

Shavua Tov



A Rood Awakening! Torah Commentary
By Glenn McWilliams

Torah Portion: *Vayeshev*

וישב

“And he dwelt”

**Meanwhile, Jacob settled in the area where his father had lived
in the land of Canaan.**

**Vayeshev Ya'akov be'erets megurey
aviv be'erets Kna'an.**

Scripture for study:

Bereshit (Genesis) 37:1 – 40:23

Our Torah portion this week marks a major transition in the history of the chosen people of YHWH ELOHIM. Until now the Torah has focused largely upon the individual lives of our ancestors; Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. This portion begins the transitional shift from individual patriarchs to the leaders of the twelve tribes and their beginnings. While still focusing largely upon the individual heads of the tribes, the stage is being set for the birthing of a nation.

There are two features of the Torah that we should be careful to note. The first feature is the fact that the Torah does not hide the faults and weaknesses of its heroes. In the story of Joseph and his brothers, we witness many and various emotions and weaknesses evident in all fallen humanity. For the sake of integrity, the Torah does not hide the fact that many of its prominent characters struggle with their fallen nature, or *yetzer hara*.¹ The heroes of the Scriptures are neither supernatural comic book characters with superhuman strength, nor the perfect flawless men of mythology and legends; instead, the heroes of the Torah are depicted as mere human beings born in the image of the fallen Adam. We must be careful as we are reading and pondering the events of Joseph and his brothers that we neither elevate them above humanity, making their example of no use to us mere mortals, nor demonize their very human traits and thus become accusers of our brethren. Instead, we should realize that they are in every way just like us. The second feature that we should be careful to take note of is that in many of these stories the free choice of man, even when ill-intended, still brings about the perfect purpose and plan of the Holy One of Israel. While YHWH'S will may have been the last thing on the mind of Joseph's brothers as they were scheming to free themselves of their brother's presence, they still

set the stage for YHWH to keep the promise and prophecy that he gave to Abraham many years earlier.

“And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance. And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age. But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.” (Genesis 15:13-16)

Our Torah portion begins almost instantly with strife. This strife, which divides the brothers one against the other, did not begin with the brothers, but was evident earlier even in their mothers. Much of this strife was spawned by jealousy and envy.

“And he (Jacob) went in also unto Rachel, and he loved Rachel more than Leah...” (Genesis 29:30)

“And when Rachel saw that she bare Jacob no children, Rachel envied her sister....” (Genesis 30:1)

“And Rachel said, With great wrestlings have I wrestled with my sister, and I have prevailed...” (Genesis 30:8)

“And she said unto her, Is it a small matter that thou hast taken my husband? And wouldest thou take away my son’s mandrakes also?” (Genesis 30:15)

The rabbis claim that it was this great rivalry between Leah and Rachel that led Reuben to defile his father’s bed. The Torah clearly states that Reuben slept with Bilhah, Rachel’s handmaid.

“And it came to pass, when Israel dwelt in the land, that Reuben went and lay with Bilhah his father’s concubine: and Israel heard it.” (Genesis 35:22)

The Talmud teaches that after Rachel’s death, Jacob moved his primary residence to Rachel’s handmaid Bilhah’s tent, where she was caring for Rachel’s children Joseph and Benjamin. Reuben felt this to be an affront to his mother, who was Rachel’s rival and not Bilhah’s. Therefore Reuben removed his father’s bed from Bilhah’s tent and placed it in his mother Leah’s tent. The Talmud states that the Torah records it as though Reuben committed fornication with Bilhah to teach that interfering in another man’s marital affairs is the same as committing adultery.² Regardless of the motivation or even the actual behavior, the Scripture is clear that Reuben paid a price for his behavior.

“Reuben, thou art my firstborn, my might, and the beginning of my strength, the excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power: Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel; because thou wentest up to thy father’s bed; then defiledst thou it: he went up to my couch.” (Genesis 49:3-4)

“Now the sons of Reuben the firstborn of Israel, (for he was the firstborn; but forasmuch as he defiled his father’s bed, his birthright was given unto the sons of Joseph the son of Israel...)” (1 Chronicles 5:1)

Knowing this fact helps to explain some of the animosity and behaviors of Joseph’s brothers. Before we go any further, let me address two specific issues that are related to our portion. First, let us be clear that there is no commandment forbidding a man from marrying more than one wife. While marrying multiple wives is not expressly condemned by the Torah, we should take careful note that where there is more than one wife there is often strife, contention, and even betrayal, not only between the wives, but also between their offspring.

