

Beth Tephila Messianic Jewish Congregation
(Under same management for over 5778 years)

SHABBAT SERVICE

December 9th – 10:30 AM Lolo Community "Synagogue"
Oneg Shabbat 12:30 PM & In-Depth Torah Study



Parsha VaYeshev

"And he settled...." -- Genesis 37-40

וַיֵּשֶׁב יַעֲקֹב בְּאֶרֶץ מְגֻרֵי אָבִיו בְּאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן:

Vayeshev Ya'akov b'erets m'gurei aviv b'erets C'na'an.

"And Jacob settled in the land where his father had sojourned, in the land of Canaan."



B'rit Chadashah

...Behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for that which has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.

...And Joseph arose from his sleep, and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took her as his wife...

From Bethel to Bethel

Jacob left the land of the Jewish people at the direction of his mother, Rebekah, and with the blessing of his father, Isaac. He was ostensibly sent to find a wife from the family of Rebekah's brother's family in Haran. He was also fleeing the wrath of his brother, Esau. God met him at Bethel ("house of God"), telling Jacob that He would be with him and protect him and return him safely to his father's home (28:11-22). Jacob worked for his uncle, Laban, for twenty years, marrying two wives and producing at least 11 sons and a daughter. Then God directed Jacob to leave and return home. On the way home, Jacob had a peaceful reunion with Esau, who then lived in Edom, the land of his inheritance. Jacob entered the land promised by God to his father, Isaac, and grandfather, Abraham, and first lived in Succoth ("booths"), where he made booths for his livestock. Then he bought land in Shechem and lived there until the incident involving his daughter, Dinah. God directed Jacob to"Arise, go up to Bethel and live there; and make an altar there to God, who appeared to you when you fled from your brother Esau" (35:1).

Chapter 36 detailed the "toldot," the family records of the descendants of Esau, "the father of the Edomites, according to their habitations in the land of their possession" (Edom) [36:43]. **Chapter 37** begins the "toldot" of Jacob following Jacob's twelve sons, as they pasture the family sheep.

From my study this week, I found an Orthodox Rabbi's classroom course about God's relationship with man. He states that Judaism teaches that God is good and that He is also all powerful. And from these two axioms arises the ancient cry - why do bad things happen to good people? Why does God allow evil in the world? This year long course will grapple with these issues as well as the related questions that surround them: What role does God actually play in our world? How much does he get involved? Do our actions or beliefs affect God's level of involvement? What is the relationship between God's Providence and human free will?

Generational Legacy: A Dysfunctional Family

Previously we observed that Isaac loved Esau, while Rebekah loved Jacob (25:28). Even though Isaac knew that "the older (brother) would serve the younger (brother)" (25:23), Isaac was prepared to give his blessing to Esau, rather than to Jacob, resulting in the deception of Isaac and the fleeing of Jacob to Haran. Working for his uncle, Laban, Jacob married Rachel and Leah, but Jacob... "loved Rachel more than Leah" (29:30). Rachel and Leah vied against one another for the love of Jacob by producing sons. Sometimes, when Jacob should have taken a stand as leader of the family, he remained passive, causing others to fill his leadership role. When he was told that Dinah had been violated, he kept silent, resulting in Simeon and Levi taking swords and killing the men of Shechem. When Reuben violated Bilhah, Jacob took no action. When Esau was approaching with 400 men, and Jacob was afraid they might all be killed, Jacob divided his people and flocks into two groups, so that one group might survive. He also separated his family, putting ..."the maids and their children in front and Leah and her children next, and Rachel and Joseph last" (33:2). By the time the family settled in the 'promised land' and began pasturing their sheep, the ten sons of Leah, Bilhah, and Zilpah knew that Jacob favored the sons of Rachel over them. Making family living even more dysfunctional, Jacob used Rachel's first-born son, Joseph, as a "tattletale," whom Jacob sent to report on the less favored sons. Although Joseph was being truthful, his status as most favored son did not endear his brothers to him. Jacob had made a special coat for him to emphasize his status. It was a a

long coat with full sleeves; the type of coat use by royalty and administrators, who did no physical work. The brothers surely understood that Joseph's presence among them was as a supervisor and snitch. Evidently Joseph did not sense their growing animosity because he freely expressed to the family two dreams that enhanced his status and denigrated theirs.

