



# TAL

## VAYESHEV 5775

### THE COMMUNITY PARASHA SHEET

**Shabbat Begins 15:36 Shabbat Ends 16:46**

#### Finding Parking!

**Rabbi Jonathan Tawil**



A man was driving to a very important meeting in town. He was late and any more delay could cause him the loss of a multibillion dollar deal.

He arrives near the office only to find that all the parking places were taken. Looking towards the heavens, he cries out to G-d.

"Please G-d take pity on me and let me find a parking spot! I know I have not been to synagogue as much as I would love too, but I assure you from now on I will be going every morning. Please just give me a spot!"

Miraculously as he finishes speaking, a car indicates and makes its way out, right before his eyes.

He raises his eyes towards the heavens and says, "it's OK G-d. I have found one!"

Every day we go through experiences; some seem normal, others seem super

real, yet do we really believe that it all comes from G-d?

This week, we learn the amazing story of a young boy, Yosef, who is put through trials and tribulations from his youth. Although loved by his father, he has a hard time with his brothers, eventually sold to Egypt and enslaved in a stranger's house. After being tested with Potiphar's wife and not committing adultery, he is thrown into prison for his 'sin'. Yet throughout these tough thirteen years and even later at the age of thirty when he is eventually brought in front of Pharaoh, Yosef never loses faith in G-d.

A famous Gemara (Yoma 35b) relates how our Rabbis taught that after a long life in this world, we will all be challenged by the heavenly tribunal.

There will be those that are rich in this world and those that are poor, those that through their blessings have tough-

er tests and those with easier circumstances.

When the poor, the rich or the wicked shall appear before Divine Judgment, they will be asked, 'Why didn't you study Torah while you were alive?'

If the poor responds that he was poor and had to earn a living and therefore had no time to study, the heavenly court will say, 'Were you poorer than Hillel the Elder?' Concerning Hillel the Elder, it was said that every day he used to work and earn one Tarpeik [a small sum], half of which he gave away to the guard of the house of learning [for admission] and with the other half he supported himself and his family.

One day, Hillel didn't earn anything and the guard refused him admission because he didn't have any money. He climbed up onto the roof and sat upon the skylight so that he might listen to the words of the living G-d from the mouth of Shemaiya and Avtaliyan [the leading Sages of the generation]. This incident occurred on a Friday during the month of Tevet in the winter and snow fell upon him and covered him up.

The next day, on the Shabbat, at dawn Shemayia said to Avtaliyan, 'Brother, why is it that every day light is visible in the academy at this time, and today it is still dark? Is it such a cloudy day?' They looked up and saw the figure of a man above the skylight. They went up to the roof, and found Hillel covered by three cubits of snow. After removing the snow, they took him down and cared for him, placed him before a fire, and remarked, 'Such a man deserves that even Shabbat should be violated for his sake.'

Thus if you say you were too poor and were busy earning a living, Hashem will point to Hillel who was even poorer but climbed on the roof in the snow to learn Torah.

p.t.o.

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If you claim you were too rich and too busy handling your affairs, Hashem will point to Rebbi Elazar whose father left him one thousand cities on land and one thousand ships at sea. Yet every day he would take up his satchel and travel from town to town and city to city to study Torah.

If you are busy with your physical desires, and say that it was difficult, after all Hashem made you handsome and you had a tough evil inclination, then Hashem will point to Yosef and ask were you more handsome than him?

He was willing to live life as a slave rather than violate G-d's will.

There will be no excuses in the Olam HaEmet – the True everlasting world.

Upon closer inspection, our Sages tell us that when Yosef was about to sin with Potiphar's wife, he merited seeing his holy father Yaakov in an image; this helped him keep his cool and run away from the sin.

We may ask, if Yosef was helped with this image, then of course he would not sin.



Why was he helped, and when we sin, we don't seem to have any holy images come to us? And how is it that G-d compares us to Yosef, if he was able to be shown an image of the Holy Yakov, and we are not?

The answer is found in how Yosef conducted his life.

At the height of his youth, he was sold to a strange land. He was shunned by his brothers and engaged for the rest of his

youth and adulthood up to the age of thirty as a slave and prisoner.

The Midrash tells us that Potiphar's wife was constantly imploring him to go with her, yet he would resist. With all her power and beauty, she could not break Yosef's pure and dedicated heart.

When a person is **constantly** aware and tries hard to be saved – he will be.

