



#9 VaYeshev Genesis 37:1-40:23
Torah Teaching
by Moshe Schwab

Names

Ya'akov – Jacob

Kefa – Peter

Messiah – English for Mashiach; anointed one; Christ in the Greek means to be smudged – anointed

Moshe – Moses

Shaul – Paul

Yeshua – Jesus' real name

Yĕhōvâh – God's real name forever (Exodus 3:15)

Y'hudah – Judah

Yochanan – John

Yosef – Joseph

Terms

Haftarah – reading from the prophets

Tanakh – Old Testament portion of Bible

Torah – 1st 5 books of the Bible

Torah portion – there are 54 portions of the Torah

Vayeshev - 9th Torah portion

The Torah portion Vayeshev means "and he settled." This portion of the Torah is about Yosef (Joseph) and his family. His brothers went to a trade route and Yosef followed them there. Trade routes were known for sin because of those who passed by on those routes. Yosef was a good man who heard from God, but his brothers didn't like his interference in their lives. Perhaps Yosef felt compelled to try to help them avoid sin.

Ironically, they turned their attention toward Yosef and sold him to foreigners to get rid of him and his interference. Just like Yosef perhaps went after them to help them, Yeshua seeks us in order to help us live right. Will we send Him away like Yosef's brothers did to Yosef? Or will we accept Yeshua's help?

Yeshua said in John 14:16-17 NKJV, "I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever — the Spirit of truth." God gave us the Torah as a helper, but also wants to give us the Holy Spirit to help us. Yeshua said of the Holy Spirit, "You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you;" Acts 1:8 NKJV. Our God wants to empower us through the Messiah Yeshua.

God's word and the Holy Spirit brings God's goodness and power into our lives. Many people live like God is not there and they are missing out on a powerful relationship with an almighty God. They are like Yosef's brothers who perhaps believe in God, but do not realize the extent of God's ability to work in our lives.

In the last portion, we learned about how the book of Jasher tells us that after Isaac dies, Ya'akov gives Esau the option to either take all of Isaac's possessions or the land of Canaan. I pointed out that Ya'akov probably believed that Esau would choose what he could see. The Canaanites still occupied Canaan so it would seem to be an easy choice. I believe that Ya'akov understood the immense value of trusting in God and what God could give him.

It makes sense that trusting in God and what He can do would be the best choice by far, but that is not how Esau saw it and that is how most people live. They trust more in what they can see than in God. People often pick and choose how they will follow God. Instead, we should be dedicated to doing all God tells us to do.

Chanukkah begins this weekend and is the Feast of Dedication and the Feast of Lights. It is a feast which commemorates the rededication of the 2nd Temple after the Greeks desecrated the Temple. The Old Testament believers took their faith seriously and so should we. It also commemorates the pure oil they found that was only enough to last one day, but miraculously lasted 8 days. See our articles online on our website about Chanukkah and Yeshua.

I would like to start out by talking about how that, sometimes our impact is more than we think. It can appear to be a drop in the bucket to us, but it can sometimes have a genuine impact on the lives of others and make them stronger spiritually.

Years ago, I met a young man and encouraged with just a few words. Then years later, I met the person again and he told me that the few words I gave him helped him to pursue God and become a faithful believer in Yeshua. I had no idea of the impact I had on his life. So never give up trying to help people to do what is right and good.

There are scriptures in the Bible that can be life changing. We often memorize them and remember them at crucial times in our life. This scripture in Deuteronomy is one of the many great scriptures that we need to memorize.

Deuteronomy 6:17-18 NKJV says,

You shall diligently keep the commandments of the LORD your God, His testimonies, and His statutes which He has commanded you. And you shall do what is right and good in the sight of the LORD, that it may be well with you.

It tells us to be diligent to keep God's commandments. They are right and good, and God sees if we are keeping them. God's commandments benefit us, they help us to live well.

Just a short verse like this can help us to move forward spiritually in several different ways. We are not to be lazy with our spiritual life but to be diligent, and not take life for granted. We know that at any time in life we may encounter difficult circumstances, or we may need to take a stand and do what is right no matter how we feel. Some people are willing to compromise, but we should be strong and diligent.

The Bible says that God's commandments are right. There is a tendency to define what is right by our own terms instead of how God says to live. Some people think there is nothing wrong with their thinking even though they are okay with disobeying God. They think that there is nothing wrong with the way they act or think instead of valuing what our all-knowing and good God wants us to do. God is right because he is the creator and knows what is best for us.

