

*Shiur L'Yom Sheni*¹

[Monday's Study]

READINGS: ***Torah Vayashev:*** **Genesis 37:1-11**
 Haftarah: **Amos 2:6-8**
 B'rit Chadasha: **Acts 6:1-6**

What is this dream that you have dreamed?

[Genesis 37:10]

Today's Meditation is Psalm 35:1-3;

This Week's Amidah Prayer Focus is Petition # 6, B'racha [Blessing]

Vayeshev Ya'akov b'ereetz megurei aviv – *Then Ya'akov sat/sprawled/settled in the land where his father had sojourned* **Genesis 37:1[a]**

The earthly remains of Ya'akov's parents, Yitzchak and Rivkah, rest in the cave of *Machpelah*, beside those of Avraham and Sarah. His brother Esav has taken his great flocks and herds, his harem of Kena'ani and Yish'maeli wives and children, and has moved to Seir. And it is not only 'home' that is not what it used to be - Ya'akov is not what he used to be either. First of all, his physical body now has over 100 years of wear and tear on it. He walks with a noticeable limp. He lost his beloved mother while he was in exile in Charan, and never even got to mourn her. He has buried his first love, Rachel. He has lost his only daughter to abduction by a local prince. His name has been made a stench in the land by the holocaust of vengeance wrought by his sons in response to this abduction. He has had whatever *bayit shalom* he had left shattered by a lusty coup carried out against him by Reuven. He now finds himself patriarch over a family of twelve sons that are more like three competing factions – the six sons of Leah [Reuven, Sh'mon, Levi, Yehudah, Yissakhar, and Zevulun], the four sons of the concubines [Dan, Naftali, Gad, and Asher] and the two now 'motherless' sons of Rachel [Yosef and Binyamin]. Yes, Ya'akov has made some mistakes. No, Ya'akov does not command the respect in his household that he should. But he is still the carrier of the baton of the Holy One's Grand Redemptive and Restorative Covenant. As a result, whole or not, healthy or not, and happy or not, everything he says and does sends out Kingdom ripples, and has its effect, throughout the entire world.

Gird up your loins, *Ya'akov Avinu* – it is time for your – and thus it is time for our - next great season of prophetic challenges!

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Welcome to Et-Tzarah L'Ya'akov – i.e. the Time of 'Jacob's Trouble'²

As we embark on our 9th week of study an exciting new door of Divine Revelation and inspiration is about to fly open for us. Heretofore Torah has only hinted at the hope of *Mashiach*. This week that will start to change. In the concluding parshot of Sefer B'reshit we will receive our first substantive and detailed exposure to the Great Messianic Dream. For those with eyes to see and ears to hear, the Holy One's promise of a glorious Mashiach³ [*Messiah*] will veritably burst forth from the narratives that introduce us to Yosef⁴. Rachel's firstborn son is ordained to serve as the Torah's first real-life, real-time, in-our-face forerunner of the Messianic Identity, Mission, and Persona. The detailed chronicles of the misunderstanding, rejection, and persecution of Yosef by the Covenant Family; of his years of steadfast Covenant faithfulness; and of his eventual rise to pre-eminence first in the Gentile world, then over the children of Yisrael, are designed to provide the first substantive introduction to the Messianic element of the Holy One's Grand Plan of Redemption.

The Patriarchs, the Covenants, and the Great Messianic Dream

The Holy One has establish six closely interrelated and interdependent portals of interaction – some call them covenants - with man. They are *one covenant*, which the Holy One chose to unveil in *six separate phases of progressive revelation*. These phases of covenant/revelation can be and have been variously described, but basically they break down as follows:

1. The *Covenant/Revelation Man's Purpose*⁵;
2. The *Covenant/Revelation of Assigned Cycles and Accountability*⁶;
3. The *Covenant/Revelation of Redemption Through Avrahamic Ambassadorship*⁷;

² The phrase is drawn from Jeremiah 30:7, which says: “*Alas! For that day is great, so that none is like it; and it is the time of et-tzarah l'Ya'akov – i.e. the time of Jacob's trouble - but he will be saved out of it.*”

³ The Hebrew noun *Mashiach* is מָשִׁיחַ [mem, shin, yod, chet, Strong's Hebrew word #4899]. It is a title used in the TaNaKh in such inspiring verses as Psalm 2:2 and Daniel 9:25-26. It is usually translated to mean ‘anointed one’, but the verb root *mashach* [mem shin chet] from which it is drawn describes the action as being the movement of a hand. *Mashiach*, as a proper name, is thus *the chosen One through Whom the Hand of the Creator moves*.

⁴ Other Covenant Messengers of the Holy One who serve for us as prototypes of *Mashiach* in the TaNaKh include Shet [Seth], the Cherub guarding the pathway to the Tree of Life, Hanoch [Enoch], Shem, Eliezer, Melki-Tzedeq, Moshe [Moses], David, Sh'lomo [Solomon], Eliyahu/Elishahu [Elijah/Elisha], Iyov's friend Elihu (see **Job chapters 31-37**), Daniel, Nehemiah, and Zerubbabel.

⁵ See Genesis 1:26-28 & 2:15-20.

⁶ See Genesis 8:21 – 9:17.

⁷ See Genesis 12:1-3, 15:1-21, 17:1-14, 18:17-19, and 22:1-18, later renewed first with Yitzchak, then with Ya'akov/Yisrael,

4. the *Covenant/Revelation Establishing YHVH's Kingdom of Priests*⁸;
5. the *Covenant/Revelation of the Kingdom of Heaven Coming to Earth*⁹; and
6. the *Covenant/Revelation of the Latter Glory of the Olive Tree People*¹⁰

These Revelation Downloads – and every *promise, empowerment, and instruction* contained therein or incident thereto – are designed to constitute *fallen man's introduction to and invitation to enter and abide in the realm of 'May Your Kingdom come, and May Your Will Be Done, on earth as it is in Heaven'*. These Download episodes establish the parameters of a Glorious Portal – a 'strait' but glorious gate, as it were – which constitutes the *entry point and launching pad* for every spiritual discovery, blessing, and mission any human being will ever experience.

