

<sup>37:1</sup>Jacob lived in the land where his father had stayed, the land of Canaan.

<sup>2</sup>**This is the account of Jacob's family line.** Joseph, a young man of seventeen, was tending the flocks with his brothers, the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives, and he brought their father a bad report about them. <sup>3</sup>Now Israel loved Joseph more than any of his other sons, because he had been born to him in his old age; and he made an ornate robe for him. <sup>4</sup>When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of them, they hated him and could not speak a kind word to him.

1. <sup>2</sup>*This is the account of **Jacob. Joseph ...***

a. Genesis Rabbah LXXXIV:6

6. R. Samuel b. Nahman commented: THESE ARE THE GENERATIONS OF JACOB: JOSEPH. **Surely Scripture should say, THESE ARE THE GENERATIONS OF JACOB: Reuben?** The reason is this: as Jacob was born circumcised, so was Joseph born circumcised: as **the former's mother was childless, so was the latter's ... as the brother of the former hated him, so did the brothers of the latter; as the brother of the former sought to kill him, so did the brothers of the latter seek to kill him; the one was a shepherd and the other was a shepherd; the one was pursued by Satan and the other was pursued by Satan ... the one was escorted by angels, and the other was escorted by angels;**<sup>(4)</sup> the one was promoted through a dream, and the other was promoted through a dream ... **the one went down to Egypt and the other went down to Egypt; the one ended the famine and the other ended the famine; the one adjured [his children] and the other adjured [his brothers]; the one charged [his children] and the other charged [his brothers]; the one died in Egypt and the other died in Egypt ...**

(4) Jacob saw in his dream the angels who were regarded as having escorted him in actual fact.

2. 2. יוֹסֵף אֶת־דִּבְתֵּם רָעָה אֶל־אֲבִיהֶם—*Joseph would bring evil reports*

*about them.* Rashi explains: "Anything bad that he saw regarding his brothers, the sons of Leah, he used to tell his father." However, Ramban<sup>1</sup> holds that Joseph told tales about the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah, and consequently they hated him because of his tales; the sons of Leah hated him **because their father showed preference to him.**<sup>2</sup>

1 Moses ben Nachman (1194–1270), (Nachmanides or Ramban), was a leading medieval Jewish scholar, Sephardic rabbi, philosopher, physician, kabbalist, and biblical commentator.

2 Rabbi Elie Munk, *The Call of the Torah, Bereishis*, (Mesorah Publications, Ltd.), pp. 497-539.

3. 3. וַיִּשְׂרָאֵל אֶהָב אֶת־יוֹסֵף מִכָּל־בָּנָיו—*Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his sons.* **It is amazing to see that the patriarch, who had suffered so much during his life from the consequences of his own father's preference for his brother Esau, did not take steps to avoid this same situation in his relations with his own children.** To explain this preference, the Torah tells us that Joseph was the "son of his old age," which Rashi interprets as meaning that Joseph was born during Jacob's later years, or that he had the same facial features as Jacob, or was (according to Onkelos) an intelligent child and Jacob had passed on to him all the wisdom he had gained from Shem and Ever. But the Zohar gives another reason: **Jacob loved Rachel and her son Joseph and he knew that Rachel's children will be instrumental in mankind's final redemption in messianic times.** The text discreetly hints at this reason when it designates the patriarch here as Israel. It was indeed as father of the nation given the messianic calling that Jacob cherished Joseph ...

**If the patriarch's love might thus seem understandable to us in human terms, it was nevertheless a mistake to show this love openly in front of the other sons.** "It was taught in the name of Rav<sup>3</sup>: **A man should never single out one of his children among the others.** For it was because of a garment ... which Jacob gave to Joseph and not to his other sons that they became jealous of him. And the matter resulted in the descent of our ancestors into Egypt" (Shabbos10b). Of course, remark the Tosafists,<sup>4</sup> the decree of the exile into Egypt goes back to Abraham's time, but the oppression would not have been so severe were it not for this (the unjustified hatred which reigned among the tribes of Israel). And Rambam states clearly in his *Mishneh Torah*:<sup>5</sup> "Our Sages have commanded that **during his lifetime a man should never make any distinction between his children, no matter how slight, so that there should be no quarrels or jealousy among them as there was between Joseph and his brothers.**"

3 Abba Arikha (175–247) was a Jewish Talmudist who was born and lived in Babylonia, known as an Amora (commentator on the Oral Law) of the 3rd-century who established the systematic study of the rabbinic traditions, which, using the *Mishnah* as text, led to the compilation of the *Talmud*. He is commonly known simply as **Rav**.

