



Snapshot Torah

GUIDE TO THE WEEKLY PARSHA

SECOND EDITION / ISSUE 9

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VAYESHEV

21th Kislev 5775

Kohen - First Aliya:

Chapter 37, verses 1 - 11

- ✚ Yaacov and his family finally settled down and dwelt in the land of Canaan.
- ✚ Yisrael (Yaacov's new name) loved his son Yosef more than his other sons and presented him a coat of many different colours. When Yosef's brethren witnessed this, they started to despise him and would not speak amicably with him.
- ✚ Yosef has a dream and shares it with his brothers; which enhanced their anger towards him even more. He dreamt that eleven sheaves of wheat bowed down to Yosef's sheaf.
- ✚ Yosef dreamt a second dream. This time the sun, moon and eleven stars bowed down towards Yosef's star. Even though Yisrael scolds Yosef about these apparitions, deep down he knew there was truth in them.

Levi - Second Aliya:

Chapter 37, verses 12 - 22

- ✚ Yaacov sends Yosef out to check on the well-being of his brothers who are in the fields of Shechem shepherding their flocks and report back to him.
- ✚ After arriving at Shechem, Yosef manages to track his brothers down in Dothan. As he approaches, his brothers see him from afar and plot to kill him.
- ✚ Reuben was against this idea and persuaded the others to just cast Yosef into a pit instead in order that he could rescue him later and bring him back home.

Sh'lishi - Third Aliya:

Chapter 37, verses 23 - 36

- ✚ Yosef arrives and is set upon by his brothers who remove his coat and fling him into a pit.
- ✚ As the Brothers were sitting down to eat, in the distance they see a caravan of Ishmaelite's and decide to sell Yosef to them instead of killing him.
- ✚ Once sold, the brothers killed a goat and dipped Yosef's coat in its blood, to make it seem that Yosef was mauled to death by a wild animal and reported the news back to their father. Yaacov became grief stricken and could not be consoled or comforted over his loss.
- ✚ Yosef was eventually taken down to Mitzraim (Egypt) where he was sold as a slave to Potiphar.

R'VI'I - Fourth Aliya:

Chapter 38, verses 1 - 30

- ✚ Yehuda marries and has three sons. The eldest son weds a girl called Tamar but before she conceives the son dies. Tamar marries the second son but he too is killed before she became pregnant.
- ✚ Comprehending that Yehuda would not allow her to marry the youngest son, Tamar disguises herself as a Prostitute and manages to swindle Yehuda to part with three of his possessions.
- ✚ On hearing the news that Tamar is now pregnant, Yehuda condemns her to death. Yet before the sentence is carried out Tamar hands back the possessions. Realising the deception played on him Yehuda releases Tamar and she went on to give birth to twins.

Chamishi - Fifth Aliya:

Chapter 39, verses 1 - 6

- ✚ Noticing how successful Yosef is in his work, Potiphar quickly promotes Yosef to become the manager of his estate.

Shishi - Sixth Aliya:

Chapter 39, verses 7 - 23

- ✚ Potiphar's wife tries to seduce Yosef, but when Yosef refused her advances, she claimed Yosef attempted to attack her; leaving Potiphar no option but throw him into jail.

Sh'vi'i - Seventh Aliya:

Chapter 40, verses 1 - 23

- ✚ Whilst in jail, Pharaoh's Butler and Baker who also happened to be imprisoned both dreamt troubling dreams. The Baker's luck was not good as Yosef predicted correctly the time of the baker's execution. However Yosef interpreted the Butler's dream favourably that in three days he would be released back into Pharaoh's service.
- ✚ Yosef requested the Butler to mention him to Pharaoh that he should not be in prison because he was innocent of his crimes. Yet upon the Butler's release, He forgot.

Haftorah – AMOS Chapter 2, verse 6 to Chapter 3 verse 8

OVERVIEW:

- ✚ The first half of this week's Haftorah, the prophet Amos rebukes Israel for a lengthy list of sins and warns that harsh punishment is on its way. Amos outlines the ways that the wealthy in Israel are oppressing the poor and how greed led to profaning Hashem's name,
- ✚ Amos then recalls all the good God has done for the Israelites, namely taking them out of the land of Egypt and destroying the Amorites, so that they could settle in their own land. but Israel refused to listen and because of their unjust behaviour and stubborn refusal to be educated will be punished severely,
- ✚ The second half of the Haftorah features a string of seven rhetorical questions that use different metaphors to convey one message: It can be possible to look at events and understand what caused them. The implication being is that when Hashem punishes Israel, they will be able to see that it was their own actions that brought about his wrath.

LINK TO SEDRA READING:

- ✚ Yosef's brothers in this week's sedra, sell him into slavery.
- ✚ In the Haftorah, Amos is making a point about injustice that was going on in his own time. (Just as the brothers sold Yosef to the Midianites for 20 pieces of silver; you are selling your righteous for money)
- ✚ The prophet's message was a simple one. 'Being devoted to Hashem is not enough. You have to be dutiful to your fellow man too.'

WEEKLY DISCUSSION:

After learning of Yosef's apparent death, Yaacov went into a state of mourning and try as they might none of the remaining family could comfort him; as the Torah quotes Vayema'ain l'hitnachem (he refused to be comforted). Commenting on this phrase Rashi teaches a person can never be truly comforted with respect to someone they think is deceased when really they are not. If Rashi is correct, how come Yaacov didn't come to the realisation himself that Yosef was still alive and well? The very fact he was not comforted should have been a clear message to Yaacov that he was mourning unnecessary.

There are various answers to this but the one I personally agree with the most is the possibility that Yaacov would have been even more distressed knowing Yosef was still alive and may have found himself in situations which would have test Yosef's willpower to the limits that could then lead him into situations which would spiral out of control. I think Yaacov still refused to be comforted even though he knew deep down his son was still alive because of the fact that maybe Yosef would have succumbed to his temptation to sin and suffer a spiritual downward decline.

Yaacov's fears were totally justified as the torah later tells us regarding the episode of Yosef and Potiphar's wife where she tries to seduce Yosef to lay with her. There is two things I find interesting here. The first thing is the only thing which prevented Yosef from giving in to this temptation was seeing a vision of his father explaining the severe spiritual consequences if he failed to resist. And the second thing the same torah uses the same Hebrew wording as before "Vayema'ain (he refused). In short the "Vayema'ain" (refusal) of Yosef was the outcome of the "Vayema'ain" of Yaacov. Meaning: Yaacov's refusal to be comforted when he could have been complacent just with the knowledge of Yosef's survival, enabled him to be available to Yosef as a form of inspiration in order for Yosef to succumb to his temptation of sin.

I believe the message we can learn this week is this, we all have Myriads of opportunities to make a strong impression of the correct way to do things, living our lives as role models, incorporating our strong torah values in order for us to grow spiritually. May Hashem bless us all in not being too complacent when imparting our knowledge and torah values to others. In this way we can all make a difference, assisting them into making the right choices throughout their lives too