The Divine Words that make up the substance of these Covenants are not 'laws'; they are *empowerments*. They are not burdens; they are *infusions of Messianic Wisdom and Energy*. The entrance of these Divine Words bring Light into the human heart, health to the human body, peace to the human mind, and understanding to the human will. **Psalm 119:113**. His Covenants will never become obsolete, will never become irrelevant, and will never pass away. His Covenants are the foundation of His Redemptive Plan. Outside of the Covenants the Holy One made with Avraham, and renewed first with Yitzchak and Ya'akov, then with Yisrael as a nation of seed-bearers, there is – and can be - no functional God-Man relationship. That is why any person or ethnic group being considered, or considering themselves, 'strangers to the Covenants' was never part of the long-term Plan. See e.g. **Exodus 12:38; Deuteronomy 29:10-13; Joshua 6:25; Ruth 2:2-6; Isaiah 56:1-8; John 10:14-16; and Revelation 14:6-7**.

While vast in their implications, eternal in their operation, and extensive in their empowerment, these Covenants were never designed to serve as an end to themselves. The Covenants were not intended to be the sum total of our spiritual experience. The Redemptive Plan of the Creator – the Mystery of the Ages that confounds the principalities and powers of this world – is that flesh and blood human beings like us have actually been invited by the Holy One to press on even further into Him and His Ways than our ancestors did. Through the portal of the Covenants and the narratives of the patriarchs the Holy One has opened a great door in the unseen spiritual realm to all who consent to enter relationship with Him. He invites all who respond to His Covenant calling upon the lives of

⁸ Often called the "*Law of Moses*". See Exodus 19:3- Deuteronomy 34:12; see also Joshua 8:32 & 23:6, II Kings 23:25, II Chronicles 23:18, Nehemiah 8:1, Malachi 4:4., and Acts 28:23.

⁹ See I Chronicles 17:1-27, Isaiah 2:1-5, 11:1-12:6, 29:17-24, 30:15-31, and 66:1-24, & Zechariah 14:1-27.

¹⁰ Often called the 'new covenant' or 'renewed' covenant, or in Hebrew phrasing the *B'rit Chadasha*. See especially Jeremiah 31:1-40 & 33:7-26, Isaiah 55:1 – 56-8 & 60:1-61:11, Ezekiel 36:1 – 37: 2. II Corinthians 3:2 - 4:2, Hebrews chapters 8-9, and I Peter 1:3 – 2:25.

Avraham, Yitzchak, and Ya'akov to proceed humbly and in reverent fear of Him all the way down the straight and narrow path blazed for us by Mashiach.

The Promise of Mashiach¹¹ is inherent in and an essential feature of each of the Covenants/Phases of Revelation.

Running the Course Set Before Us

If in accordance with the Covenantal protocols outlined in Torah we submit to the guidance of the Great Shepherd's Unseen Hand the Holy One promises to do amazing things with our lives. First of all, He will *navigate us around the petty seductions, corruptions, and defilements of the unclean elements of this world*. See **Psalms 1 & 23**. Secondly, He will *lead us through irritations, aggravations, offenses, outrages, persecutions, and sufferings of the common realm*. See **Psalms 27 & 37**. Thirdly, He will *personally escort us past the whited sepulchers of religion, into the waiting arms of His promised Mashiach*. See **Psalms 2, 24, & 110**. Then, once we have encountered, embraced, and begun to walk with Mashiach through life He will *personally train us to overcome the resistance of our cultures and our own flesh and develop into the mature sons and daughters He has designed us to be – i.e. sons and daughters who operate in ever-increasing levels of unity with and submission to our incomparably wise Lord and King*. See **Psalms 34, 45, and 145**.

For us alive today, just as it was for our forefathers, our calling is to *abide in Him as we walk in the Covenants of the Holy One*. There is no 'Old Covenant' way vs. a "New Covenant" way. There is only the ***way of the Holy One, to do righteousness and justice, that Holy One may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him***. **Genesis 18:19**. The substance and purpose of walking with the Holy One has not changed since the days of Hanoach [Enoch] and Avraham. Throughout His history of interactions with the species of man since the Fall the Plan of the Holy One has remained the same - to invite all men who will respond to His calling to represent Him to the fallen world through the empowerment of His *Intimate Companionship and counsel, of His Breath* [the Ruach HaQodesh] and of *the sheer energy carried by His Words*. He has never called upon men to do so in their own strength or righteousness. He is not dispensational. He has always – and will always – relied upon His own power to inspire and remotely direct men who surrender to His Unseen Hand by His Compassionate Heart, His Longsuffering Attitude, His Firm but Gentle Touch, and His Brilliant Mind.

¹¹ The 'Promise of Mashiach', as used in these studies, refers to the full revelation of the Mashiach's Restorative work as manifested in [1] His Pre-appearance manifestations and foundational works; [2] His first appearance and service as *Mashiach ben Yosef* (Messiah son of Joseph), [3] His intercession on our behalf as the Great High Priest of Heaven and Earth; [5] His revelation in the hearts of men through the infilling and ministry of the *Ruach HaQodesh* (i.e. 'Holy Spirit), and [6] all He will accomplish in connection with His Glorious Return as *Mashiach ben David* (Messiah son of David).

Trying to walk in the Revelation of Mashiach without embracing the Covenant the Holy One made with our forefathers is sort of like trying to climb a tree with our hands tied behind our backs and our legs duct-taped together. The idea that a person could do such a thing is an absurd delusion. Likewise, however, the idea of walking in the Covenant at its maximal level of impact without embracing the revelation of Mashiach is farcical – like entering and starting a race just to stop running midway and sit on the track instead of pressing on to the finish line.

This is no time to quit running the race set before us. This is no time to rest on *yesterday's revelation*. Nor is it a time to worry about *comfort zones* and/or *the approval of men*. The Unseen Shepherd is urging us on. If we do not embrace the Messianic aspect of the Covenant as it is revealed to us we will never really learn to anticipate, pray for, cooperate with, and recognize the redemptive plan of the Holy One at its deepest levels. Who wants to be left out on that front? Not me. So let's jump right in to this week's readings, shall we?

What Exactly Did Ya'akov Do After Burying His Father?