4 Tosafists were rabbis of France and Germany, who lived from the 12th to the mid-15th centuries ... The Tosafists composed critical and explanatory glosses (questions, notes, interpretations, rulings and sources) on the Talmud, which are collectively called Tosafot ("additions"). The Tosafot are important to the practical application of Jewish law, because the law depends on how the Talmud is understood and interpreted.

5 The *Mishneh Torah* ("Repetition of the Torah") was compiled between 1170 and 1180 CE while Maimonides was living in Egypt, and is regarded as Maimonides' *magnum opus*.

a. Genesis 33:1-3

<sup>1</sup>Jacob looked up and there was Esau, coming with his four hundred men; so **he divided the children among Leah, Rachel and the two female servants**. <sup>2</sup>He put the female servants and their children in front, Leah and her children next, and **Rachel and Joseph in the rear**. <sup>3</sup>He himself went on ahead and bowed down to the ground seven times as he approached his brother.

b. Genesis 42:1-5

<sup>1</sup>When Jacob learned that there was grain in Egypt, he said to his sons, "Why do you just keep looking at each other?" <sup>2</sup>He continued, "I have heard that there is grain in Egypt. Go down there and buy some for us, so that we may live and not die." <sup>3</sup>Then ten of Joseph's brothers went down to buy grain from Egypt. <sup>4</sup>But **Jacob did not send Benjamin, Joseph's brother, with the others, because he was afraid that harm might come to him**. <sup>5</sup>So Israel's sons were among those who went to buy grain, for there was famine in the land of Canaan also.

c. Exodus 23:2-3 (cf. Deut 1:17; 16:19; Lev 19:15)

<sup>2</sup>"Do not follow the crowd in doing wrong. When you give testimony in a lawsuit, do not pervert justice by siding with the crowd, <sup>3</sup>and **do not show favoritism** to a poor person in a lawsuit.

d. Acts 10:34-36

<sup>34</sup>Then Peter began to speak: "I now realize how true it is that **God does not show favoritism** <sup>35</sup>but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right. <sup>36</sup>You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, announcing the good news of peace through Yeshua the Messiah, who is Lord of all ...

e. 1Timothy 5:21 (cf. Rom 2:11; Gal 2:6; Eph 6:9; Col 3:25; Jas 2:1, 9)

<sup>21</sup>I charge you, in the sight of God and Messiah Yeshua and the elect angels, to keep these instructions without partiality, and to **do nothing out of favoritism**.

f. When you chose a rake over a post-hole digger to gather leaves together, you are not showing "favoritism." The one is chosen over the other because it is designed for the task—it is not arbitrary.

4. כְּתֹנֶת פָּסִים—*A fine woolen tunic*. Ibn Ezra<sup>6</sup> and other commentators

translate: a coat of many colors. According to Sforno,<sup>7</sup> a coat of this kind is a sign of high rank and leadership. Frescoes discovered in the

Egyptian tombs of the Bene Hasein<sup>8</sup> show that in the patriarch's times chiefs of Semitic tribes wore multicolored robes; this was the case in the house of King David, as is recorded in II Samuel 13:18. We see from this how the father's gesture brought out the hatred and then the jealousy of the brothers. According to an ancient tradition, the cloak was from the bridal gown which Jacob had offered to Rachel and which he later made into a garment for the son of his late wife.

4. וַיִּשְׁנְאוּ אֹתוֹ—*They hated him*. The Zohar gives a view which differs from that of the Talmud (quoted in the commentary on the previous verse) according to which Jacob was guilty of showing preference to one of his sons. The Zohar recalls that **God Himself openly proclaims His affection for Jacob-Israel at the expense of Esau and declares it formally through the prophet Malachi (1:2) and others**. So too, the three patriarchs openly show their love for one of their children, **not caring about the feelings of hostility which this might stir up among the other children**. This is because true love is given completely. When it clings to the ideal of goodness and justice, it excludes everything which stands in their way. Knowing how to hate is the corollary of knowing how to love. **If the patriarchs showered their fatherly love on one of their children, it was on the one in whom they recognized the true guardian of their spiritual heritage**. They gave him this love without reservation and considered it useless to hide it, even though it might because for fierce hatred on the part of the brothers. So too, God never concealed His love for His "chosen people," although it bore the seeds of the rancor and the hatred of the nations. Thus the struggle between the rival brothers of the patriarchal family, as well as of the vast "family of nations," finds a fertile breeding ground, almost as if prepared in advance, by the act of a parent in choosing, or exercising his privilege of bestowing love. No doubt this struggle is deemed necessary for the attainment of moral perfection and for good to ultimately triumph. Without it, mankind would lapse into stagnation and indolence.

