

## “Oh Those Teen Years”

### Commentary on Parashat Vayeshev (Gen. 37:1-40:23) {And he (Jacob) dwelt}

*Ya'akov continued living in the land where his father had lived as a foreigner, the land of Kena'an. (Gen 37:1)*

#### **Ya'akov settles Down—The Children of Yisrael Cannot**

In this week's *Parashat* we see is that our father *Ya'akov* settles down, not in the riches and greatness of the land of *Esav* (cf. *Bereshit* 36:7), but rather in *יהודה*'s promised land, no matter whether there are riches there or not. *Ya'akov* is 108 years old, his father *Yitzchak* is 168 and *Yosef* is 17. Time to settle down and have a peaceful life, don't you think? But this is just the beginning! The children of *Yisrael*, meaning “the offspring of the one who contends with *Elohim*” however, cannot settle down. Oh those teen years!

#### **Remember: What goes around, comes around**

Over the course of many years we have noticed the undeniable fact that life is cyclic (or a sine wave, if you wish). We have often shared on the law of sowing and reaping—so we better be careful what we sow. Often, our words, ill-spoken, come back to haunt us, and so may *יהודה* ‘*be true and everyone else a liar.*’ I have written previously:

Scripture tells us about the cyclic nature of life. *Sh'lomo* the wisest human to ever live tells us: “<sup>14</sup>*I know that, whatsoever G-d doeth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it: and G-d doeth it, that men should fear before him.*” <sup>15</sup>*That which hath been is now; and that which is to be hath already been; and G-d requireth that which is past.*” (Eccl 3:14-16) Can we not break the cycle of iniquity that plagues our lives? *Yeshua* said: “*Because you have such little trust! Yes! I tell you that if you have trust as tiny as a mustard seed, you will be able to say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there!’ and it will move; indeed, nothing will be impossible for you!*” (cf. Jer. 32:17) and again He repeated: “*Humanly, this is impossible; but with G-d everything is possible.*” (see Matt. 19:26). *Miryam* was told in Luke 1:37: “*For with G-d, nothing is impossible.*” And once more in Luke 18:27: “*What is impossible humanly is possible with G-d.*” Do you get the picture? We can! You can! I can! Say it with me: **I have overcome Satan by the Blood of the Lamb, by the words of my testimony about that Blood and because I love not my life unto the death** (cf. Rev. 12:11). **I can do all things through *Yeshua* who strengthens me!** (cf. Phil. 4:13)

It is time to break the cycle of consequences that plague our walk with the L-rd. There is great reward awaiting us if we sow precious seeds of righteousness. This is why Scripture saith: “<sup>5</sup>*Those who sow in tears will reap with cries of joy.*” <sup>6</sup>*He who goes out weeping as he carries his sack of seed will come home with cries of joy as he carries his sheaves of grain.*” (Ps 126:5-6) We can, with His Spirit by our side and with His strength change the course of history, I challenge us to rise and become the generation of Rev. 12:10-11. We are that Excellent generation, by trusting (by faith), will you join me and the thousands of our people at Mt. Sinai and reaffirm to Him “*Naseh V'Nishma.*” **We will do and we will obey...**

In this *Parashat* we'll once again see this law of sowing and reaping play out. Words come back to haunt our people. Will you see His hand in the process? I trust you will and take heed—as I do. In the first part of the *Parashat* we see *Yosef*, a seventeen-year-old teen, brash and self assured.

*“Here is the history of Ya’akov. When Yosef was seventeen years old he used to pasture the flock with his brothers, even though he was still a boy. Once when he was with the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah, his father’s wives, he brought a bad report about them to their father.” (Gen. 37:2)*

When the *Torah* uses the word “*still a boy*” it is referring to *Yosef*’s immaturity, because we already know that he is young (17 years old), therefore the extra word describes something about his character. How easy it is for a 17-year-old to forget that he is after all, only 17—the dawning of adulthood! Older teens know everything, don’t they? It is both a wonderful and frightening age—no longer a kid, and just before legally becoming a voter, a citizen, a soldier, an adult! “You are doing this and that wrong, dad (mom), I now know what I am talking about.” “Listen sis (bro), let me explain to you so and so...” I can see *Yosef* as a real teen, aggravating every adult in sight, a little of a Mr. know-it-all. Scripture relates how much this progresses, aided by the iniquity (favoritism) of his father *Ya’akov* and perhaps even *Yosef*’s own doing (at least we can speculate).

*“<sup>4</sup>When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they began to hate him and reached the point where they couldn’t even talk with him in a civil manner. <sup>5</sup>Yosef had a dream which he told his brothers, and that made them hate him all the more.” (Gen 37:4-5)*

I am not defending the brothers here. It is clear they also have guilt, for no one is to “*hate his brother*” according to *Torah*. But still, I want you to see both sides, that in conflict it takes ‘*two to tango*.’ And I know that you know the rest of the story, so I will not repeat it here. Instead I want to focus on *Yehudah*, and the obvious implications to us and to the Revealing of Messiah. (By the way, the brothers were tending sheep in *Shechem*! What! Back to the place where they murdered an entire city! The memories of *Dinah* has to be fresh in their minds. Do you recall in the *TNK* the phrase ‘*a dog returns to his vomit*.’ Oh boy, wasn’t *Shechem* a place of trouble already! No you say, they went to *Dothan*! From the promised land to *Shechem* to *Dothan*, that is from bad to worse). *Yehudah* comes up with the alternate plan (Scripture tells us that *Reuben* intended to rescue *Yosef*) to spare *Yosef*’s life. Let us hear what he said:

*“<sup>26</sup>Y’hudah said to his brothers, “What advantage is it to us if we kill our brother and cover up his blood? <sup>27</sup>Come, let’s sell him to the Yishma’elim, instead of putting him to death with our own hands. After all, he is our brother, our own flesh.” His brothers paid attention to him.” (Gen 37:26-27)*

Hey, if one is going to do evil, why not make a profit? Of course, maybe *Yehudah* was truly trying to spare his own brother from death, or maybe he understood that “...*The voice of your brother’s blood is crying out to me from the ground!*” (see Gen. 4:10) Whatever the reason, it is particularly *Yehudah*’s plan that prevails. The text does not state that the brothers actually sold *Yosef*, but rather, that while they were eating the Ishmaelites (or was it the Midianites or the Medianites?) take him and trade him like one trades goods. So much for the dreams of a 17-year old! (Although I am so inclined to follow *Yosef*’s path and life and draw from it such rich insights, I will try and stay focused on *Yehudah*, but it is hard!) And so the brothers, including *Yehudah*, come to their father, things now out of control, and say unto their father *Haker-Na*—see for yourself, examine for yourself, know now, discern please, check this out dad! “*All of us agree dad, look at the evidence!*”