The opening lines of *Vayashev* paint an interesting picture:

Vayeshev Ya'akov b'ereetz

And Ya'akov settled/sat/abided/sprawled out on a tract of land

megurei aviv b'ereetz Kena'an

on which his father had sojourned in the land of Kena'an.

[Genesis 37:1]

After having spent many decades away from his father's house and having endured many trials, our patriarch *Ya'akov* has at last not only *returned to* but has also *settled down in* the land of Kena'an. We will soon find out, however, that he is about to cease to be the focus of the narrative of Torah. All eyes will soon turn from *Ya'akov* to the most stunningly handsome and gifted young man in his household – a motherless lad the name of *Yosef*.

The Torah is preparing us for the fact that it will primarily be *through Yosef* – not Rueven, Levi, nor even Y'hudah - that the blazing torch of the covenant the Holy One made with Avraham will be carried forth into the next generation.

It is through *Yosef* that we will learn what *a suffering servant* looks like. It is through *Yosef* that we will learn what *life lived in the fear of God* looks like. It is through *Yosef* that we will learn what both *betrayal* and *unconditional forgiveness* look like. It is through *Yosef* that we will learn what is like to *bear false accusation*, and *stand silently in the face of it like a lamb before the shearers*. It is through *Yosef* that we will learn what *experiencing bondage* and *being*

miraculously delivered from bondage are like. And it is through Yosef that we will discover *what redemption really means*.

What would the covenant lifestyle be like without these matters, Beloved? How inferior would our faith-walk be if Yosef had not laid for us in Torah the foundations for these Messianic truths? How in the world would we or anyone else have a prayer of recognizing Messiah if the Holy One had not caused Yosef's life story to be recorded in Torah?

Eleh Toldot Ya'akov

The narrative of *Vayashev* starts out with a statement that seems to be a *nonsequitur*. Verse 2 begins with the declaration "***Eleh Toldot Ya'akov*** [*i.e.* this is the history of, or this is the account of, Ya'akov]; the narrative which follows, however, turns out *not to be about Ya'akov at all*, but about *Yosef*. In fact the very next words after '***Eleh Toldot Ya'akov***' are:

Yosef ben-sh'va-esreh shanah

Yosef was 17 years old.

hayah ro'eh et-echav b'tzon v'hu na-ar

As a lad, he would tend the sheep

Ya'akov's destiny, we will see, has become inextricably intertwined with Rachel's firstborn son. From hence forward, as things go with Yosef will be how things go with Ya'akov/Yisrael.

Introduction to the First Fully Developed Messianic Prototype

As stated above, beginning with parsha *Vayashev* the focus of Torah is going to turn away from the God-encounters and Divinely ordained life experiences of Ya'akov and toward the life and times of his son Yosef. It thus behooves us to get to know Yosef as well as possible.

The first thing we learn about Yosef other than his age is how he interrelated with his 10 elder half-brothers. Torah describes how the 10 eldest sons of Ya'akov dealt with Yosef with the following words:

Vayir'u echav ki-oto ahav avihem

When his brothers realized that their father loved him

mi-kol echav vayisnei'u oto

more than all the rest, they began to hate him.

v'lo yachlu dabro l'shalom

And they could not say a peaceful word to him.

[Genesis 37:4]

The word our English Bibles translate as 'began to hate' in this verse is *yisnei'u*, a

form of the Hebrew verb *sane*'¹². The first letter of the Hebrew verb root *sane*' is *sin*, indicating/picturing a fire or burning. As we have previously discussed, when this letter is pronounced as a *shin* [the 'sh' sound], it represents the flames of the manifest presence of the Holy One, such as at the burning bush, or tongues of fire as appeared at Sinai and again on the 'Day of Pentecost'. When this letter is, as here, pronounced *sin* [the 's' sound], however, it represents *the destructive power of human passion or uncontrolled appetite, jealousy or anger*. The second letter, *nun* [which makes the 'n' sound] represents *a son or heir*. The third letter, *alef*, represents the source of or moving force behind all things – *i.e.* the Holy One. The Hebraic picture of the verb *sane*' is, thus that of *a son or heir inflamed with passion, acting in place of – or as if he were – the Holy One*. In context, it means *to condemn, to judge, and to take vengeance* [all of which rightfully are the province of the Holy One alone]. So what Yosef's brothers did in response to the provocation of Ya'akov's favoritism toward Yosef was *to yield to the flames of passion, anger, and jealousy, and let the desire for vengeance upon Yosef consume them*. The brothers were thus rendered totally incapable of seeing Yosef *through the Holy One's eyes*, with *prophetic insight*. All they saw when they looked at Yosef was a RIVAL – and ENEMY to be eliminated. That lack of vision would be their downfall. Yosef was not the enemy they supposed. He was called by the Holy One not to *compete with* them or to *judge* them, but to serve as *the human vehicle of their salvation*.

Who Exactly is This Young Man Called Yosef – and Who Does He Prefigure?

Yosef is going to prove to be important to us not only as a *historic* figure but also as a *prophetic* one. Even Yosef's physical brothers will eventually declare with great joy "***Od Yosef chai!***" [*Yosef lives!*]. Future sons of the covenant will declare to the world a similar message regarding someone passages in the Talmud refer to as *Mashiach ben Yosef* [Messiah, son of Joseph]. What am I talking about, you ask? Throughout or national history our sages have struggled with two different, seemingly contradictory, aspects of the Messiah that are revealed in Scripture. On the one hand Messiah is said to have to suffer and die, to first be humbled in order to later be exalted, a single *Tzaddik* [righteous man] whose suffering and death atones for his entire nation if not for all nations and generations of men. This is known as the *descent for the sake of ascent*. On the other hand Messiah is said to *be triumphant* and to *rule and reign* supreme over all the earth.

One of the ideas promoted to resolve this problem is that of there being two Messiahs. In the Talmud therefore not just one *mashiach* but two *mashiachim*

¹² *Sane* is *sin, nun, alef*. Strong's Hebrew word #8130, it is pronounced *saw-nay'*.

[Messiahs] are mentioned¹³.