<sup>37:12</sup>Now his brothers had gone to graze their father's flocks near Shechem, <sup>13</sup>and Israel said to Joseph, "As you know, your brothers are grazing the flocks near Shechem. Come, I am going to send you to them." "Very well," he replied. <sup>14</sup>So he said to him, "Go and see if all is well with your brothers and with the flocks, **and bring word back to me**." Then he sent him off from the Valley of Hebron. When Joseph arrived at Shechem, <sup>15</sup>**a man found him wandering around in the fields** and asked him, "What are you looking for?" <sup>16</sup>He replied, "I'm looking for my brothers. Can you tell me

6 Abraham ben Meir Ibn Ezra (c. 1090–c. 1165) was one of the most distinguished Jewish biblical commentators and philosophers of the Middle Ages.

7 Ovadia ben Jacob Sforno (1475–1550) was an Italian rabbi, Biblical commentator, philosopher and physician.

8 Beni Hasan is an ancient Egyptian cemetery. It is located approximately 20 kilometers (12 mi) to the south of modern-day Minya in the region known as Middle Egypt, the area between Asyut and Memphis.

where they are grazing their flocks?"<sup>17</sup>"They have moved on from here," the man answered. "I heard them say, 'Let's go to Dothan.'" So Joseph went after his brothers and found them near Dothan.<sup>18</sup>But they saw him in the distance, and before he reached them, they plotted to kill him.<sup>19</sup>"Here comes that dreamer!" they said to each other.

1. 15. מָה־תִּבְקֶשׁ—*What do you seek?* This verse is written in honor of Joseph. It shows you that he could have had many excuses for giving up the search for his brothers, whom he did not find at Shechem where his father had sent him. But he faced all the dangers and persisted out of respect for his father until he had carried out his mission. The account also teaches us how many means Providence has at Its disposal to achieve Its ends. **At the proper moment it sent Gabriel, a ministering angel who, in the guise of a human being, spoke to Joseph and directed him to his brothers.** God has many agents to do His work and His plan is carried out in all circumstances (*Ramban*).

a. Genesis 50:18-20

<sup>18</sup>His brothers then came and threw themselves down before him. "We are your slaves," they said. <sup>19</sup>But Joseph said to them, "Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? <sup>20</sup>**You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.**

1) Isaiah 46:9-10

<sup>9</sup>Remember the former things, those of long ago; I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me. <sup>10</sup>I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say, **'My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please.'**

2) Job 42:1-2

<sup>1</sup>Then Job replied to the LORD: <sup>2</sup>"I know that **you can do all things; no purpose of yours can be thwarted.**

3) Proverbs 19:21

<sup>21</sup>Many are the plans in a person's heart, but **it is the LORD's purpose that prevails.**

b. Ruth 2:1-7

<sup>1</sup>Now Naomi had a relative on her husband's side, a man of standing from the clan of Elimelek, whose name was Boaz. <sup>2</sup>And Ruth the Moabite said to Naomi, "Let me go to the fields and pick up the leftover grain behind anyone in whose eyes I find favor." Naomi said to her, "Go ahead, my daughter." <sup>3</sup>So she went out, entered a field and began to glean behind the harvesters. **As it turned out, she was working in a field belonging to Boaz, who was from the clan of Elimelek.** <sup>4</sup>**Just then Boaz arrived from Bethlehem** and greeted the

harvesters, "The LORD be with you!" "The LORD bless you!" they answered. <sup>5</sup>Boaz asked the overseer of his harvesters, "Who does that young woman belong to?" <sup>6</sup>The overseer replied, "She is the Moabite who came back from Moab with Naomi. <sup>7</sup>She said, 'Please let me glean and gather among the sheaves behind the harvesters.' She came into the field and has remained here from morning till now, except for a short rest in the shelter."

c. Luke 2:1-7

<sup>1</sup>In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. <sup>2</sup>(This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) <sup>3</sup>And **everyone went to their own town to register.** <sup>4</sup>So **Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David.** <sup>5</sup>He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. <sup>6</sup>While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, <sup>7</sup>and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

1) Micah 5:2

<sup>2</sup>But you, **Bethlehem Ephrathah**, though you are small among the clans of Judah, **out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel**, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times."