Ronal Gitelman presented a UMJC Torah teaching about the possibility of destructive favoritism among the disciples of Yeshua: In the Brit Chadasha, we are told about the mother of two disciples who approached Yeshua and asked him to let her children sit on his left and his right in God's kingdom. While the request appeared simple, it was actually complicated. In Judaism, the left and right hand of God depict judgment and mercy. So, in a Jewish context, she was asking him to let her children be the ones who handed out judgment and mercy. Imagine the power that those two disciples would have had, if they had been given that position. It would have shown that Yeshua loved these disciples more than the others. Enmity and hatred could have developed and perhaps even a plot similar to that of Joseph's brothers. However, we don't see Yeshua favoring any disciple over the other.

Joseph's Dreams



Joseph told the family he dreamed that while the brothers were gathering sheaves in the field, the sheaves of his brothers bowed down to his sheaf. He told them that he had another dream ..."and behold the sun and the moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me" (37:9). Even Jacob understood that Joseph was elevating himself above everyone else in the family. Yet knowing the jealousy of his ten sons against Joseph, **Jacob remained passive**, resulting in the plot of the brothers against Joseph.

Joseph Sold Into Egypt

The ten brothers found their chance for revenge against Joseph when Jacob sent Joseph, as their administrator, to check up on them. They were supposed to be pasturing their flock in Shechem about 50 miles away from Jacob in Hebron. Joseph found them another 15 miles further in Dothan, so they were more than three day's journey from their father. When they saw Joseph approaching, they plotted to kill him and throw him into one of the many cisterns in the area. Reuben, the eldest brother, intervened against killing Joseph, deciding for the moment just to throw Joseph into the cistern. Reuben perhaps thought he might get back into favor with his father as first-born, if he later rescued Joseph and returned him to Jacob. However, Reuben left the area.

While Joseph was languishing in the cistern, the other brothers sat down to eat. They would later recall ..."we saw the distress of his soul when he pleaded with us, yet we would not listen..." (42:21).



As a caravan of Ishmaelites passed by on their way to Egypt, Judah, taking the leadership role from the absent Reuben, decided that the brothers could profit from selling their brother to the Ishmaelites (a general designation that included other desert tribes like the Midianites). They sold Joseph as a slave for 20 shekels of silver. When Reuben later returned he became distraught because he knew Jacob would blame him (as first born) for allowing the brothers to sell Joseph. Instead, the brothers conceived a false story to deceive their father. (Where had they learned deception?) They killed a goat and put its blood on the long coat of Joseph, so they could tell their father that Joseph was killed before they found his coat. **God's irony** should not be lost! It was with a goat skin that Jacob deceived his father, Isaac. It was with the blood of a goat that Jacob was deceived by his sons. The dish prepared by Rebekah for Jacob to serve his father to complete the deception was made from goat-meat. Rebekah dressed Joseph in goat skins and in Esau's special garment. The brothers took Joseph's special garment - the **K'tonet Pasim** - and smeared it with goat's blood. This is a stark example of **"Mida k'neged mida"** - **"measure for measure"**or what I call **"God's irony."** God had a plan which proceeded with the unknowing help of the brothers and other individuals. And yet each person involved acted of his own free will, and was therefore accountable for his own actions.



"We found this; please examine it to see whether it is your son's coat or not."

Jacob tore his clothes in grief and put on sackcloth to mourn for his beloved and favored son, Joseph, with his whole family of sons and daughters.

Judah & Tamar

Joseph has been sold into slavery in Egypt by his own brothers. Jacob's sons have deceived him, and Jacob is totally distraught. His sons are completely out of control, **while Jacob has been passive in his dealings with them**. Reuben, the first born son, was absent, so Judah took charge, deciding for all the brothers to sell Joseph. So, one might ask, why is the story of Judah and Tamar injected into the story right now? What is God trying to tell us at this point about the character of Jacob's sons by injecting Judah's relationship with Tamar?



"Tamar...removed her widow's garments and covered herself with a veil, and wrapped herself, and sat in the gateway of Enaim..."

"When Judah saw her, he thought she was a harlot, for she had covered her face. So he turned aside to her by the road, and said, 'Here now, let me come in to you...' (38:13-16).

God Will Preserve His People (no intermarriage)

Judah was visiting a nearby (15 miles) Canaanite town and married Shua (he saw her...took her and went in to her), a Canaanite, in violation of God's prime directive to avoid intermarriage with Canaanites. They produced three children, Er, Onan, and Shelah. Tamar was Judah's pick to become the wife of his eldest son, Er and was betrothed to him. However, **because of his sons' wickedness, the Lord first killed Er and then Onan.** When his oldest son Er died, one would have expected Judah to have gained some insight into his father's pain after losing his son, Joseph. **Judah now knew** intimately, first-hand, **what Jacob felt, when Judah deceived him by telling him that Joseph was dead. As Judah mourned the death of his sons, he surely must have remembered how he caused Jacob to mourn the supposed death of Joseph.** When Judah's second son Onan died, we would have expected Judah to have been tormented with guilt; it would have been a natural response for him to have seen the connection between his own earlier actions and the tragic deaths of his sons. We would have expected Judah to have approached his father at last, to admit his guilt, and to tell him, "Joseph lives!" But Judah seemed cold and indifferent. Indeed, he continued the deceit.