1. *Mashiach Ben-Yosef*

The first pattern of Mashiach recognized by the sages involves someone very special from the Covenant Household who is estranged from, rejected by, and suffers at the hands of his brethren, and is ultimately *delivered unto death* by them. This Messiah is sometimes referred to as *Mashiach Ben-Yosef* – i.e. Messiah, son of Joseph - because Yosef is going to establish this pattern of a suffering servant in the course of the events we will study this week in parsha *Vayashev*.

2. *Mashiach Ben-David*

The second pattern of messiah discussed in the Talmud is one who a physical descendant of David and who reigns gloriously and subjugates the other nations under Israel as David did. *Mashiach ben-David* will, it is taught, *gather in the exiles* from the four corners of the earth, *resurrect the dead, rebuild the Temple and re-institute the Aharonic priesthood* and the system of approach and worship described in Leviticus, and *establish a worldwide Messianic Kingdom* with Jerusalem as its capital and Torah as its constitution. This pattern of messiah is referred to as the *Mashiach Ben-David* [i.e. *Messiah son of David*] pattern.

According to traditional Jewish teaching, before *Mashiach ben David's* arrival - and in order to prepare the way for same – someone meeting the *Mashiach ben Yosef* pattern will appear on the scene, will be slain on behalf of Israel, and atonement will be granted when they “***look unto him whom they have pierced; and mourn for him as one mourns for his only son***”¹⁴. **Zechariah 12:10.**

Yosef’s rejection by his brethren and the trials he experiences as a result are prototypical of a ‘suffering servant’ to come later. Yosef’s receiving, and

¹³ Contrary to the belief of most Christians today there has never been one conclusive definition of the characteristics of Messiah within the Messianic teachings of the various forms and sects of Judaism. Depending upon the sect or movement of Judaism, Messiah may be seen alternatively as a suffering *Tzaddik*, as an *atoning Priest*, as a *triumphant King*, or in any number of other forms. Some see Messiah as a simple man born in time. Others see him as a mystical person who like the Holy One existed prior to the foundation of the world. Some of the names associated with Messiah by various branches and streams of Judaism include, in addition to Messiah ben Yosef and Messiah ben David, the following: *Messiah ben Ephraim*, the *Leprous Messiah*, the *Head of Days*, the *Son of Man*, the *Tzemah* (Shoot), the *Menachem* (Comforter), the *Nehora* (Light), the *Shalom* (*Wholeness, wellness, peace*), the *Tzaddik* (Righteous), *Adonai* (Lord), *Tzidqenu* (*Our Justice*), *Shiloh*, and *Elijah*.

¹⁴ Some Talmudic commentators on this verse interpret this future time of mourning, as being for *Messiah ben Yosef*, Particularly see **Mas. Sukkah 52a**, where the following discussion occurs: “*What is the cause of the mourning [mentioned in the last cited verse]? — R. Dosa and the Rabbis differ on the point. One explained, The cause is the slaying of Messiah the son of Joseph, and the other explained, The cause is the slaying of the Evil Inclination.*”

becoming known primarily by, another name will be prophetic of the Messiah being renamed by the world as well. So as we begin this study of the Yosef chronicles we should understand that Rachel's firstborn son Yosef is not just a man who lived many centuries ago in a far-off land. *Od Yosef Chai*, Dear Reader! Yosef is still alive! There is far more going on in this narrative than a squabble among brothers. A great deliverance is being unleashed – one about which the world will be marveling forever. With that understood, let's now jump back into our story!

The Beginning of Sorrows – An 'Evil Report'

I personally believe that it was during Ya'akov's period of *sitting sheva* after Yitzchak's death [and his prolonged grief after Rachel's death] that the animosity between Yosef and his brothers began to fester. While Ya'akov was *sitting sheva* as it were, his sons were tending to his business. Yosef was assigned to help Dan, Naftali, Gad and Asher (the sons of Ya'akov by Bilhah and Zilpah) care for Ya'akov's flocks during this period.

Yosef basically appears to have acted as a 'spy' for Ya'akov. Why? What meaneth *this*? Could it possibly be that Ya'akov knew by virtue of his close relationship with Yosef, that Rachel's first born, among all the children he had fathered, had the *clearest grasp of the fine lines of distinction that separate good and evil*? Could it be that among Ya'akov's sons he saw in Yosef the *firmest grasp on the principles of Divine judgment*? Could it be that among all Ya'akov's sons Yosef had demonstrated the best understanding of '*noblesse oblige*' – *i.e.* that those born into a noble class or placed in a position of honor have corresponding responsibilities to pursue excellence, to *exercise wisdom and discretion*, to *lead by example as well as rule by power*, and to *manage with a best-interest-of-the-kingdom mentality*, rather than wasting time or substance on idle, selfish, or frivolous pursuits? Could it be that Ya'akov saw in Yosef a young man who *would neither tolerate nor compromise with evil*, who would *never either exonerate the guilty or condemn the innocent*, who *could not be bribed or intimidated*, and who would nevertheless *always temper judgment with mercy and compassion*? Could it be that Ya'akov knew that Yosef was both *committed to truth* and *loyal to his father* – and both *willing and able to suffer whatever consequences came from honoring both*?

Without telling us why or whether it was in any way deserved our text indicates that when Yosef returned to Ya'akov to report to him concerning Dan, Naftali, Gad, and Asher, the report Yosef gave to Ya'akov turned out to be what Torah calls an "*evil report*" [in Hebrew, *dibbah ra*]. Torah does not tell us of what Yosef's 'bad report' consisted¹⁵. It does not tell us it whether such report was — or was not

¹⁵ Hebrew legend has filled the void with various possibilities. Rabbi Meir suggests that Yosef reported that the brothers ate a living animal limb-from-limb; Rabbi Shimon postulated that Yosef reported that the brothers in question had cast their gaze upon the local women. Rabbi Y'huda ben Pazi tied these together,

– justified by what Yosef saw with the sight of his eyes or heard with the hearing of his ears. It does not tell us if whether Yosef reported to Ya’akov was true, or was false, or was a mixture of truths, half-truths, and lies. The truth or falsity of this particular report is really not the issue in this particular case. The issue in this particular case is how the ‘evil report’ – be it true, false, or some combination of those two – adversely affected Yosef’s relationship with his half-brothers.

