

## 5781—Genesis 37-40—Vayashev (And he settled)

### *When G-d Needs You<sup>1</sup>*

*Do you ever feel alone? Not necessary lonely, but alone, even though you are surrounded by people.*

*You may have different values from those around you. You may have a different perspective or way of looking at reality. You may feel like an outsider, not quite fitting in to the norms of your society.*

*And that's just when you may be presented with a challenge. An opportunity to get recognition. A means to get ahead in life. A prospect that will make your life so much easier.*

*The catch? Taking that path will not be true to who you are or to what, deep down, you know is the way you ought to be.*

*A part of you insists, who cares? Why make your situation so difficult? It's not as if your life has ever been a bed of roses! You've been inundated with adversities, confronted by adversaries, and surrounded by people who don't care about you.*

*And, who will know? Why stubbornly remain so forlorn because of your unrealistic ideals? Besides, look at how your life has turned out. It's not like your unwavering values have gotten you very far.*

*How should we respond to that cynical voice within?*

Joseph is presented with this question. He had experienced a harsh life; he was reviled by his brothers, sold into slavery, a stranger in a strange land. Finally, just as fate was beginning to smile—and he had secured an important position—the wife of his master, Potiphar, took a liking to him.

It came to pass, after these things, that his master's wife laid her eyes upon Joseph. She said: "Lie with me."—GENESIS 39:7

The Talmud comments: "Each day, Potiphar's wife would attempt to seduce him. Cloth she wore for him in the morning she would not wear for him in the evening ... She said, 'Surrender yourself to me.' He answered, 'No.' She threatened him, 'I shall confine you in prison ... I shall subdue your proud stature ... I will blind your eyes.'"

Joseph refused. And he said to his master's wife: "How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against G-d?" (Genesis 39:8-9)

Said Joseph to her: "I am afraid of the Holy One, blessed be He." Said she: "But He is not here." (Midrash)

And then finally, after all her unceasing efforts, one day Joseph was about to relent.

He entered the house do to his work, and none of the household staff was inside.—GENESIS 39:11

The Talmud (Sotah 36b) fills us in on what happened: At that moment his father's image appeared to him through the window, and said: "Joseph, your brothers will have their names inscribed upon the stones of the ephod ... Is it your wish to have your name expunged from amongst theirs and to be called an associate of harlots?"

Since the Torah had not yet been given, it is questionable whether Joseph had to risk his life to refrain from this sin. Nevertheless, when he saw the vision of his father, from whom he had been separated for decades, he regained the strength to desist. Why?

Jacob's face resembled the beauty of Adam, **whose sin he worked to rectify. Adam's sin of eating the forbidden fruit seemed insignificant, but it had cosmic ramifications for all of humankind.** When Joseph saw the visage of Adam, he recognized that, while our deeds might seem trivial and our personal affairs isolated, every deed can affect our moral balance, as well as the moral standing of all of creation—for now and all times.

Life sometimes showers us with intensely lonely moments of cold indifference. In those times, we need to remember that our every action has significance and lasting consequences. We need to respond to our cynical voice: Right now, G-d needs me to be true to the visage of my Father—by being true to my inner self.

1. *Jacob's face resembled the beauty of Adam, whose sin he worked to rectify. Adam's sin of eating the forbidden fruit seemed insignificant, but it had cosmic ramifications for all of humankind.*

#### a. Genesis 3:1-11

<sup>1</sup>Now the serpent ... said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?" <sup>2</sup>The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, <sup>3</sup>but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, **and you must not touch it, or you will die.**'" <sup>4</sup>"You will not certainly die," the serpent said to the woman. <sup>5</sup>"For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." <sup>6</sup>When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. <sup>7</sup>Then **the eyes of both of them were opened**, and **they realized** they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

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<sup>1</sup> Chana Weisberg, *Shabbat deLights, Bereishit/Shemot* (Chabad.org), pp. 111-113.

<sup>8</sup>Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. <sup>9</sup> But the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?" <sup>10</sup>He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and **I was afraid because I was naked**; so I hid."

<sup>11</sup>And he said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?" ...