The only reason his father's image appeared was because he constantly fought off his evil inclination.

Chanah stated (Shmuel I 2:9) "Raglei Chasidav Yishmor," He guards the ways of the pious. When a person is dedicated to G-d, they will not falter.

Next time you find that parking spot, let out a "Thank G-d!" Show your appreciation and realisation that He constantly runs the world.

As we approach Chanuka - a time of rededication - let us dedicate and commit ourselves to serve G-d and may G-d constantly guard over us. Amen.

Three days before Pharaoh's Saar Hamashkim (director of wines) is released from prison, Yosef asks him to mention his name to Pharaoh in the hope that he might also be pardoned. We are told (*Bereshit Rabbah* 89:3) that as a result of this request Hashem added a further two years to Yosef's sentence. The explanation given is that since he turned to a fellow man for help, he displayed a lack of *bitachon* (trust in Hashem).

This is difficult to understand on two counts. Firstly, how could Yosef *Hatzaddik* possibly be guilty of lacking *bitachon*? Secondly, how could an apparently minor indiscretion bring on such a harsh punishment?

Rabbeinu Bachya writes that, without a doubt, Yosef believed whole-heartedly that he would receive Divine assistance and be released from prison in due course. The problem was that Yosef reckoned that a recommendation from his co-prisoner was the most likely vehicle for his own release and that he should therefore encourage the Saar Hamashkim to mention his name to Pharaoh. The mistake Yosef made here was that he appeared to believe that there were a limited

number of means through which Hashem could bring about his release. Through his behaviour, Yosef implied that his release *had* to come about through a recommendation from his co-prisoner. In truth, however, Yosef should have appreciated that there were a multiplicity of avenues through which Hashem could have brought about his release. In his unfathomable wisdom, Hashem can engineer a desired result through any number of means.

**"In his unfathomable wisdom Hashem can engineer a desired result through any number of means"**

That explains what Yosef's mistake was. But why so harsh a punishment?

This week's Sedra sets out to describe the "*toldot*" (generations) of Yaakov and then surprisingly mentions Yosef's name only. The Ibn Ezra explains that

in this case the word "*toldot*" in fact means "happenings". Based on this explanation, the focus of the Sedra is the sequence of the events which met Yaakov and his sons at this point in history.

More specifically, the central theme of the Sedra is that of the incredible *hashgacha* (Divine orchestration of affairs) which led to Klal Yisroel's enslavement in Egypt. This *hashgacha* is apparent clear in two distinct phases.

Firstly, the background for Yosef's enforced journey to Egypt is laid out. Yosef isolates some of his brothers by bringing negative reports of their behaviour to their father. The other brothers became resentful towards Yosef when their father buys him the "*Katonet Pasim*". Yosef's telling and re-telling of his dreams serves to further fuel the tension. We then see the wheels of *hashgacha* grind with greater urgency as Yosef is sent by his father

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## Parasha Insights

**Rabbi Benjamin Stone**



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to report on the welfare of his brothers. A mysterious man (the angel Gavriel in fact) "finds" Yosef and points him in the direction of his brothers. Shortly afterwards Yosef is sold to passing tribesman, who "just happened" to be on their way to Egypt and is eventually sold to none other than a high ranking official with strong connections to royalty. He then becomes a royal prisoner and is placed together with two servants, one of whom would act as the agent in bringing Yosef and Pharaoh together. Yosef's accession would set the scene for Klal Yisroel's settlement in Egypt. A remarkable chain of events.

Perhaps the clearest indication of the Yad Hashem in this case is the striking duality of Yosef's character. He protects the sons of the maidservants

from taunts from their half-brothers but then proceeds to give them a poor report to his father. He is prone to vanity due to his good looks and yet he baulks at the prospect of a forbidden relationship. He begins his adulthood as a naïve braggart but then develops into a formidable *tzaddik*, clinging to a *Torah* life in the most isolated of places - displaying a cool, unshakable trust in Hashem. Surely Yosef would notice that his colourful set of character traits were clearly implanted in him to facilitate the miraculous set of events which came into play.

Yosef certainly does recognize the presence of Hashem's hand in his life. In the first instance he attributes his dream - interpreting skills directly to Hashem (41;16). Furthermore, he

bears no grudge to his brothers for their callous behaviour towards him (45;5), declaring the whole affair to have been pre-ordained in order that he would be able to sustain his father's household during the famine.