Torah does not tell us what the consequences of that bad report were, if any, for the 4 alleged wrongdoers. Hopefully Ya’akov followed what would later become the most famous Torah principle of due process, that *no one is to be condemned but on the testimony of two or three witnesses*. But the *dibbah ra* brought back by Yosef concerning his half-brothers brings up a point. Have you ever noticed that there is an amazing tendency on the part of children (and unfortunately many adults) to desire to see others “get in trouble”?

When children do it today it is usually called “*tattle-taling*”. When the same thing occurs in the context of adult conversations it has a more sinister sounding name - *gossiping*. This childish tendency in its mutated adult form is the reason shows like “60 Minutes”, tabloids, talk radio and political-attack machines thrive in our world. Strangely enough, digging up and exposing ‘dirt’ on other people seems to be the force that keeps some people alive. But however it may clothe itself - and however innocent it may try to appear - what it really is, the *dibbah-ra* [evil report] is the natural *tongue of the serpent*.

Recognizing and Learning to Interpret and Avoid Serpent-speak

What is the motivation behind judging, criticizing and speaking evil about someone else? What is the motive for spreading juicy tidbits of gossip? What evil force lies behind the desire to see someone else get in trouble or be humiliated? In children the driving force is often competition. A child looks at a fellow human being, perhaps a brother or sister, and says to himself concerning that person “*this is my competition!*” He senses that the other person competes with him for esteem, for attention, for affection, and for a sense of importance. That kind of ‘competition’ is not *friendly*. It is also not by any means *healthy*. That makes sense, because competition is *fear-based*. It comes from ingesting the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. What we *fear* we *react against* and desire to inflict humiliation upon. But let’s look even deeper.

suggesting that the punishments Yosef later endured were ‘measure per measure’ – and that, hence, it was [a] for suggesting his brothers had torn a limb from a living animal that he was represented to his father as having been torn limb from limb by a wild animal, and [b] for suggesting that his brothers were lusting after Kena’ani women that he was accused of attempting to rape Potifar’s wife.

As stated above, *in children* the motivation for talking evil about other people and for spreading slanderous reports is primarily *competition*. What about *in adults*? What makes a grown man or woman weave negative talk about his or her fellow human beings into every conversation? What makes a seemingly mature human being wage a campaign of character assassination on another person? In adults the motivation is even more sinister than in children - it is the spirit of murder; it is the *intent to destroy*; it is the seed of childish competition encased in a cancerous tumor; it is social and psychological *terrorism* in its most insidious and dangerous form. The root of this, of course, is a crisis of distrust in regard to the Holy One. If and to the extent we believe the Holy One is a righteous judge we know instinctively that He will cause the righteous to be vindicated and the one who is evil to be brought low. If we trust the Holy One, therefore, we do not have to either defend ourselves against or speak evil concerning others. After all, the Holy One really does not need our “help” to judge rightly.

It is therefore incontrovertible evidence of lack of faith in the Holy One and in His righteousness to speak negatively about someone else. The soul who spouts negative speech about others – who gossips - is much like a *terrorist*, and his or her slander is almost as much a form of biochemical warfare as finely ground anthrax. The serpent *loves it*. After all, it *does his work for him*. All he has to do is *devour the victim* – after the destruction has been wrought by the human instrument.

The Two Pathways of Human Relationship

One can pursue two paths concerning relationships with his fellow man. The “good path” is to look at one’s fellow man through the eyes of the Holy One, *sh’ma*-ing the Words of the Holy One and walking uprightly in those Words and trusting the Holy One to work out any problems in the relationship. Unfortunately this is the path “less traveled.”

The path most commonly followed is for one to look with suspicion or jealousy at one’s fellow (particularly one’s brother or sister, hence the “way of *Kayin* [Cain]), and to try to obtain/maintain an advantage over him/her by slandering or pointing out the faults of others.

Tattle-taling and gossip are forms of such verbal warfare. The weapon used is the tongue (or, in today’s high-tech society it could even be the computer or smart-phone keypad). What does the “speaker” hope to gain by such guerilla warfare? *Advantage*, Beloved. The speaker hopes to both *ingratiate himself* to the hearer and *make the object of the speech odious* to the hearer. The speaker hopes to *strengthen the bond* between himself and the hearer and simultaneously *drive a wedge* between the object of the slander and the hearer. In the race for affection, favor, and

importance, such a weapon has been effectively employed for millennia.

What You Sow, You Always Reap!

Understanding the Repercussions That Flow From Every Dibbah-Ra

The *dibbah-ra* weapon can be effective, especially in the short-term; but it almost always has its repercussions. For one thing, *the law of reaping and sowing is always in effect*. Every time you sow *dibbah-ra* you can be assured you will very shortly reap *dibbah-ra*. In addition, the wedge that a critical person drives between the hearer of his or her report and the object of the report is in the end never as wide as the wedge he drives between the object of the report and himself. Thirdly, retribution is almost certain - and usually will be painful enough to outweigh whatever momentary benefit was gained from the *dibbah ra*.

Innocently or not, Yosef sowed seeds of *dibbah ra* - and those seeds grew. As you read today's aliyah look for the three stages of the growth of the hate that *dibbah ra* always generates. These stages are the landmarks of *the way of Kayin*. May you never personally pass such landmarks.

The Gift That Provoked Yosef's Brothers to Jealousy

Almost everyone has heard of Yosef's so-called 'coat of many colors'. In English we read:

*Now Yisra'el loved Yosef more than all his children,
because he was the son of his old age, and he made him a coat of many colors.*
[Genesis 37:3]

Most children who grow up in the Judeo-Christian part of the world at some time hear the story taught about the garment Ya'akov made for Yosef, and when they do their imaginations run wild trying to get a mental image of what the coat looked like. Most imagine this garment as a brightly colored, gaudy, patchwork quilt kind of outer jacket. But that is not what Torah is talking about.

In Hebrew the phrase that mentions the garment Ya'akov made for Yosef reads *hu lo v'asah lo ktonet passim*¹⁶. The Hebrew word our English Bibles translate as "coat" is *k'tonet*¹⁷. This word is from an unused root meaning *to cover*. The first Biblical usage of this word is found in Genesis 3:21, where we are told:

¹⁶ The Hebrew word *passim* can be translated as:
colorful (Radak; Septuagint); or
embroidered (Ibn Ezra; Bachya; Ramban on Exodus 28:2); or
striped (Ibn Janach; Radak, *Sherashim*), or
embossed with images (*Targum Yonatan*).