Targum Jonathan<sup>9</sup>/Micah 5:1

And you, O **Bethlehem Ephrathah**, you who were too small to be numbered among the thousands of the house of Judah, **from you shall come forth before Me the Messiah**, to exercise dominion over Israel, he whose name was mentioned from before, from the days of creation.

2. 20. וְנִהְרָגוּ—*And let us kill him.* The brothers felt it perfectly justified to pronounce the death penalty on Joseph. They considered him guilty of slander, talebearing, and giving false witness. Rashi ... : "He had denounced his brothers, bringing evil report of them to his father, say-

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9 Jonathan ben Uzziel was a student of Hillel. His Targum dates to the 1st cent. BCE. This Targum is a fusion of the Jerusalem Targums with that of Onkelos. Scholars have traced various strata in this text and have discovered elements dating back to the Hasmonean period and layers as late as the period of the Arab conquest. The Jerusalem Targums are interpretative and exegetical in nature. The translators sought to reflect the exegetical traditions of the Oral Torah and to introduce well-known Halachic and Aggadic interpretations of the verses—Noah Aminoah & Yosef Nitzan, *Torah, The Oral Tradition* (World Zionist Organization), pp. 24, 26.

ing: "They ate flesh torn from a living animal; they humiliated the sons of the bondwomen and called them slaves; they are suspected of immorality. And Joseph will be correspondingly punished on these three accounts ..."

But another opinion suggests that Joseph's brothers considered him a usurper. They looked upon Judah as the brother predestined by his qualities to found the future royal tribe. And they were ready even then to accept him as chief. Now, through his dreams and words, Joseph had shown his intention **of taking over as head of the family**. Thus he went against the others and seriously threatened the peace and harmony of the family and of the future of Abrahams descendants. This was sufficient to make him deserving of the death penalty (*Torah Sheleimah*<sup>10</sup>).

(According to) Sforno ... they considered him a גֹּכֵל, a man of cunning, who had evil intentions. **They thought he was planning to cause their moral or material downfall through some trickery**. This inopportune visit happened after the family had met at Shechem to decide what measures to take against the dreaded appearance of a family tyrant. (It is interesting to note that, in the tradition of Jewry, Shechem has remained the symbol of revolt against any threat of dictatorship. When Solomon died and his son Rehoboam made unacceptable demands as heir to the throne, it was again at Shechem that the people assembled and there the schism of the kingdom took place.) **When they passed the death sentence on their brother, the sons of Jacob were convinced that they were acting in legitimate self-defense**. They remained convinced of their right and, for many years afterwards, they felt that they deserved reproach not for the deed itself but only for the manner in which they carried it out and for their lack of pity (42:21).

a. Genesis 42:21

<sup>21</sup>They said to one another, "Surely we are being punished because of our brother. **We saw how distressed he was when he pleaded with us for his life, but we would not listen**; that's why this distress has come on us."

<sup>38:24</sup>About three months later Judah was told, "Your daughter-in-law Tamar is guilty of prostitution, and as a result she is now pregnant." Judah said, "Bring her out and have her burned to death!"

<sup>25</sup>As she was being brought out, she sent a message to her father-in-law. "I am pregnant by the man who owns these," she said. And she added, "See if you recognize whose seal and cord and staff these are." <sup>26</sup>Judah recog-

nized them and said, "*She is more righteous than I, since I wouldn't give her to my son Shelah.*" And he did not sleep with her again.

<sup>27</sup>When the time came for her to give birth, there were twin boys in her womb. <sup>28</sup>As she was giving birth, one of them put out his hand; so the midwife took a scarlet thread and tied it on his wrist and said, "This one came out first." <sup>29</sup>**But when he drew back his hand, his brother came out, and she said, "So this is how you have broken out!" And he was named Perez.** <sup>30</sup>Then his brother, who had the scarlet thread on his wrist, came out and he was given the name Zerah.

1. Genesis 38:1

<sup>1</sup>At that time, Judah left his brothers and went down to stay with a man of Adullam named Hirah ...

a. אַתְּ הַיּוֹאֵל בְּעֵת הַהוּא—*It was at that time*. Rashi explains: "Why is this account placed here, interrupting the story of Joseph? It is to teach us that the brothers deposed Judah from his leadership when they saw the grief of their father. They said to Judah, 'It is you who told us to sell him. Had you told us to bring him back home we would have listened to you.'" Sforno emphasizes more explicitly Judah's responsibility in the action taken against Joseph. His culpability was great and his wrongdoing in destroying the peace of the family now turned against him. Right in his own household death and jealousy among the brothers broke out. "Measure for measure"—with the loss of his own sons Judah will come to know the cruel suffering he has caused his father.