Since God is good, His commandments are good. Some people value how they treat others and want to do what is good. We know what is good because God told us what is good. We have a value system that is above our ordinary thought process to rely on that holds us to

higher standards.

Being invested in doing what is right helps us to avoid personal failures in life. Desiring what is truly good leads us in the right direction in how we process what we think and do, or at least it should do that. Because of that, God's commandments can benefit us greatly. Regardless, doing what God says is important spiritually.

We are to aspire and struggle to please God. Since God cares about us and is a good God, we can form a loving attachment to our Creator. If someone treats you with kindness, you are often aware of their goodness. Even now I recall a dear sweet aunt of mine holding my hand when I was little and encouraging me on with kind words. God also wants us to succeed. Isaiah 41:10 NKJV says, "Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand."

There are many good approaches on to how to proceed in life. Some take a little longer to arrive at a good process for life, but it is important that we stay dedicated to God and truth to achieve a godly lifestyle.

Not all is straightforward in life, but the root of our life needs to be established in truth.

Psalms 1:1-3 NKJV says,

Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night. He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season.

Happier is the person who does not live by His own standards instead of God's truths in the Bible. They do not live in outright rebellion to God, and they do not ridicule what is right and true. They consider God's law in all that they do. Their lives produce what is godly and good.

I have done many different things in my life, but at the core of my life was following God and His word. I started out working in research, then robotics, and then seismology which involves the surface movement of the earth. What a strange path, but no matter what we do, we need to have a good basis for life. After my one cousin became a believer, he successfully became a mainframe computer expert and would pray before each job. One time he was called on to help two computer experts who had been working on a large computer system for 24 hours straight. He prayed and it was fixed in 10 minutes. Our paths are not only better because God's ways are best, but God can empower our lives.

Often, we think that we achieve something by listening, but it is not just by listening that we truly become accomplished.

We often study hard at our jobs in order to do a great job for our customers or the company we work for. Our study was not meant to just be head knowledge but so we could know how to do our work and do it best. When I began my seismology work, that was only the beginning of working at and studying for my job. I even had to write an important study on the work I did. So, I had to know what I was doing, and the other nuances and effects of the ways rock and soil are affected.

Most of all, do we work at doing what is right and good? Are we accomplished at walking in

God's ways? Deuteronomy 8:6 NKJV says, "Therefore you shall keep the commandments of the LORD your God, to walk in His ways and to fear Him." We are to commit our lives to do what God says, to do that in all we do, and we walk in His ways. It says we are to fear God. There are a lot of people who do not fear the consequences of their actions. They do not care how they affect others. The reason we need police is so people will not cause others harm. The people who do not want police around are often those who will cause others harm if no one is around to stop them. But God is not the police. He asks us to do what is right and good for our own well-being and the well-being of others. He must be just though, and those who cause pain to others through sin will have to stand before Him and be judged someday. 2 Peter 2:9 NKJV says, "The Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment." God does not want people to fail and live in sin. He will help you overcome, but you need to be committed to be led by God's commandments.

The picture or direction we need to take becomes more clear when we apply ourselves.

Some people say they cannot keep God's commandments, but the Bible says God's commandments are not hard or burdensome. Deuteronomy 30:11 ESV says, "For this commandment that I command you today is not too hard for you, neither is it far off." Yochanan also says the same thing. 1 John 5:2-3 NKJV says, "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome." We are part of God's family if we act like His children.

When we first try doing something that requires skill, we have to develop our ability to do the task. When I first began shooting the basketball when I was young, I had trouble getting the ball over the rim to make a basket, but I kept at it. By the time I was a young man, I could make quite a few basketball shots in a row. In the same way, we have to keep working at doing what is right. When we fail, we commit ourselves to doing what is right again. When a baby starts to walk, they fall down over and over. They do not stay down and crawl the rest of their life.

We do what is right and then we see the good results. For example, those who hurt others are put in jail. That is the consequence of doing evil. As we keep God's commandments, it will become clearer that doing what is right and good is the best way to live, but we have to be committed. Every time we fail, we need to commit ourselves to doing what is right. We should have contempt for our sin and a desire to do what is right and good. Mostly, we need to focus on ourselves and not others. We cannot always help others. When we try to help others, we need to be patient and kind. We also will fail at times. Psalms 119:104-105 NKJV says, "Through Your precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way. Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." God's ways light our path and help us in life. Won't you make a decision this Chanukkah season to be more committed than ever.