Under the "law of the levirate," their brother was obligated to marry Tamar. Judah claimed that Shelah was not yet of marriageable age because he was afraid that if Tamar was to marry Shelah, he also might die. One could very well speculate that he was correct. God could not allow intermarriage with Canaanites to sully the line through which Messiah would come. Tamar decided to take matters into her own hands. Evidently it was common knowledge that Judah was promiscuous after the death of his wife. Tamar decided she would take advantage for herself by disguising herself as a prostitute, sitting beside the road at the gateway to Enaim, where she knew Judah would pass by. Judah approached Tamar, thinking her to be a prostitute, and negotiated for her services. He gave her a pledge - his signet ring and staff - in lieu of a goat to be brought later. She became pregnant by Judah. Three months later it became obvious that Tamar, betrothed to Shelah, was pregnant. Judah required that Tamar be executed by fire, but Tamar produced the pledge of Judah, showing that he was the father. Judah then relented, saying "She is more righteous than I..." Of course, neither were righteous... both were deceitful. However, his admission of guilt and taking responsibility showed the character of Judah. Russ Resnik (former UMJC Exec) says, "Judah demonstrates the ability to turn away from man-made devices and calculations and turn back to God's way of doing things. His turning in this story foreshadows an even greater turning-point later on, when he will offer to do whatever it takes to support his father's love of Benjamin, Joseph's younger brother. Judah's repentance is a sign of hope for all who have defied God, and in the end he shows signs of being chosen himself. Stay tuned!" Perez, named in the line of Messiah (Matthew 1:3) and Zerah were born to Tamar (one of only four women mentioned in the ancestry of Yeshua) and Judah. God allowed the immoral nature of Judah, the de facto leader of Jacob's sons, to accomplish His will by producing a son from within the Jewish people, who would become an ancestor of Messiah.

The story of Judah and Tamar is inserted into the narrative at this point to illustrate **the deleterious effect that living among the Canaanites was having among God's people.** Had Jacob remained living among the Canaanites, perhaps all his children would have assimilated. Then God's promise to give the "promised land" to Abraham and his descendants and that through his descendants "all the families of the earth would be blessed"

could not have been fulfilled, because there would not have been a Jewish people. Just as the selling of Joseph into Egypt prepared the way for Jacob's family to exit Canaan and preserve themselves in Egypt, so also the story of Judah and Tamar illustrated why **God's people could no longer remain in Canaan. One way or another, God's people will be preserved! God's Will will not be thwarted!!**

Meanwhile Back In Egypt



Previously we have seen God's testing of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Now we will observe the testing of God's righteous servant, Joseph. While Joseph's testing entailed suffering, God still superintended circumstances to accomplish His purposes, to preserve Joseph, and to prepare a place of protection for the house of Israel.

"The Lord was with Joseph, so he became a successful man" (39:2). As time went by, Potiphar....

"saw that the Lord was with him and how the Lord caused all that he did to prosper in his hand" (39:3). "...the Lord's blessing was upon all that he owned, in the house and in the field. So he left everything he owned in Joseph's charge..." (39:5). Just as Laban was blessed by Jacob working for him, Potiphar figured that he could participate in God's blessings by extension by making Joseph overseer of his house. This is the out-working of the Abrahamic Covenant ("bless them that bless thee") that is still in effect today! History records that those nations which blessed the Jewish people were, themselves, blessed. History also records the loss of blessing for nations that "turned their backs" on God's people.

The Testing of Joseph

Already under the stress of betrayal by his brothers, having been exiled to a foreign land with no one to rescue him, now Joseph was sexually desired by the wife of Potiphar. He refused her with the explanation, "How then could I do this great evil, and sin against God" (39:9)? She persisted,

however, and one day caught hold of his garment. **Joseph fled (the Hebrew translates "he got him out,") leaving his garment in her hand.**



Rejected by Joseph, Potiphar's wife called the servants to tell them that Joseph had attacked her. When she screamed, Joseph ran away, leaving his garment behind as evidence. When her husband returned, she repeated her lie to him about "the Hebrew slave whom you brought to us..." (39:17). This was a blatantly anti-Semitic statement made about a Jew with the intent to cause him harm. Potiphar was angry and had Joseph taken to the king's jail. But even in jail, God made Joseph successful, so that the chief jailer put him in charge of all the prisoners.

