

Torah: B'resheet (Genesis) 37:1-40:23 Haftarah: 'Amos 2:6-3:8 B'rit Hadashah: Acts 7:9-16		<i>year 1</i> 37:1-36	<i>year 2</i> 38:1-30	<i>year 3</i> 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 Jacob dwelt in the land of the sojourning of his father in the land of Canaan	<i>va'yéshev Ya'aqov b'éretz meguréy aviyy b'éretz Kena'an</i>	וַיֵּשֶׁב יַעֲקֹב בְּאֶרֶץ מְגֻרֵי אָבִיו בְּאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן
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Vayeshev (“He settled”) begins the story of Ya’aqov’s favorite son Yosef, his dreams, his rivalry with his brothers, slavery in Egypt, imprisonment and interpreting dreams. It also tells the story of Y’hudah and Tamar.

The haftarah speaks of selling the righteous for silver, just as Yosef’s brothers sold him into slavery in the Torah portion.

Aliyah Highlights

- Gen. 37:1-3** Yitz’khaq lived his entire life within the boundaries of the promised land as a sojourner (Le. 25:23). Although his death was previously described (Ge. 35:28-29), he lived until 12 years after the sale of his grandson, Yosef. Torah is not about chronology. The story of Yosef is a continuation of the story (*tol’dot* – תּוֹלְדוֹת) of Ya’aqov. The concubines Bilhah and Zilpah (order reversed) have been elevated to “wives” with the passing of Rakhel and Leah. Yosef would be very close to Bilhah. Yosef’s bad report was a cause of enmity between Yosef and his brothers. Israel’s favoritism, which included a robe of special significance, was a second cause of enmity.
- Gen. 37:4-7** It was emphatically Yosef who his father loved. The brothers rebuffed every attempt at positive interaction with Yosef. His dreams were the third cause of enmity. It was assumed that dreams were predictive and from deity, reflecting the wishes and needs of the dreamer. Although shepherds, brothers could have found employment during harvest times. Sheaves bowing imply Yosef’s authority over his brothers. Their hate increases three-fold (v. 4, 5, 8).
- Gen. 37:8-1** Pairs of dreams show their seriousness. The celestial setting of the second dream seems to infer parents (sun/moon) and brothers (stars, Ge. 15:5, 22:17). Ya’aqov adds “to the ground” when bowing is mentioned, remembering himself before Esav hinting at the future.
- Gen. 37:12-17** Yosef is sent by his father to seek his brothers (messianic!) in Sh’khem, about 50 miles away. We are not told much about the unnamed helpful stranger, or why the interaction is included except to see divine care and guidance modeled in practical simplicity – we should all be so helpful. The thoughts of a brother seeking brother in a field evoke thoughts of Kayin and Hevel (Gen. 4:8-9). What if this encounter on Yosef’s journey to find his brothers is the same field where Kayin asked, “am I my brothers’ keeper?”
- Gen. 37:18-22** The brothers, filled with hate, see Yosef coming. They want to kill (*harag* – הָרַג – murder) him, but the oldest, Re’uven demands they don’t and plans to return him to Ya’aqov.
- Gen. 37:23-28** Yosef is stripped of his tunic and thrown into an empty cistern. A passing merchant caravan of aromatic spices is spotted. Y’hudah rises and leads the brothers to sell Yosef. The text

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could be interpreted that it was the Midianites who took Yosef and sold him to the Yishmaelim (Ge. 40:15).

7. **Gen. 37:29-36** Re'uven believes Yosef dead (Ge. 42:22) and responds in agony. Ironically, they deceive Ya'aqov with the same props he used to deceive his father (Ge. 27:9, 15-16). Ambiguity in the text allows the interpretation that Yitz'khaq wept for Ya'aqov.

Thought Focus

Sibling Conflict – *Kayin* and *Hevel*, *Yishma'el* and *Yitz'khak*, *Esav* and *Ya'aqov*, *Esav* established his kingdom and territory in *Seir* (Ge. 36:43, De. 2:5). Now, the children of *Ya'aqov*/*Yis'rael* - *Yosef* and his brothers - will dominate the text for the remainder of the book of Genesis. Details of this struggle will be the setting for the most famous story of reconciliation and restoration – the motif of biblical theology. The promise to *Avraham*, *Yitz'khaq* and now *Ya'aqov* heads toward Egypt (Ge. 15:13), from where, eventually, another pair of brothers will work together to lead Israel to nationhood.

***Ya'aqov* or *Yis'rael*:** *Ya'aqov*'s name was changed to *Yis'rael* (Ge. 32:29), yet he is still referred to by both names (Ge. 37:1/37:3). One way to see this is that he is called *Ya'aqov* when functioning in his humanity (insecure, devious, fearful of men), and *Yis'rael* when he is fulfilling his national, divinely inspired authoritative role (upright, trusting *HaShem*'s faithfulness and fearing him, not men). See Hos. 12:4-5.

Daily Devotional questions for reflection and application

1. (37:1) *Ya'aqov* 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'aqov* 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 time line? (Ecc 3:1, Act 1:7, Joh 2:4, 7:30, 8:20, 13:1, Psa 102:13)