- 1) Adam and Eve "died" spiritually, and passed on a deadened spiritual nature to their descendants. **Scripture describes fallen human beings as morally, intellectually, and emotionally corrupt, hostile toward God and one another** (Eph. 2:1-3; Rom. 1:18-32; 3:29-18). In addition, nature itself was twisted out of its original design (Gen. 3:17-19; Rom. 8:19-22). Scripture's description of the Fall is the key to a biblical understanding of the origin of both sin and evil. **Sin was admitted into the world by Adam's act of disobedience and a corrupt nature was transmitted through Adam to the whole human race** (Rom. 5:12-19). Evil, as an active bent of fallen human nature producing the pain and suffering men cause one another, **is the consequence of that first act, amplified by the multitude of sins which it had generated.**<sup>2</sup>

Ephesians 2:1-3 (CJB)

<sup>1</sup>You used to be dead because of your sins and acts of disobedience. <sup>2</sup>**You walked** in the ways of the 'olam hazeh **and obeyed** the Ruler of the Powers of the Air, **who is still at work among the disobedient**. <sup>3</sup>Indeed, we all once lived this way—we **followed the passions of our old nature** and **obeyed the wishes of our old nature and our own thoughts**. In our natural condition we were headed for God's wrath, just like everyone else.

Romans 1:18-32 (CJB)

<sup>18</sup>What is revealed is God's anger from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people **who in their wickedness keep suppressing the truth**; <sup>19</sup>because what is known about God is plain to them, since God has made it plain to them. <sup>20</sup>For ever since the creation of the universe his invisible qualities—both his eternal power and his divine nature—**have been clearly seen**, because they can be understood from what he has made. **Therefore, they have no excuse**; <sup>21</sup>**because, although they know who God is, they do not glorify him as God or thank him**. On the contrary, they have become futile in their thinking; and **their undiscerning hearts have become darkened**. **(HOW? AS A RESULT OF "ORIGINAL SIN." OR BY MAKING A DECISION TO TURN**

**AWAY FROM THE TRUTH)**. <sup>22</sup>Claiming to be wise, they have become fools! <sup>23</sup>In fact, **they have exchanged** the glory of the immortal God for mere images, like a mortal human being, or like birds, animals or reptiles!

<sup>24</sup>This is why God has given them up to the vileness of their hearts' lusts, to the shameful misuse of each other's bodies. **(WHEN DID GOD "GIVE THEM UP"? AT THE "FALL" OR WHEN THEY TURNED AWAY FROM GOD?)** <sup>25</sup>**They have exchanged** the truth of God for falsehood, by worshipping and serving created things, rather than the Creator—praised be he for ever. *Amen*.

<sup>26</sup>This is why God has given them up to degrading passions; so that their women exchange natural sexual relations for unnatural; <sup>27</sup>and likewise the men, giving up natural relations with the opposite sex, burn with passion for one another, men committing shameful acts with other men and receiving in their own persons the penalty appropriate to their perversion.

<sup>28</sup>In other words, since **they have not considered** God worth knowing, God has given them up to worthless ways of thinking; so that they do improper things. <sup>29</sup>They are filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and vice; stuffed with jealousy, murder, quarrelling, dishonesty and ill-will; they are gossips, <sup>30</sup>slanderers, haters of God; they are insolent, arrogant and boastful; they plan evil schemes; they disobey their parents; <sup>31</sup>they are brainless, faithless, heartless and ruthless. <sup>32</sup>They know well enough God's righteous decree that **people who DO SUCH THINGS deserve to die**; yet not only do they keep doing them, but they applaud others who do the same.

Genesis 3:17-19 (CJB)

<sup>17</sup>To Adam he said, "Because you listened to what your wife said and ate from the tree about which I gave you the order, 'You are not to eat from it,' the ground is cursed on your account; you will work hard to eat from it as long as you live. <sup>18</sup>It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat field plants. <sup>19</sup>You will eat bread by the sweat of your forehead till you return to the ground— for you were taken out of it: you are dust, and you will return to dust."