The phrase *k'tonet passim*, as used in this passage, may refer to either a 'full-sleeved robe,' a 'coat of many colors,' a 'coat reaching to his feet,' an 'ornamented tunic,' a 'silk robe,' or a 'fine woolen cloak.'"

¹⁷ *K'tonet* is *kaf, tav, nun, tav*. Strong's Hebrew word #3801, it is pronounced *ket-o'-net*.

*Unto Adam also and to his wife
did the Holy One God make coats [k'tonet] of skins, and clothed them.*

I have previously pointed out that Hebrew legend tells us the *k'tonet* which the Holy One made from animal skins [from the lamb slain before the foundation of the world] for Adam to completely cover his sin was preserved by his descendants - up to and including Yitzchak. Yitzchak had set it aside, so the legend goes, for Esav – and it was that special garment, so the legend goes, in which Rivkah dressed Ya'akov to deceive Yitzchak into believing Ya'akov was Esav. It is supposedly that garment which still smelled like the garden of Eden from which it came that Yitzchak smelled when Ya'akov came near and kissed him.

You will recall that Yitzchak said at that instant: “*the scent of my son is like the fragrance of a field the Holy One has blessed.*” The scent was that of the garment – not the smell of either Ya'akov or Esav. I do not know if this legend has any truth to it. But if it does I would suspect that the *k'tonet passim* Ya'akov ‘made’ for Yosef¹⁸ was either the garment Adam had worn [which Ya'akov would have received as the son of Yitzchak who received the blessing and birthright], or one *patterned after it*.

At the very least the making of such a garment exclusively for Yosef put his brothers to the test. I am sure the favoritism Ya'akov showed Yosef [and Binyamin] *did not seem ‘fair’* to the older brothers. I am sure it *provoked* them. But life is chock full of provocations, absolutely jam-packed with things which do not seem “fair”. Our assignment in the Covenant is to rise above such things – and to never surrender our joy, peace, kindness, longsuffering, or gentleness for the serpent’s poison cocktail of offense and ‘outrage’.

***Getting Past Human Ideas of ‘Right’, ‘Wrong’, ‘Morality’
and ‘Fairness’ – and Tuning Into the True Tone
of Divine Wisdom, Compassion, Redemption and Restoration***

I have a news flash for you, Dear Reader. Here it is: The Holy One is not a God who deals in *right, wrong, morality, or fairness*. I know that sounds crazy to some of you – indeed, foreign to every institutional teaching you have ever heard. But before you label me a heretic and hurl those stones in your hands, at least hear me out. The concepts of ‘right’, ‘wrong’, ‘morality’, and “fairness” are *figments of the fallen human imagination*, birthed from the poison nectar of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of ‘good’ and ‘evil’. Fairness, right, wrong, morality, and such are always *in the eye of the beholder*. They represent humanistic concepts that are

¹⁸ The Hebrew word our English Bibles translates as colors is *passim*¹⁸. This is from the Hebrew verb root *pasas*¹⁸ - a primitive verb root that Strong’s interprets to mean to *disappear, to vanish, to cease, or to fail*. The phrase *ktionet passim* likely is best interpreted as ‘*garment that completely covered him*’ - in the sense of being *long-sleeved* and *ankle length*, hence making his flesh seem to disappear.

entirely subjective. They come forth like wood sprites from a whimsical, capricious fantasy. Once loosed into the environment by human opinion, they change shape from person-to-person generation to generation, and culture to culture like a chameleon changes color.

The Holy One, on the other hand, traffics in ‘higher thoughts’. He does not act reactively; nor does He ever think, speak, act, or govern according to men’s ideas – even those that you, Beloved, delight to espouse – about what is conceptually ‘right’, ‘wrong’, ‘morality’, and ‘fairness’. His thoughts are not like our thoughts. He governs, speaks, and acts according to an Ecosystem and Bloodline Creator’s *wisdom*, with *Fatherly compassion*, and in furtherance of a grand, *long-term, Covenant-fulfilling Plan to Redeem the species of mankind, household by household, and bloodline by bloodline, and to Restore Creation, acre by acre, to its original intended state of beauty, fruitfulness, and shalom*. There is thus a vast difference in the Holy One’s standards and any man, culture, or religion’s ideas of ‘right’, ‘wrong’, ‘morality’, and ‘fairness’.

But what about ‘justice’, I hear you say. *Justice* – in Hebrew *mishpat* - is a Covenantal Standard - not a concept over which men are supposed to preach, rant, or express outrage. *Mishpat* is not something you pontificate about; it is something you live humbly before men. *Mishpat* is not a concept you incite vengeance over; it is a long-term strategy of bloodline redemption and geographical location restoration. Purely and simply, *mishpat* is *whatever it takes, in a given situation, to make the Covenant stronger and more secure, the Messianic Dream more substantive, and to bring the Redemptive and Restorative Plan of the Holy One closer to fulfillment*. Doing ‘justice’ – in Hebrew ‘*asah-ing mishpat*’, or one of the primary components of the Avrahamic persona¹⁹ - is thus both defined and introduced by the Stronger Covenant Partner – not the weaker one. See e.g. **Job 38:1 – 42:6, Isaiah 11:1-5, Psalms 97-99, and Matthew 7:1-4**. In other words, doing justice is not following a set of moral principles; it is about following a King as and where, in what way and at what pace, with what objectives, that King chooses to lead.

Justice – *i.e. mishpat* - is 100% dependent upon *Divine perspective* and subject to Divine direction, guidance, and rules of engagement. The Holy One has the advantage of *omniscience, purity of motive, and cross-generational vision*. We, on the other hand, as well-intentioned as we might be, are subject to the failings that haunt humanity since the Fall – *i.e.* we have a limited frame of reference, we have

¹⁹ See Genesis 18:19, where the Holy One explains concerning Avraham: ***I have made Myself known to him in order that he may enjoin his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the Holy One, to do [asah] righteousness [tzedekah] and justice [mishpat], that the Holy One may bring to/through Avraham that which He has spoken concerning him.***”

impure motives, we have intellectual and emotional biases, we can never escape the taint of self-interest, and we can never see with any clarity at all the effects a particular behavior will have even in the immediate moment, much less over the course of generations.