We witness this contention and striving between Sarah and Hagar.

“And he went in unto Hagar, and she conceived: and when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress was despised in her eyes. And Sarai said unto Abram, My wrong be upon thee: I have given my maid into thy bosom; and when she saw that she had conceived, I was despised in her eyes; YHWH judge between me and thee. But Abram said unto Sarai, Behold, thy maid is in thy hand; do to her as it pleaseth thee. And when Sarai dealt hardly with her, she fled from her face.” (Genesis 16:4-6)

The strife of the wives and mothers is likewise witnessed to continue between their children.

“And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, which she had born unto Abraham, mocking. Wherefore she said unto Abraham, Cast out this bondwoman and her son: for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac.” (Genesis 21:9-10)

Samuel’s mother Hannah also endured such strife from her counterpart, Peninnah.

“And he had two wives; the name of the one was Hannah, and the name of the other Peninnah: and Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children... And when the time was that Elkanah offered, he gave to Peninnah his wife, and to all her sons and her daughters, portions: But unto Hannah he gave a worthy portion; for he loved Hannah: but YHWH had shut up her womb. And her adversary also provoked her sore, for to make her fret, because YHWH had shut up her womb.” (1 Samuel 1:2, 4-6)

David also had numerous wives, and their descendants did great mischief to one another.

“Wherefore Nathan spake unto Bathsheba the mother of Solomon, saying, Hast thou not heard that Adonijah the son of Haggith doth reign, and David our lord knoweth it not? Now therefore come, let me, I pray thee, give thee counsel, that thou mayest save thine own life, and the life of thy son Solomon.” (1 Kings 1:11-12)

King Solomon may be the saddest example of all.

“And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines: and his wives turned away his heart.” (1 Kings 11:3)

While multiple wives are not forbidden in the Torah, it is clearly depicted in a negative light. There are also certain restrictions as to whom one can marry, as well as for the care of multiple wives. The Torah prohibits a man from diminishing the first wife’s portion in order to support the second wife.

“If he take him another wife; her food, her raiment, and her duty of marriage, shall he not diminish.” (Exodus 21:10)

The Torah also limits whom one can marry and one’s reasons for marrying her.

“Neither shalt thou take a wife to her sister, to vex her, to uncover her nakedness, beside the other in her life time.” (Leviticus 18:18)

While it would appear that Jacob violated the above Torah commandment, this is not necessarily so. Here we may compare this prohibition to that concerning the making of images and idols. The Torah does not forbid the children of Israel from making images of animals and other objects found in nature for the purpose of art or ornamentation, but only for the purpose of bowing down to them in worship.³ Likewise it would appear that the Torah is not forbidding a man from marrying sisters, but forbids him marrying a woman’s sister for the purpose of vexing the first wife. Jacob did not marry Rachel in order to vex Leah, therefore he did not violate this commandment. We must confess, however, that though this was not Jacob’s intention, it was still a vexing situation, as we have already seen.

The Torah also specifically speaks concerning the rights of the descendants of multiple wives. Here is another Torah commandment that at first glance appears to have been broken by Jacob.

“If a man have two wives, one beloved, and another hated, and they have born him children, both the beloved and the hated; and if the firstborn son be hers that was hated: Then it shall be, when he maketh his sons to inherit that which he hath, that he may not make the son of the beloved firstborn before the son of the hated, which is indeed the firstborn. But he shall acknowledge the son of the hated for the firstborn, by giving him a double portion of all that he hath: for he is the beginning of his strength; the right of the firstborn is his.” (Deuteronomy 21:15-17)

In our portion today it is Joseph, the son of the beloved second wife, who is favored and blessed with the garment of honor indicating the status of firstborn, while Reuben, the true firstborn of the hated first wife, is ignored. Did Israel violate the Torah? No! He clearly acknowledged that Reuben was indeed the firstborn and the beginning of his strength.