1) Judah had three sons—two (Er & Onan) were put to death for their "wicked(ness)" (38:7,10). Shelah was too young to fulfill the Levirate obligation to raise up children to his deceased brother Er.

2. <sup>6</sup>*Tamar* ... <sup>29</sup>*Perez* ...

a. Matthew 1:1-6

<sup>1</sup>A record of the genealogy of Yeshua HaMashiach the son of David, the son of Abraham:

<sup>2</sup>**ABRAHAM** was the father of **Isaac**, Isaac the father of **Jacob**, Jacob the father of **Judah** and his brothers, <sup>3</sup>Judah the father of **Perez and Zerah, whose mother was Tamar**, **Perez** the father of **Hezron**, Hezron the father of **Ram**, <sup>4</sup>Ram the father of **Amminadab**, Amminadab the father of **Nahshon**, Nahshon the father of **Salmon**, <sup>5</sup>Salmon the father of **Boaz, whose mother was Rahab**, Boaz the father of **Obed, whose mother was Ruth**, Obed the father of **Jesse**, and Jesse the father of **King DAVID** ...

b. Genesis Rabba 85:14 (cf., Ruth Rabba 4:6)

14. AND IT CAME TO PASS, AS HE DREW BACK HIS HAND ... AND SHE SAID: WHEREFORE HAST THOU MADE A BREACH FOR THYSELF? (XXXVIII, 29). She

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10 Menachem Mendel Kasher (1895–1983) was a Polish-born Israeli rabbi and prolific author who authored an encyclopedic work on the Torah entitled *Torah Sheleimah* ("The Complete Torah").

meant: This one is greater than all who will make breaches, for from thee will arise [he of whom it is written], *The breaker is gone up before them* (Micah II, 13).<sup>(1)</sup>

(1) I.e., the Messiah—this was an unconscious prophecy. Y.T. (Yefeh Toar, commentary by R. Samuel Jaffe Ashkenazi): the deduction is made from the repetition of the word 'breach' in the Heb., pointing to greatness.

c. Micah 2:12-13

<sup>12</sup>"I will surely gather all of you, O Jacob; I will surely bring together the remnant of Israel. I will bring them together like sheep in a pen, like a flock in its pasture; the place will throng with people. <sup>13</sup>**One who breaks open the way will go up before them; they will break through the gate and go out.** Their king will pass through before them, the LORD at their head."

d. Exodus Rabba 30:3

... But you will find, with the exception of two places—'*These are the generations of the heaven and the earth*' (Gen. II, 4) and *Now these are the generations of Perez* (Ruth IV, 18)—the word 'toledot' whenever it occurs in the Bible is spelt defectively,<sup>(6)</sup> and for a very significant reason. Thus the word is spelt fully [with a waw] in the case of '*These are the generations of the heaven and the earth*', because when God created His world, there was no Angel of Death in the world, and on this account is it spelt fully;<sup>(7)</sup> but as soon as Adam and Eve sinned, God made defective all the '*toledoth*' mentioned in the bible.<sup>(8)</sup> **But when Perez arose, his 'generations' were spelt fully again, because from him Messiah would arise, and in his days God would cause death to be swallowed up, as it is says, *He will swallow up death for ever* (Isa. xxv, 8): on this account is the '*toledoth*' of '*The heavens and the earth*' and of Perez spelt fully.**

(6) Without a second waw (i.e., תולדות —not תולדות).

(7) Denoting that life was to be full, never to be terminated by death.

(8) Henceforth it would be deficient, since death would end it.

1) 1Corinthians 15:54-57

<sup>54</sup>When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory" (Isa 25:8).

<sup>55</sup>"Where, O death, is your victory?

Where, O death, is your sting?"

<sup>56</sup>The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. <sup>57</sup>But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Yeshua HaMashiach.

תולדות

1) Adam (Gen. 5:1)

2) Noah (Gen. 6:9)

3) The sons of Noah (Gen. 10:1)  
—Shem, Ham and Japheth

4) Shem (Gen. 11:10)

5) Terah (Gen. 11:27)

6) Isaac (Gen. 25:19)

תולדות

1) Esau (Gen. 36:1,9)

2) Jacob (Gen. 37:2)

תולדות

1) Ishmael (Gen. 25:12)