For the Holy One's covenant partners therefore the question should never be whether something is or is not '*right*', '*wrong*', '*moral*', or '*fair*'. Inquiries like that bring about the *passing of judgment* – of human beings attempting to sit in judgment based solely upon what they can see with the limited visual capabilities of their fallen human eyes, hear with the limited auditory capabilities of their fallen human ears, or think with the limited wisdom-processing capabilities of their fallen human minds. The question is instead how the Holy One would have us respond *justly* to that which offends and wounds the human sense of 'morality' or 'fairness'. Will one who has been offended or wounded become angry, and bitter, and resentful? Or will he/she entrust the matter – and the matter of ultimate vindication – to the Holy One? What does His *justice* – not some human concept of *right, wrong, morality* or *fairness* - demand?

To *do justice/asah mishpat*, instead of resorting to some humanistic image of *trying to dole out what will be perceived by others as 'fairness'*, is one of the challenges that is intended by the Holy One to cause the death of our flesh, every day we live on planet earth. As part of our reverence for the Holy One, and the self-denial/subordination that is our 'reasonable service', in every situation we face we are supposed to give up our ideas of 'fairness', 'morality', 'good', 'evil', 'right' and 'wrong' in exchange for His Will. All human opinions, attitudes, and judgments regarding such subjects are *vanity* – nothing more than the putrid pit from the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Rueven, Sh'mon, Levi, Y'hudah, and company will learn this truth in today's aliyah of Torah. They will, alas, be woefully inept at this Covenant undertaking called '*doing justice/asah-ing mishpat*'. Raw emotions will cloud their perspective. Self-interest will blind them. Their fleshly senses of 'right', 'wrong', 'fairness', and 'morality' will intoxicate them with the bloody froth of self-will. They will, alas, not be able to see past these things to glimpse either Yosef's value to their family or his grand destiny in the Holy One's Grand Redemptive and Restorative Plan.

But, of course, the lessons of Torah are never really about THEM, are they. They are always about US, the readers. They are not for historical information –they are for our admonishment, upon whom the end of days will come. So ... how are *you* doing with all this, Dear Reader? When you confront the challenges of modern life,

and the drama of interpersonal relations, do you get blinded by self-interest? Do you, like the majority of people who live as strangers to the Covenant, let yourself get intoxicated by self-will, and caught up in a feeding frenzy focused on what your mind says is 'right' vs. 'wrong', 'good vs. evil', 'fair' vs. 'unfair', and/or 'moral vs. immoral'? Are your opinions, attitudes, and judgments about the people and situations in your life really any better than those of Yosef's brothers about 'that dreamer'? Until a person can get beyond the urge to judge by the sight of his own eyes and by the hearing of his own ears, he has not effectively embraced the Messianic Dream. **Isaiah 11:3-4**. All who insist on judging others sight of their own eyes and by the hearing of their own ears are instead trapped in a Crusader's Nightmare.

***What is This Dream You Have Dreamed?
Is That YOU, Yosef... or Just a Brilliant Disguise?***

All we have discussed heretofore sets the stage for our discussion of Yosef's famous Messianic Dreams. Like his father Ya'akov it seems that Yosef was quite the prolific dreamer. Ya'akov dreamed of a stairway to heaven, angels in motion, and an encounter with the Creator of the Universe. Of what will Yosef's dreams consist? And even more fundamentally, what are dreams, anyway? Are they merely surrealistic imaginings that randomly dart into and out of – then playfully flit and flutter through – our grey matter at night? Are they merely a 'virtual reality' outlet in which we can act out our deepest subconscious fears and desires? Are they products of our own minds – or are they *strategically planned nocturnal input piped into our souls* by external sources?

What is the *substance* of dreams? What is their *source*? What is their *purpose*? What is their *function in our lives*? What are they saying to us? And whatever that may be, *who is saying it*? Is it *us*? Is it our 'inner child'? Is it a *demon assigned by the enemy to destroy us*? Is it an *angel assigned by the Holy One to protect and to serve us*? Is it the Holy One *Himself*? Who is it that controls what enters our heads when sleep sets in? What do the details of our dreams mean?

Ya'akov was a dreamer. But Yosef was much, much more. Yosef was *a master of dreams*. Unlike his brothers unlike his father, and indeed, unlike most people who have ever lived - Yosef actually managed to *dedicate his imagination to Divine service the way other human beings dedicate their conscious minds to worldly pursuits*. As a result Yosef was able to *decode from dreams* - his own and those dreamt by others - *secret messages from the Holy One*. To Yosef dreams were not the products of the human mind but constituted *downloads from the Throne of Heaven*. It all started when Yosef was 17. In that year he dreamed two prophetic dreams.

Dream #1: *The Bowing of the Sheaves*

In Yosef's first prophetic dream he and his brothers were binding sheaves of grain in the field when a strange thing happened. Suddenly the sheaf of grain he was binding rose up, stood erect, and achieved a higher position than the sheaves of his brethren. Then each of his brothers' sheaves gathered around his sheaf and bowed down before it.

Dream #2: *The Bowing of the Sun, the Moon, and the Stars*

Secondly, Yosef dreamed a dream that involved the sun, the moon and eleven stars. In this dream *he stood tall* in the Universe while *the sun, moon, and 11 stars all came and bowed down before him*.