“Reuben, thou art my firstborn, my might, and the beginning of my strength, the excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power: Unstable as water, thou shalt

not excel; because thou wentest up to thy father's bed; then defiledst thou it: he went up to my couch." (Genesis 49:3-4)

By his own misdeed, Reuben disqualified himself from this position of honor in his father's eyes. Therefore by default, Joseph, as the firstborn of his second wife, becomes the heir of the double portion. Until both Rachel and Leah had died, Bilhah and Zilpah were considered concubines and not wives, therefore lacking the right of inheritance. We may note that in the opening verses of our portion both Bilhah and Zilpah are considered to be the wives of Jacob, indicating that Leah had died without mention.

"These are the generations of Jacob. Joseph, being seventeen years old, was feeding the flock with his brethren; and the lad was with the sons of Bilhah, and with the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives: and Joseph brought unto his father their evil report." (Genesis 37:2)

Note that no mention is made of the children of Leah.⁴ The portion begins by declaring that "These are the generations of Jacob," but only mentions Joseph, and all others are simply lumped together as "brethren," which is then further qualified as being the sons of Bilhah⁵ and Zilpah.⁶ It is interesting that the first four of Leah's children are all involved in some negative incident. Reuben, as we have already stated, defiled his father's bed by sleeping with Bilhah.⁷ Levi and Simeon deceitfully slaughtered the men of Shechem during the rescue of their sister Dinah, provoking their father's indignation toward them and his judgment upon their anger.⁸ And Judah, as is reported in our portion, departs from his family, deceives his daughter-in-law, and is shamed into repentance.⁹ It is clear in the Torah that the children of the wives always take precedence over the children of handmaids. So when Reuben, Simeon, and Levi act impulsively, Jacob then gives the right of the firstborn to Joseph, the firstborn of his beloved wife Rachel. We have seen the transfer of the rights of inheritance passing from the firstborn to another in lives of both Isaac and Jacob. Ishmael is clearly the firstborn of Abraham, and yet since Isaac was the first to enter the covenant by passing through the cutting of Abraham's circumcision, it is Isaac and not Ishmael that inherits the covenant promise.¹⁰ In the story of Esau and Jacob, Esau despised his birthright and sold it to his brother Jacob for a pot of stew.¹¹ And now in our story, Reuben loses the privilege to Joseph.

Another reason for Joseph alone being mentioned as the "generations of Jacob" is because of the many similarities between the life of Jacob and the life of Joseph.¹²

- Neither of their mothers could have children naturally (Genesis 25:21; Genesis 29:31)
- Each mother bore two children with difficulty (Genesis 25:22; Genesis 30:22-24)
- Each gained the birthright of the firstborn in an unusual way (Genesis 25:31; 1 Chronicles 5:1)
- Both were hated by brothers (Genesis 27:41; Genesis 37:4)
- Both were under threat of death by their brothers (Genesis 27:41; Genesis 37:20)
- Each became wealthy (Genesis 32:10; Genesis 45:13)
- Each went down to Egypt (Genesis 46:3-6; Genesis 37:28, 45:13)
- Each was exalted by a dream (Genesis 28:12ff; Genesis 37:5,9, 40:5)
- Both died in Egypt (Genesis 49:33; Genesis 50:26)

- Both were buried in the Land of Israel (Genesis 47:29, 50:6-13; Genesis 50:26, Exodus 13:19, Joshua 24:32)
- Both have a nation named after them (Exodus 12:19, 21, Psalm 83:4; Amos 5:15, Ezekiel 37:19)

Of all of Jacob's children, it is possible that Jacob felt the closest to the son that was most like him. The Torah gives us yet another reason for Israel's great affection for Joseph.

"Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age." (Genesis 37:3)

The expression "son of his old age" can have several different connotations. First, it could be a literal statement describing Jacob's age when Rachel gave birth to Joseph. If this were the case, however, we would expect to see Benjamin listed, since he was born after Joseph by several years. It could be that since Rachel died giving birth to Benjamin, his memories were sweeter when recalling Joseph's birth. This title could also mean simply that Joseph was the son chosen to stay home and care for Jacob in his old age. This was a very common practice. Since Jacob was already advanced in years, it is possible that he chose Joseph, since Benjamin might not have reached an age of responsibility and usefulness by the time Jacob would have required his assistance. Finally, the title "son of his old age" can also be a reference to wisdom. The Scriptures often bestow special honor on the aged for their wisdom and experience.

"Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honor the face of the old man, and fear thy Elohim: I am YHWH." (Leviticus 19:32)

"The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness." (Proverbs 16:31)

Thus it could well be that it was Joseph that received his father's instructions in the Torah. We should take careful notice that it is not Jacob that loved Joseph more, but Israel. Here the play on names is quite dramatic. If Israel is the name indicating spiritual matters, then it could be that Israel is calling Joseph the son of his spiritual nature, the fruit of all his faithful studying. We should note that the title "children of Israel" is not used as of the heads of the tribes until after Joseph reveals himself to his brothers and there is repentance and reconciliation.¹³ Until this time of future reconciliation, the Torah refers to Joseph and his brothers as being merely the "sons of Jacob."¹⁴ That Israel loves Joseph would seem to indicate that Joseph bore some special quality recognized and appreciated only by his father. This becomes apparent in the bestowing of a special garment to Joseph as well as in Jacob's response to Joseph's dreams. Let us begin with comments about the "coat of many colors."

There are many instances in our spiritual development where tradition more than biblical fact influences our understanding of biblical events. One of the most blatant examples of this phenomenon is the story of the wise men that came to worship the Messiah. If asked how many wise men came to the manger to worship the Messiah, most believers will emphatically state that there were three. The Scriptures are very clear that the wise men went to the house when Yeshua was a young child. The wise men never went to the manger. The Scriptures do not tell

us how many wise men there were at the house. Tradition has painted a very romantic but unfaithful picture for us.

The same may be said of Joseph's "coat of many colors." What Israel gave Joseph was a *ketonet passim* (Caf, Tav, Nun, Tav; Pey, Samach, Yud, Mem). A *ketonet* is a linen undergarment, usually worn under a coat or tunic. The Hebrew word *passim* can be translated as "colorful,"¹⁵ embroidered,¹⁶ striped,¹⁷ or with pictures.¹⁸ It can also denote a long garment, coming down to the palms of the hands¹⁹ and the feet.²⁰ Alternatively, the word denotes the material out of which the coat was made, which was fine wool²¹ or silk.²² Thus the *ketonet passim* that Joseph received from his father may be translated as "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." This was not the usual working garment for shepherds. It was royal attire,²³ a special garment that indicated Israel's special love for Joseph, and evoked jealousy and additional hatred toward Joseph from his brothers.

After bestowing this *ketonet* upon Joseph, the Torah reports,

"And when his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him." (Genesis 37:4)

While Joseph's youthful tattling, the receiving of the right of the firstborn, Israel's special affections, and the unique garment were all reasons for the brothers to jealously hate Joseph and refuse to speak kindly or peaceably to him, there is nothing indicating that they desired to kill him. Yet once Joseph shares his dreams, everything changes.

Joseph has two very powerful dreams, both of which convey a very similar message.

"And he said unto them, Hear, I pray you, this dream which I have dreamed: For, behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and, lo, my sheaf arose, and also stood upright; and, behold, your sheaves stood around about, and made obeisance to my sheaf." (Genesis 37:6-7)

The brothers quickly responded,

"Shalt thou indeed reign over us? Or shalt thou indeed have dominion over us? And they hated him yet the more for his dreams, and for his words." (Genesis 37:8)

But this did not deter Joseph from sharing his second dream.

"Behold, I have dreamed a dream more; and, behold, the sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to me." (Genesis 37:9)

Now his father rebukes him, asking Joseph,

"What is this dream that thou hast dreamed? Shall I and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth?" (Genesis 37:10)

The Torah goes on to tell us,

“And his brethren envied him; but his father observed the saying.” (Genesis 37:11)

In both of Joseph’s dreams, his brothers bow before him. In the second dream, Israel himself gives an interpretation of the dream as relating to Joseph’s family bowing before him. It is these two dreams that evoke jealous anger from his brothers and careful consideration from Israel his father. When Israel sends Joseph to visit his brothers in the field, the brothers respond with a unified front. The Torah tells us that the brothers went to Shechem to tend their father’s flock. We should remember that it was at Shechem that the brothers last acted together as a family against a perceived enemy. We should also note that it was at Shechem that the brothers acted against their father’s wisdom.¹⁵ Once again the brothers scheme without their father’s knowledge or consent. Were these sons of Jacob that evil that they would murder their brother simply out of jealousy? We should note that while the brothers clearly desire to be rid of Joseph, they first intend to slay him, but then Reuben and Judah begin suggesting ways to restore him or save his life. This seems to belie a completely evil motive. We should remember that the final chapter of last week’s Torah portion reported on the descendants of Esau that rose up to reign over their family as princes and kings.¹⁶ I would suggest that Joseph’s brothers heard similar ideas coming from their interpretation of Joseph’s dreams. Could it be that they feared that Joseph would raise himself up to conquer and subjugate his own family? If this was the case, then clearly the brothers were justified in their indignation and attempts to spare their family tyranny. We should note that when the brothers see Joseph, they do not call him “brother” but “dreamer.”

