was spiritually a lot higher than his brothers, and Jacob loved him even more because of it and it showed which lead to jealousy by his brothers. The Talmud teaches us not to discriminate or show favoritism to our children as well as applying same principle to all Israel. (Shabbos 111a)

Now, Joseph knew by getting the robe, he was acknowledged and knew that he was spiritually higher than his brothers. Even though, he was 17 years old, the Talmud describes him as a young child who lacks discipline and spend time grooming himself while shepherding yet he was sensitive to the treatments given to the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah by the sons of Leah. So, Joseph became an informer by giving “evil reports” to his father.

The Torah shows as Joseph being mean, spoiled brat with a fancy robe, and making “evil reports.” On a deeper level, the Torah is showing how concerned Joseph was about his brothers’ conduct, and told his concern to his father. The Torah supports this by inserting Judah in chapter 38 of Genesis. Up until this point, the Torah mentions Joseph did this and Joseph did that. By inserting Judah, the Torah is supporting Joseph’s concern. Further evidence is found in the *parashat Vayigash* which reveals that Joseph was not upset with his brothers nor angry with them and quick to forgive for selling him. Thus, when he made “evil reports” to his father, he did it without lies or exaggeration. He did it because he was concerned about them.

What did Joseph tell his father? He saw his brothers eating live parts of an animal. The halacha teaches that a clean animal requires *shechitah* (ritual slaughtering). It continues that even though the animal was slaughtered properly, the animal still moves which is caused by involuntary muscle reaction. Thus, it is allowed to cut animals during that specific time period because it is no longer alive. We can learn from here that the brothers performed *shechitah* even before the Laws were given much later. Joseph knew shechitah, but he did not know about involuntary muscle movement. So, to him, his brothers were eating live animals. He runs to his father to make an “evil report.”

Then comes Joseph and tells his father that the sons of Leah were not treating the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah properly. They were showing their superiority over the children of handmaiden. Joseph did not like that and ran to tell his father.

Joseph also saw the sons of Leah being active in forbidden relationship with women. As mentioned above and in previous parashat, the wealth Jacob accumulated was immense. He had so much, it took him more than 18 months to relocate his assets. The sons were shepherding and guarding his livestock. And they had to hire people from surrounding areas to support them, and a lot of workers were women. The sons had to be out there supervising them which put them in constant contact with women. Joseph, being young, thought his brothers were having affairs. “Why are you hanging out with these women all the time?”, thought Joseph. He constantly reported to his father of this, not because of malice but concern for his brothers.

As if this is enough, Joseph tells his brothers about his dreams. Not only that Jacob gave Joseph a colored robe to show everyone that Joseph was loved most. The brother knew Joseph was telling to his father about them. They were angry about that. Now, here comes Joseph flaunting his new robe given by their father and tells them of his dreams!

In Joseph's first dream, he tells his brothers. They were out binding sheaves of grain when his sheaf stands up and his brothers' sheaves gathered around and bowed to his sheaf. He tells them of his second dream where the sun and the moon and eleven stars bow to him.

Now, Joseph knew his brothers were angry with him for giving "evil reports," and loved most by their father. It is normal for the people to avoid who are angry at you. If that be the case, why did Joseph, knowing that his brothers hated him, goes to them and tells them about his dreams? Did Joseph not know how to interpret his dreams? Nope. Because he interpreted dreams easily in later chapters.

Or Chaim explains: Joseph went to his brothers knowing that they hated him and he was afraid of them. He knew immediately the meaning of the dream. So, he went to his brothers for them to negate dreams because he cared for them. He wanted them to say, "Don't worry. That is a silly dream. It doesn't mean anything." What did they say? "Do you really intent to rule over us? Will you actually rule it?" (Gen. 37:8) Joseph then goes to his father and tells him about the dream. His father said, "What is this dream you had? Will your mother and I and your brothers actually come and bow down to the ground before you?" (Gen. 37:10)

Rambam and Shulcan Aruch (The Code of Laws) teaches that the dreams are nonsense and shouldn't even bother to mention it. The Kabbalah, however, teaches differently. We discussed about a dream interpreter and two rabbis who went to see him not too long ago. In Gemara, tractate Berachot, Rabbis Abaye and Rava both had a same dream. When Abaye went to the dream interpreter. The interpreter said that the vegetables Abaye saw was wide, green, and taste delicious. Therefore, he will be successful in his business. When Rava when to the interpreter and told him the same dream, the interpreter said that the cabbage was wide, green, and taste bitter. Therefore, he will not be successful in his business. And both interpretations came true. Abaye became very rich whereas Rava very poor. Why was the interpretation different from a same dream? Abaye paid where Rava did not for the interpretation.