Careful Now: Interpreting Prophetic Dreams is Not Recommended For Amateurs – or For Persons With a Personal Interest at Stake

Dreams are never to be interpreted in light of self-interest – or through either the lens of hate, or of fear, or of offense, or of jealousy, or of selfish ambition. Please note, therefore, that Yosef did not attempt to interpret either of his prophetic dreams to anyone – nor did he ask any of his family members to try to interpret his dreams. Alas, his family members could not resist. Though they were all rank amateurs at dream interpretation, his brothers chose to interpret the first dream. Of course, they did so through their own horribly clouded lenses of self-interest. *The brothers interpreted Yosef's harvest-time dream of the bowing sheaves in the most insidious way possible: they scoffed, **Will you indeed reign over us? Will you indeed have dominion over us?***

*Yosef's second dream – the dream of the bowing celestial luminaries - was interpreted just as skeptically by Yosef's father Ya'akov. Though Ya'akov had more experience with dreams than the brothers did, he had just as much of a problem with predisposition and self-interest. Though the dream did not identify the sun, the moon, or the 11 stars as members of Ya'akov's family, that was the conclusion to which Ya'akov jumped. Upon hearing the second dream Ya'akov therefore said: "**Will I and your mother²⁰ you're your brothers indeed come to bow ourselves down to you to the erez?**" Again, self-interest and personal emotional involvement were the key lenses through which Ya'akov tried to interpret the dream.*

²⁰ Yosef's mother Rachel was, of course, already dead at the time of this dream – having died giving birth to Binyamin. Thus Ya'akov's mother could never bow to Yosef *in this earthly life*.

Were these really the correct interpretations of Yosef’s dreams? Was the substance of the first dream really that Yosef would ‘reign over’, or ‘have dominion’ over, his brethren? We know something similar to that later happened in Egypt – but was there not *more to it than that*? Were not these dreams really about the Holy One’s redemptive plan, and the important part He had ordained for Yosef and his progeny to play in it? Did these dreams even relate primarily to Yosef and his physical generation? Or did they not also deal with some of Yosef’s descendants – especially such national leaders as *Y’hoshua son of Nun* and *Gideon*?

Dream *big dreams*, Beloved. But don’t be satisfied with *self-centered dreams*. Ask the Holy One to let you dream *trans-generational dreams*. Dare to dream *the very dreams that the Holy One dreams over you and your children and your children’s children forever*.

Questions for Today’s Study

1. As parsha *Vayashev* begins we are introduced in earnest to *Yosef* [Joseph] – the eldest son of Rachel, who will be the focus of our study for several weeks.

[A] How old is *Yosef* at the beginning of parsha *Vayashev* (when his grandfather Yitzchak died)?

[B] What was Yosef’s *vocation*?

[C] Name the four half-brothers of whom Yosef brought back a “bad report” to their father.

[D] By what gift did Ya’akov demonstrate a special level of favoritism to Yosef?

[E] In Strong’s and Gesenius look up the words our English Bibles translate as “*coat*” and “*colors*” in verse 3. Write the Hebrew words in Hebrew letters with their vowel markings. Search out the meanings of these words and their verb roots. Then describe the Hebraic word picture you see developing.

2. One of the supernatural enablings with which the Holy One endows Yosef is the gift of *receiving and interpreting spiritual dreams*.

[A] Why do you think the Holy One inspired the two dreams we read about in today’s aliyah?

[B] What do you think Yosef should have done to be a good steward of the revelation the Holy One gave him in these dreams?

[C] What do you think the following symbols in Yosef’s dreams mean:

- i. sheaves;
- ii. a field;
- iii. bowing;
- iv. sun;
- v. moon;
- vi. eleven stars.

3. This week's haftarah is taken from the writings of the prophet Amos. Amos was a simple God-fearing shepherd, not a clergyman or trained professional. He prophesied about the same time as *Hoshea* [Hosea]. In today's aliyah, the message to the Northern Kingdom [what is now considered the 10 'lost' tribes] is:

Thus says the Holy One: "For three transgressions of Yisra'el, yes, for four, I will not turn away its punishment; because they have sold the righteous for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes; They trample on the dust of the eretz, on the head of the poor, and deny justice to the oppressed; And a man and his father use the same maiden, to profane my holy name; And they lay themselves down beside every altar on clothes taken in pledge; And in the house of their God they drink the wine of those who have been fined.

[Amos 2:6-8]

[A] What are the four transgressions of Yisrael that the Holy One says have sealed its judgment?

[B] What judgment did the Holy One impose upon Yisrael for these sins?

4. In today's reading from the apostolic Scriptures the historian/witness *Lukas* [Luke] discusses the circumstances that led to certain men beginning to function in the Community as *shamashim* [KJV, *deacons; literally flame bearers/burning and shining lamps*]. Here is the narrative:

Now in those days, when the number of the talmidim was multiplying, a complaint arose from the Yevanian Y'hudim against the Hebrews because their widows were neglected in the daily service.

The twelve summoned the multitude of the talmidim and said, "It is not appropriate for us to forsake the word of God and serve tables.

Therefore select from among you, brothers, seven men of good report, full of the Ruach HaKodesh and of wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business.

But we will continue steadfastly in prayer and in the ministry of the word."

These words pleased the whole multitude.

They chose Stefanos, a man full of faith and of the Ruach HaKodesh, Pilipos, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas, a proselyte of Antioch.

These they set before the apostles, and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them.

[Acts 6:1-6]

[A] Did the Holy One specifically direct anyone to designate Stefanos [Stephen], Pilipos [Philip], and the others as *shamashim*?

[B] Was the community of Messianic Hebrew Believers described in Acts 6 in any way similar to a 'local church' or a 'synagogue' as those terms are used today? Explain your answer.

[C] Do you think the procedure of appointing *shamashim* to oversee the administration of aid to widows in the Believing Community, born as it was as a compromise measure to resolve a controversy, is a Biblical mandate for Believers

today? Why or why not?

[D] According to the text what was the designated function of a *shamash* [deacon] intended to be? And what [if anything] do you think that has to do with a local church or synagogue in today's culture?

[E] Could *shamashim* still oversee the administration of aid to widows in the Believing Community in a geographical area even without the existence of a formal religious organization? Explain your answer.

*May you heart be purified,
That you may see all other human beings through the eyes of the Holy One.*

The Rabbi's son

Meditation for Yom Ha-Sheni of the Week of Vayashev Psalm 35:1-3 [A psalm of David]

Plead my cause with those who strive against me, O Holy One!

Fight against those who fight against me.

Take shield and buckler in Hand and stand up to help me!

Draw the spear, and stop those who pursue me.

Yeshuatech Ani! [I am Your Yeshua/Deliverance/Help/Salvation]