Romans 8:19-22 (CJB)

<sup>19</sup>The creation waits eagerly for the (children) of God to be revealed; <sup>20</sup>for the creation was made subject to frustration—not willingly, but because of the one who subjected it. **But it was given a reliable hope** <sup>21</sup>**that it too would be set free from its bondage to decay and would enjoy the freedom accompanying the glory that God's children will have**. <sup>22</sup>We know that until

now, the whole creation has been groaning as with the pains of childbirth ... **(THE “CHILDREN OF GOD” OBVIOUSLY HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY TO “REPAIR THE WORLD” (TIKKUN OLAM). WHY ELSE WOULD “CREATION WAIT EAGERLY” FOR THEM?)**

Romans 5:12-19 (CJB)

<sup>12</sup>Here is how it works: it was through one individual that **sin entered the world, and through sin, death**; and in this way death passed through to the whole human race, **inasmuch as everyone sinned. (WE DO NOT SIN BECAUSE WE ARE SINNERS—WE ARE SINNERS BECAUSE WE SIN)**. <sup>13</sup>Sin was indeed present in the world before *Torah* was given, but **sin is not counted as such when there is no *Torah***. <sup>14</sup>**Nevertheless death ruled from Adam until Moshe**, even over those whose sinning was not exactly like Adam's violation of a direct command. In this, Adam prefigured the one who was to come.

<sup>15</sup>But the free gift is not like the offence. For if, because of one man's offence, many died, then how much more has God's grace, that is, the gracious gift of one man, Yeshua the Messiah, overflowed to many! <sup>16</sup>No, the free gift is not like what resulted from one man's sinning; for from one sinner came judgment that brought condemnation; but the free gift came after many offences and brought acquittal. <sup>17</sup>**For if, because of the offence of one man, death ruled through that one man; how much more will those receiving the overflowing grace, that is, the gift of being considered righteous, rule in life through the one man Yeshua the Messiah! (DEATH RULED THROUGH ADAM—NOT SIN. WE ARE OURSELVES RESPONSIBLE FOR THAT—OTHERWISE HOW CAN GOD JUDGE US FOR SOMETHING THAT WE HAVE NO CAPACITY/RESPONSIBILITY FOR?)**

<sup>18</sup>In other words, just as it was through one offence that all people came under condemnation, so also it is through one righteous act that all people come to be considered righteous.

<sup>19</sup>For just as through the disobedience of the one man, many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the other man, many will be made righteous.

a) The concept of original sin was **first alluded to in the 2nd-century** by Irenaeus (c. 130-202), Bishop of Lyons ... Other church fathers such as Augustine (354-430) also developed the doctrine ... Tertullian (c. 155-240), Cyprian (c. 200-258), Ambrose (c. 340-397) and Ambrosiaster (d. 397) considered that **humanity shares in Adam's sin**, transmitted by human generation. Augustine's formulation of original sin was popular among Protestant reformers, such as Martin Luther (1483-

1546) and John Calvin (1509-1564), who equated original sin with concupiscence (ardent desire, especially sexual desire), affirming that it persisted even after baptism **and completely destroyed freedom**. Within Roman Catholicism, the Jansenist<sup>3</sup> movement, which the Church then declared heretical, also maintained that **original sin destroyed freedom of will**.

b) Total depravity (also called “absolute inability,” “radical corruption,” or “total corruption”) is a theological doctrine derived from the Augustinian concept of original sin. It is the teaching that, as a consequence of the Fall of Man, every person born into the world is enslaved to the service of sin and, apart from the efficacious or prevenient grace of God, **is utterly unable to choose to follow God, refrain from evil, or accept the gift of salvation as it is offered**.