Joseph could have given in to Potiphar's wife in order to keep his job or simply because of the temptation. However, Joseph took a stand for God that cost him what little freedom he had. Potiphar may have figured out that his wife was lying, but for the sake of appearances still put Joseph in jail. Evidence for this view was that Potiphar could have had Joseph killed for the "crime" but banished him to jail instead. Still, the consequence for Potiphar would be that he would no longer receive God's blessings because of Joseph.

From this Chapter, **we learn to make no alliances with sin but to flee from it. We learn to not yield to temptation; never take a stand alone in the presence of sexual temptation -- flee immediately! Resist Satan, but flee fornication! Even though we cannot control all situations, we should endeavor to control ourselves!**

When we put God first in our lives, even under the most adverse circumstances, God will remain with us through the circumstances, help us to endure the circumstances, and make for us a way of escape!!!

The Butler, the Baker, ...the Candle-stick Maker?



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Chapter 40 brings into view two new characters, whom God used to make a way of escape for Joseph. As we end this Torah portion and begin "**Miketz**" next week, we will see how God used the cupbearer and the baker to slowly but surely allow Joseph to leave the royal jail, rise to prominence, and be ready to receive and preserve the Jewish people. Please notice that although God was fully capable of having Joseph rise to power without having been falsely accused of adultery and put into prison, **God chose to accomplish His will of preserving His people by allowing Joseph to undergo suffering in prison. Joseph had to endure the circumstances God allowed, continue trusting God, and be patient for God to supply the way out. In this process the character and faith of Joseph was refined**, and God was sufficient to preserve him, while he endured this testing. When we find ourselves in circumstances that are beyond our control, we can remember how Joseph trusted God in his suffering, and how God was always there for him!

The cupbearer (butler) and the baker had offended the Pharaoh, who put them into the royal prison to await his pleasure (or displeasure). Nothing is told to us about their offense. Perhaps the cupbearer, who was really a taster of the Pharaoh's food (One of the most popular ways to kill a king was by food poisoning.) spilled the wine. Perhaps the baker burned the bagels. Whatever the offense, God was in control, placing them into the prison that Joseph was managing for the chief jailer. The captain of the bodyguard (Potiphar) - responsible to Pharaoh - put Joseph in charge of them, knowing that whatever Joseph touched, God made successful. God then gave each of them a dream, and they sought from Joseph an interpretation of their dreams. Joseph correctly interpreted the dream of the cupbearer that within three days, he would be restored to court as the Pharaoh's cupbearer. Joseph asked the cupbearer, "only keep me in mind when it goes well with you, and please do me a kindness by mentioning me to Pharaoh, and get me out of this house (prison)" (40:14). Joseph also correctly interpreted the dream of the baker that within three days Pharaoh would execute him by hanging. Our Torah portion closes with..."Yet the chief cupbearer did not remember Joseph, but forgot him".... for two more years (40:23). Just when Joseph thought God would deliver him....nothing....for two more years! The testing of Joseph continued for another two years, while Joseph had to keep his faith in God and patiently await God's timing for his release from prison. Patient endurance is the theme of the book of Hebrews, where Jews who followed Yeshua were persecuted by both the Romans (because they were Jews) and also by their own people (because they said that they were no longer Jews). We, too, must have patient endurance, even when we are enduring trying circumstances, and we cannot understand why God is allowing

them. We, too, must maintain our faith in God and await His deliverance, ..."continually offering up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name" (Hebrews 13:15), knowing that "I (God) will never desert you, nor will I (God) ever forsake you (Deuteronomy 31:6; Hebrews 13:5,6)', so that we confidently say, 'The Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid. What shall man do to me?'"

Joseph's life serves us as an example of living one's faith in trying circumstances. God did not make things easy for Joseph. God did not speak to him (as He had spoken to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob), telling Joseph His future plans. So, while God may not allow us foreknowledge of His immediate plans for our lives, God has provided us Messiah to remove the oppression of sin from our lives. He has provided us with the Tanakh and B'rit Hadashah to give us His rules for living and show us His ultimate plans for us. And He has provided the Ruach Hakodesh to reveal to us the truths of Scripture and allow us to experience His presence. Let us grasp hold of the faith God has given us and act on it - in whatever our circumstances - praising God for the abundant life He gives us!

SHABBAT SHALOM



Chanukah is coming, Tuesday Evening December 12th (light first candle)

Chanukah Party, Shabbat, December 16th



Moving our Israel Embassy to Jerusalem = Chanukah MIRACLE

Dry Bones



Dry Bones