In essence, the brothers told Joseph that he will rule over them. His father told him that they will come to where Joseph is and bow to him. And that happened according to the interpretation of dreams. Now, Jacob calls on Joseph to go check on his brothers because they were shepherding near Shechem. Joseph obeys his father and goes to look for his brothers despite his fear and their hatred toward him that something will happen. Jacob send him off from the Valley of Hebron. We drive from this verse to provide escort until the guests are on their journey safely.

Joseph got lost. A man, that is an angel, Gabriel directs him to the proper direction. His brothers saw him and tried to kill him with an arrow. Then they threw him in a dry well, and eventually sold to the Ishmaelites ending in *Mitzrayim* (Egypt). The Talmud teaches that Hashem creates an environment to nudge a person to the right direction for the events to occur. That is why Gabriel appeared to him as a man. That is why his brothers tries to kill him, ultimately being sold as a slave and end up in *Mitzrayim* where the salvation of his family will come from. So, what is *Mizrayim* in spiritual level?

"*Metzer*" in Hebrew is "limitation." Hashem has created us to face challenges and tests so that we can overcome them to lead us in His way. And that is what He had done to Joseph. He wanted certain events to take place. And so, He places them to a place where it will happen. Joseph was placed in the house of Potiphar, and soon enough he was chased by Potiphar's wife. He was thrown

into a dungeon so he can interpret dreams for Pharaoh's servants that would lead to interpretation of Pharaoh's dreams, to place Joseph in charge of all *Mitzrayim*. And that is the whole point of this parashat. Hashem laid out all the foundation for Joseph to succeed as He laid out all the foundation for us to succeed.

There are two levels of *yetzer hara* (evil inclination) – cool and hot. Not doing a mitzvah is considered as cool and “hot” to jump into sin. Baal Shem Tov explains, when he was in a morning service, he greeted a business man with “Peace be unto you.” Then about an hour later, he said to the same business man, “Peace be unto you.” Perplexed, the business man said, “Rabbi, you said the same thing one hour ago and you greet me with same word.” He replied, “Because when you first came, your mind was elsewhere, but now you are here.” It means where our thoughts are, that is where we will be. The Talmud is teaching us that we can reach higher spiritual level with our mind. That we can control our body (emotion) and subdue it by refining our self to serve Hashem in much higher and different level. When our mind is full of Torah, it takes us away from *yetzer hara* that we can serve Him with higher purpose.

Amos 2:6-3:8

Amos opens with a rebuke to Israel. 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 the Israelite how He took them out of Egypt and led them through the desert for forty years and settled them in the Holy Land with love. Despite they were given prophecy, the people did not respond in kind by giving wine to the Nazirites and instructing the prophets not to prophesy. Amos then describes HaShem's punishment for their behavior: “And the stout-hearted among the mighty shall flee naked on that day, says the Elohim.”

Matthew 1:18-25

In verse 18, it says “Holy Spirit” or “Holy Ghost.” The word “holy” derives from “*heile*” referring to the warmth of the sun. And “ghost” is a Saxon (Germanic tribe) term that refers to the spirit of the dead. Thus, the words are inconsistent with being Set Apart for the Kingdom of Elohim.

Just as Hashem led Joseph (Gen. 37-40) into Egypt, He guides Joseph (Matthew 1) not to divorce Miriam for her pregnancy to fulfill the prophecy in Isaiah 7:14. Just as He was actively involved in moving in their lives, so is He today.

Joseph overcame his *yetzer hara* by remembering the teachings of his father, Jacob. Joseph overcame his *yetzer hara* by obeying the words of Hashem in Matthew 1:24. So, that we all can serve YHWH with higher purpose. Amen.