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VaYeshev means, "and he settled." This portion begins by telling us about Ya'akov's love for his son Yosef and the long-sleeved coat he made for him when he was seventeen. One time,

Yosef reported on his brothers and also his brothers became jealous of their father's favoritism. Yosef also had a couple dreams where his brothers prostrated themselves to him and they hated Yosef even more.

Jealousy can cause sin.

His brothers could not even speak peaceably to him because of their feelings toward Yosef. The Bible in this portion teaches a valuable lesson to parents about favoritism. Children will get jealous if parents show favoritism. Often there is rivalry between the children in a family even without favoritism. So, try not to show favoritism towards your children.

In this tragic portion we see the destructive nature of sibling rivalry, jealousy, and worldly thinking. We also see a lack of trust by Yosef's (Joseph) family in God's leading through Yosef's dreams. But we also see how God favored and protected his prophet Yosef. This should remind us that God can protect His people and give them favor even in difficult situations, and that the prophetic can be instrumental in helping God's people.

I have been amazed at what God will do for us if we will follow how He is leading us. Perhaps we are making every effort to live right. If things are not going well, God can turn that around for us and can bless us in many different ways. Sometimes I just think of something, and it just happens. This one time I was at the store and I was looking at an expensive jacket that was marked down from \$500 to \$250. I thought to myself, "Too bad it's not \$50." Two months later I was there, and it was marked down to \$50. My wife was with me, and she bought the same style of jacket too for \$50. There were only a few left and they just happened to have ones that fit us, and they were in the colors we wanted! My size is difficult to find because I am tall. It was no coincidence to me. I knew it was God.

Ya'akov sends Yosef to see how his brothers are doing and when his brothers saw him in the distance, they plotted to kill him. When he arrived, they threw him in a cistern and took his long sleeved coat. A caravan was coming at the time, so instead of killing him, they sold Yosef to them, and the caravan went on toward Egypt. His brothers concocted a lie and took his coat and put goats' blood on it, and they let their father come to the conclusion that he must have been killed by a wild animal. Ya'akov was devastated.

Then the portion talks some about Y'hudah and his children. Tamar was not given proper treatment by Y'hudah's family, and she entices Y'hudah to sleep with her and she has a child by him.

In the meantime, Yosef becomes a servant of Potiphar, a captain of Pharaoh's guard. God favored everything that Yosef did, and he was appointed to manage Potiphar's household. Since he was so closely attached to the leadership of Egypt, he must have also been known by Pharaoh. Potiphar's wife tried to seduce Yosef, but he would not comply, so she pulled off his garment when he fled and accused him of trying to sleep with her. Yosef ends up in prison, instead of being put to death. So, it seems Potiphar probably did not believe the accusations being made. God gives favor to Yosef, and he is put in charge of the prisoners. God just keeps blessing Yosef even in difficult times.

Pharaoh became angry with his baker and cup bearer and put them in prison. They had dreams that Yosef interpreted for them. He told the cup bearer that his position would be restored and the baker that he would be killed. Yosef asked the cup bearer to remember him. Yosef's predictions turned out as expected, but the cup bearer forgot about Joseph's interpretation of his dream. The cup bearer eventually remembers Yosef.

Remembering is important.

There are things in life we need to remember and that is why we have history. For example, at one time, the colonies of the United States were being taken advantage of by the King of England. The founders of the United States tried to set up a form of government where the people would not be taken advantage of by its leaders. It is important to remember our beginnings and how the United States has tried to treat each person, equally and justly. Otherwise, we might be confused by those who would lie about our country. We learn important things from history, so we do not make the same mistakes over and over again.

Preamble to the Declaration of Independence

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.

Preamble to the United States Constitution

We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America. (from Archives.GOV)

We find out in the subsequent portions that God works out Yosef's situation and he even becomes second to Pharaoh, the leader of Egypt. Absolutely amazing, isn't it! It took time for all this to evolve. It must have been difficult for Yosef, but he remains faithful to God. He had a relationship with God, and he must have trusted that God would work things out. He must have also thought that the dream he had from God about his brothers would come to pass.

The associated gifts of the Holy Spirit are important.

