

Torah: B’resheet (Genesis) 37:1-40:23
Haftarah: ‘Amos 2:6-3:8
B’rit Hadashah: Acts 7:1-18

	year 1 37:1-36	year 2 38:1-30	year 3 39:1-40:23
1	37:1 – 3	38:1 – 5	39:1 – 6
2	37:4 – 7	38:6 – 11	39:7 – 10
3	37:8 – 11	38:12 – 14	39:11 – 18
4	37:12 – 17	38:15 – 19	39:19 – 23
5	37:18 – 22	38:20 – 23	40:1 – 8
6	37:23 – 28	38:24 – 26	40:9 – 15
7	37:29 – 36	38:27 – 30	40:16 – 23

and Yosef was brought down to Egypt and Potifar / an official of Pharaoh, captain of the guard, an Egyptian / from the hands of the Ishmaelites who had brought him down there	<i>ve’Yosef hurad Mitz’ráyim va’yiḳ’néh’u Potiyfar se’riys Par’óh sar ha’tabakhiym iysh Mitz’riy miyad ha’Yish’ma’e’liym ashér horidúhu shámah</i>	וַיֹּסֵף הוּרַד מִצְרָיִם וַיִּקְנֶהוּ פוֹטִיפָר סָרִיס פְּרֹעֶזָה שָׂר הַטַּבָּחִים אִישׁ מִצְרִי מִיַּד הַיִּשְׁמַעֲלִים אֲשֶׁר הוֹרְדוּהוּ שָׁמָּה
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The masterfully told story of Yosef, leading to the descent to Egypt, continues. It follows the narrative of Esav and his possession of Seir. A chain of sordid, petty, temporal and mundane events constitutes the main motif of biblical theology – oppression and redemption. It is set in dramatic novelistic techniques in a secular mold, lacking supernatural elements (divine revelations and interactions, altar building, etc.) associated with the patriarchs. Yet the profound sense of HaShem’s guiding hand infuses the narrative – his name on Yosef’s lips at critical moments (39:9, 40:8, 16, etc.).

Aliyah Highlights

1. **Gen. 39:1-6** The narrative reconnects with the story of Yosef that was interrupted by the story of Yehudah. The location, Egypt, is emphasized (v. 1, 2, 5) as the sale of Yosef into slavery sets the stage in fulfillment of the prophecy to Avraham (Ge. 15:13). The divine name, only used narratively and only in this chapter of Yosef’s odyssey (v. 2, 3, 5, 21, 23) emphasizes that these events are significant in His plan for national Israel. Yosef’s giftedness cannot bear fruit without the support of HaShem. He 1) stays in house, 2) finds favor with Potifar, 3) becomes personally bonded with him, and, 4) is appointed overseer of his entire estate, in the house and outside (a merism). “The food he ate” could be a euphemism for his wife (Pr. 30:20), or reference to the Egyptian practice of separation at meals (see Ge. 43:32). No other male in scripture is described as “well-built and handsome.” The phrase is also used of Rakhel (Ge. 29:17). It is not an element of his father’s favoritism.
2. **Gen. 39:7-10** Time has proven Yosef’s mature moral character. When brazenly approached as no other woman in scripture does, he does not preach or dare to express anger, but respectfully reflects his values and his master’s rights. His morality comes solely from the will of HaShem, and not social convention. She remains persistent, as does he.
3. **Gen. 39:11-18** Inevitably, opportunity arises and verbal assault turns to physical aggression, resulting in the well-known results. Initially, she does not refer to Yosef as a “slave” but as a “Hebrew,” artfully combining the terms to leverage identity to bolster her deception to the staff.
4. **Gen. 39:19-23** Her story to her husband is tempered. The text leaves his fury without target – he could be upset as his loss of a valuable administrator. Yosef remains quiet as he is placed under house arrest. His experience with the prison warden parallels his experience in Potifar’s service.
5. **Gen. 40:1-8** It has been 11 years since Yosef was sold into slavery, when his dreams caused his misfortune. Now the dreams of others lead to his prosperity. He confesses his trust is in God.

Parashah 9-3 Vayeshev וַיֵּשֶׁב

6. **Gen. 40:9-15** The cupbearer's dream predicts restoration, and therefore Yosef's request to be remembered because he himself is, in fact, innocent.
7. **Gen. 40:16-23** The baker's dream predicts execution. Both dreams come to pass and the cupbearer is restored. But Yosef is forgotten

Themes

Marriage – At major times of transition the importance of the relationship between a man and a woman, marriage specifically, is challenged. All three of the patriarchs experienced the fear of death and the threat of wives being taken by a powerful local leader. They questionably claim that their wife is their sister. When the truth is revealed, their wives are restored to them. Fourth, Lot and his daughters are saved from wickedness through the intervention of messengers from God. Fifth, a local prince rapes and abducts Dinah resulting in her brothers deceiving and killing to get her back. Sixth is the sketchy story Yehudah and Tamar. Seventh is the story of Potifar's wife attempting to seduce Yosef in this week's portion. The Bible uses the imagery of marriage in the covenant relationship between HaShem and his people Israel, and in the messianic vision. Perhaps the purity, sanctity, security and flourishing of this union, rooted in the Garden of Eden should be understood, supported and emphasized. Not through violence, oppression and selfishness, but in love and faithfulness that brings new life into this universe.

Daily Devotional questions for reflection and application

1. (37:1) Ya'akov returns to the promise given his father, a different man. How have those who have gone before influenced you? What never changes, and what is "new?" (Jer 6:16, Luk 5:39, Is 48:6, Jude 3)
2. (37:12) Ya'akov seems suspicious of his sons, sending Yosef to report on them. How do you behave when no one is watching? (Mat 7:21-23, Job 13:7-9, Psa 44:21, Pro 18:17, Jer 17:10, Gal 6:7)
3. (37:23) Yosef entreats his brothers but seems to submit to their mistreatment (42:21). How did Yeshua respond to mistreatment? (Mar 10:33-34, 14:61) How do you respond? (Gen 50:20, Mar 14:61, Rom 12:18-19, Mat 5:38-41, 10:16-22)
4. (38:1) Y'hudah went "down" and separated himself from his brothers. Was this because of his role regarding Yosef? How does sin separate us from one another? (Rom 7:11, Pro 9:13-18, Heb 3:12-14)
5. (39:1) Y'hudah went down but Yosef was taken down, both resulting in God's plan being accomplished. How do you view your "ups" and "downs?" (Php 2:6-11, Isa 50:4-7, Isa 45:23-25)
6. (39:9) Torah had not yet been given. How did Yosef know what sin was? How do you know? (1Co 6:9, Act 15:28-29, Heb 13:4, Jam 2:11)
7. (40:1) "Sometime later..." God's time and timing is perfect. Is He in control of your timeline? (Ecc 3:1, Act 1:7, Joh 2:4, 7:30, 8:20, 13:1, Psa 102:13)