It is advocated to various degrees by many Protestant confessions of faith and catechisms, including those of Lutheranism, Arminianism, and Calvinism.

c) **If** “fallen human beings (are) morally, intellectually, and emotionally corrupt (and) hostile towards God and one another” **then how was it possible for:**

- 1] Abel to bring a “better offering” than Cain and was “commended as righteous” (Heb 11:4).
- 2] Enoch to be described as “one who pleased God” (Heb 11:5).
- 3] Noah to build the ark “in hoy fear” and “to save his family” (Heb 11:7).
- 4] Abraham to have the “faith (to) make his home in the Promised Land” (Heb 11:9).
- 5] Sarah to “consider (God) faithful” enough to fulfill His promise to her regarding the birth of Isaac (Heb 11:11).
- 6] “All these people (to be) living by faith when they died” (Heb 11:13).
- 7] “Noah, Daniel and Job” to be considered “righteous” (Ezek 14:14).
- 8] Joseph to recognize that how his brothers “intended to harm him ... God intended ... for good and “the saving of may lives.” (Gen 50:20). And “when his end was near, (to

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<sup>3</sup> Jansenism was a theological movement, primarily in France, that emphasized **original sin, human depravity, the necessity of divine grace and predestination**. The movement originated from the posthumously published work of the Dutch theologian Cornelius Jansen, who died in 1638.

speak) about the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt and (give) instructions concerning the burial of his bones" (Heb 11:22).

9] Moses and the children of Israel to have the "faith" required "to pass through the Red Sea on (the dryness)" (Heb 11:29).

10] Rehab to have the "faith" required to "welcome the (Israelite) spies" into her home and hide them from the people of Jericho (Heb 11:31).

11] Gideon, Barak, Samson and Jephthah, David, Samuel and the prophets, to have the "faith (to conquer) kingdoms, administer justice ... gained what was promised; (to) shut the mouths of lions, (to) quench the fury of the flames, and escape the edge of the sword; whose weakness was turned to strength; and who became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies" (Heb 11:32-34).

12] Deborah to "lead Israel" and to "go with" Barak into battle against Sisera (Jud 4:4, 8-10) and to free God's people from his oppressive rule.

13] Peter (and the other disciples) to embrace Yeshua as the Messiah (Mat 16:16).

d) Deuteronomy 30:19-20

<sup>19</sup>This day I call the heavens and the earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. **Now choose life, so that you and your children may live** <sup>20</sup>and **that you may love the LORD your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him**. For the LORD is your life, and he will give you many years in the land he swore to give to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

e) Matthew 7:7-14

<sup>7</sup>"Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; **knock and the door will be opened to you**. <sup>8</sup>For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. <sup>9</sup>"Which of you, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone? <sup>10</sup>Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? <sup>11</sup>If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him! <sup>12</sup>So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.

<sup>13</sup>**"Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many**

**enter through it. <sup>14</sup>But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.**

f) The rabbinic duality of *yetzer hara*, the so-called "evil inclination," and *yetzer hatov*, the "good inclination," is more subtle than the names connote. **Yetzer hara is not a demonic force that pushes a person to do evil**, but rather a drive toward pleasure or property or security, which if left unlimited, can lead to evil (cf. Genesis Rabbah 9:7). When properly controlled by the *yetzer hatov*, the *yetzer hara* leads to many socially desirable results, including marriage, business, and community.<sup>4</sup>

For the rabbis, adults are distinguished from children by the *yetzer hatov*, which controls and channels the drives that exist unchecked in the child. Thus children may seek pleasure and acquisition, but they are not able to create a sanctified relationship or exercise the responsibility to engage in business.

2. ***Adam's sin of eating the forbidden fruit seemed insignificant, but it had cosmic ramifications for all of humankind.***

a. 1 Corinthians 15:20-22

<sup>20</sup>But Messiah has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. <sup>21</sup>For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. <sup>22</sup>For as **in Adam all die, so in Messiah all will be made alive**.

1) Is the destiny the same for "all (who are) made alive" in the Messiah?

a) Daniel 12:2

<sup>2</sup>Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: **some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt**.

2) Then why is destiny the same for "all" those who "die" in Adam?

a) Ezekiel 18:20

<sup>20</sup>The one who sins is the one who will die. **The child will not share the guilt of the parent, nor will the parent share the guilt of the child**. The righteousness of the righteous will be credited to them, and the wickedness of the wicked will be charged against them.

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4 <http://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/the-birth-of-the-good-inclination/>