In view of the above, it is clear that the lesson we are supposed to learn from this episode is that Hashem has a continuing interest in our lives and in the destiny of Klal Yisroel and an interest that will never fade. Yosef was also expected to have learned this lesson but to a much greater degree. Having played a starring role in these events, Yosef should have achieved an unparalleled *bitachon*. For this reason, when he showed that his *bitachon* had wavered - however slightly - Yosef was deserving of significant punishment.

Rabbi Yaakov Yisrael Kanievsky, the Steipler, didn't even notice losing sleep because he loved to learn Torah so much. When the Steipler was a young man, he was forced to become a soldier in the Russian army. The soldiers tried to make the Steipler work on Shabbat, but he never would. One time, they started to hit him to make him work on Shabbat, but he never did. He never wanted to take a chance of doing an Aveira.

The soldiers took turns guarding the camp, and there was a special, thick coat that the guard would wear be-

cause of the freezing weather in Russia.

One Shabbat, it was the Steipler's turn to stand guard for the camp. The one who guarded before him was a gentile who, upon finishing his watch, hung the coat on the tree by the guard post.

When the Steipler arrived he saw the coat on the tree. He did not want to violate the Rabbinic prohibition of taking something off a tree on Shabbat, but the cold was so bitter. He

## Our Chachamim



thought to himself, "for the time being, it's not life threatening, so I'll wait a few minutes until I have to take the coat off the tree."

After a few minutes, again he thought "it's not yet life threatening, so I'll wait another few minutes." And so it went the entire long winter night, a few minutes and a few minutes... until his watch was over.

## Halachot Of Shemita

### Rabbi Dov Levy



There are 3 main categories of produce, which have distinct definitions:

#### Definition of Shemita produce

**Now that it's the Shemita year, is all produce holy if it grew in Israel?**

Only produce which grew during the Shemita year in Israel is holy and has to be treated in the manner previously explained.

**What's the definition of something grown in the Shemita year?**

Fruit from trees: 'Chanata' is the stage of growth which defines the fruit as a product of the Shemita year, meaning if it reaches this stage during the Shemita year, it is holy. If it has already developed past the stage of 'Chanata' during the 6<sup>th</sup> year, it is not Shemita produce. Similarly, if it starts growing during Shemita but only reaches this stage in the 8<sup>th</sup> year, it is not Shemita produce. The exact definition of 'Chanata' is disputed, being either

when the blossoms fall off (the very beginning of fruit formation) or a third of the fruit's growth.

Vegetables: The time the vegetable is picked defines if it is Shemita produce.

Olives, grapes, crops and Kitniyot (pulses): A third of the growth is the defining point for Shemita. If it grows a third in the 6<sup>th</sup> year, it is not holy, and so too if it only reaches a third in the 8<sup>th</sup> year, it is not holy.

**So a lot of fruit coming from Israel at the moment won't be from Shemita?**

Correct. We will discuss that next week.

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- "These are the offspring of Yaakov: Yosef...."  
Give three reasons why Yosef is considered Yaakov's main offspring.  
**37:2 - (a) Yosef was the son of Rachel, Yaakov's primary wife. (b) Yosef looked like Yaakov. (c) All that befell Yaakov befell Yosef.**
- What was praiseworthy about the fact that Yosef's brothers did not speak to him in a friendly manner?  
**37:4 - They did not act hypocritically.**
- How do we see from Yosef's dream about the sun, moon and stars that all dreams contain some untrue element?  
**37:10 - The moon represented Rachel. Since she had already died, it was impossible for that element of the dream to come true.**
- Who brought Yosef down to Egypt?  
**37:28 - A caravan of Midianites.**



- Where was Reuven when Yosef was sold?  
**37:29 - He was attending to Yaakov.**
- In addition to the brothers, who else knew that Yosef was alive?  
**37:33 - Yitzchak.**
- Why didn't G-d reveal prophetically to Yaakov that Yosef was alive?  
**37:33 - Because the brothers had issued a ban against revealing the truth to Yaakov, and G-d, so to speak, abided by their ban.**
- For how long did Yaakov mourn the loss of Yosef?  
**37:34 - Twenty-two years.**
- Verse 37:35 states "his father wept." To whom does this refer?  
**37:35 - Yitzchak, who wept because of Yaakov's suffering.**
- Who was Tamar's father?  
**38:24 - Shem.**

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