That just goes to show you how important the gifts of the Holy Spirit that we talk about and also hearing from God is. Shaul tells us that it is very important. 1 Corinthians 14:1 NKJV says, "Pursue love, and desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy." Some say we are not supposed to hear from God, but Shaul says that what he is saying is a commandment of God. 1 Corinthians 14:37 NKJV says, "Let him acknowledge that the things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord." So, the people who are saying we shouldn't hear from God are disobeying God.

We are supposed to be having words of prophecy in our meetings. That's what they did in the early congregations; I Corinthians 14:26 NKJV says, "Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification." The reason Shaul says that all things are to build up the believers is because it seems some were making the meetings laborious; in the context, Shaul puts limits on what they do, and we also need to have meetings that divide up time between

activities and that are orderly.

What God tells us through the prophetic should not go against the truths of the Bible. The Bible tells us to test what is spoken. 1 Thessalonians 5:19-22 says, "Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies. Test all things; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil." Prophecies should encourage us. 1 Corinthians 14:3 NKJV says, "But he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men." The people who think prophecy is just for telling the future are wrong.

If God says to be strong in His prophecy, that is a word of encouragement. If it happens that some testing comes after that, it was meant as a prophecy for something we would have to face. In either case, it was encouragement. Making up prophecy or making up what will happen **is wrong**. If we are speaking prophecy, we are to speak what God says and **NOT** what's on our mind.

Look what the prophetic did in the case of Yosef. He saved the lives of his family and the lives of the people in Egypt and all around that area. The prophetic is powerful. God worked out things for all the people of that region through his prophetic gifting.

Shaul tells us that God can work out things in our lives. Just like God worked out things for the good of Yosef and eventually for his whole family, we know that God can also work out the situations in our lives and bring good. Romans 8:28 NKJV says, "We know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose." Stay faithful and seek all of God's spiritual gifts (see Romans 12:4-8, Ephesians 4:11, and 1 Corinthians 12:4-11).

The Haftarah for VaYeshev is Amos 2:6-3:8. Amos was from Judah but prophesied to the northern kingdom of Israel. Amos predicts doom for the northern kingdom's neighbors in the beginning of the book of Amos. Then, he predicts God's judgment on the northern kingdom of Israel.

Northern Israel is treating good people badly and the poor badly, they are committing sexual sins, and they are drinking wine in their meeting places. God destroyed the Emori and brought Israel out of Egypt and into the Emori's land. Israel though caused the Nazirites to sin and silenced the prophets. They should have valued their relationship with God. Their own strength will not save them. Then God uses some examples of cause and effect to show why they are doomed.

They would not listen to the prophet of God, just like Yosef's brothers did not listen to Yosef. So, northern Israel would bring trouble on themselves for not obeying God. We should always remember that God will restore and forgive us if we will change and do what is right and good.

It says in Amos 2:12 NKJV, "But you gave the Nazirites wine to drink, and commanded the prophets saying, 'Do not prophesy!'" It says in 1 Corinthians 14:1 NKJV, "Pursue love, and desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy." It is the same in our time for

some isn't it. People say you cannot prophesy. Guess what, they are contradicting the Bible and losing out in their relationship with God.

In this portion we see the destructive nature of worldly thinking and the end result of pushing away of God's words through the prophetic. Ya'akov and his family suffered because they did not trust Yosef's words from God. Israel did worse and was completely destroyed because they did not listen to the prophets. God will work out His will. We have to decide if we will be part of it and stand strong for our faith. God may have to find someone else to do His work if we will not do it. In this portion, through the prophetic, God saved a whole region from disaster; God was able to do that because Yosef was willing to stand for God, do what is right, and be bold enough to trust in what God told him.

**Commandments, Implied Commandments, Permissions, and other Concepts.
(We can also understand commandments are being implied from other scriptures in the Bible. There are other possible concepts than what is shared here.)**

Parents are to avoid favoritism and cause jealousy. Genesis 37:3.

Jealousy can lead to sin. Genesis 37:18-25.

Selling a person into slavery is wrong. Exodus 21:16.

Lying can cause great pain. Genesis 37:33-34.

God knows what will happen and can warn us. We should use what God tells us with wisdom. Perhaps Yosef's dreams helped him to get through the terrible situations that he faced. Genesis 37:5-11.

In closing, let us say the Aaronic Blessing from Numbers 6:24-26:

Yě-hō-váh bless you and keep you.

Yě-hō-váh make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you.

Yě-hō-váh lift up His face upon you, and give to you peace. Amen.

Thank you for being with us today.