“And they said one to another, Behold, this dreamer cometh.” (Genesis 37:19)

Clearly the brothers recognize these dreams to be nothing more than Joseph’s own ambitious intentions. No longer do they see Joseph as one of themselves, but as a threat and enemy. This is alluded to in the response of the man who finds Joseph wandering in Shechem.

“And a certain man found him, and, behold, he was wandering in the field: and the man asked him, saying, What seekest thou? And he said, I seek my brethren: tell me, I pray thee, where they feed their flocks. And the man said, They are departed hence; for I heard them say, Let us go to Dothan.” (Genesis 37:15-17)

Here, note that Joseph is seeking “brothers.” Clearly Joseph still has affection toward his brothers and feels no malice toward them in spite of their ill-treatment of him. When Joseph asks for his brothers, the man responds, “They have departed hence.” The Hebrew here is a little more pointed, stating, “They have departed from this.” In other words, Joseph asks the man where he can find his brothers, and the man responds by saying they have departed or left of being brothers to you.¹⁷ The man tells Joseph that the brothers went to Dothan (Dalet, Tav, Nun). In Hebrew, Dothan means two wells. It was into one of these wells or cisterns that the brothers ultimately threw their brother Joseph.

“And they took him, and cast him into a pit: and the pit was empty, there was no water in it.” (Genesis 37:24)

The redundancy of this statement should cause us to raise questions. Water is often a symbol of the Torah. Here, however, we are told that the pit was empty and there was no water in it. This is an allusion to the fact that the brothers are not acting according to the Torah - nor was the place to which Joseph would ultimately be taken a place of Torah. It is Reuben who first tries to dissuade his brothers from harming Joseph, suggesting that he be thrown into the pit instead. The Torah clearly states that this was so Reuben could return later and take him out and restore him to his father. But when the brothers see a caravan of Ishmaelite traders, they scheme yet another way to dispose of Joseph without having blood on their hands. While some of them may have intended to leave Joseph to die in the pit, Judah raises a most critical question.

“What profit is it if we slay our brother, and conceal his blood? Come, and let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and let not our hand be upon him; for he is our brother and our flesh.” (Genesis 37:26-27)

In many ways we may see these events surrounding Joseph’s treatment by his brothers as bold allusions to Joseph as a type of the Messiah.

- *He is beloved of his Father (Matthew 3:17)*
- *He is hated by his brethren (John 15:18)*
- *His brethren conspire to kill him (Matthew 26:4)*
- *He goes to the Gentiles (Matthew 12:18)*
- *He is rejected by his brethren (John 1:11)*
- *His brothers are blind to who he is (John 9:40-41)*
- *They strip off his garment (Matthew 27:28)*
- *They put him into the hands of the Gentiles (Luke 18:32-33)*
- *There is surprise when he is not in the pit (Matthew 28:6)*
- *When they see him again there is weeping (Zechariah 12:10)*
- *When they see him again he is sitting in glory (Colossians 3:4)*

Here we see the depth of the Holy One’s wisdom. Just as the children of Israel unknowingly rehearsed the life and ministry of the Messiah for centuries by keeping the Feasts of YHWH, so too Joseph and his brothers proclaimed the Messiah without realizing what they were doing. We may draw great comfort from this truth. We have already stated that YHWH will fulfill His promises even in spite of our free will. We should learn from this story to trust YHWH ELOHIM to keep His promises. We should also realize the need for us to submit to divine providence. We never know how YHWH can and will use our lives, even as fractured or broken as they may be. Only YHWH knows what part our lives will play in His plan of restorations and reconciliation.

A second major theme we learn from Joseph’s life is gleaned from the second half of our portion. In the beginning of the portion we witness Joseph receiving his calling. Blessed with dreams of his future and endowed with his special status and garment, Joseph looks regal and ready to assume his position as firstborn. But YHWH realized that Joseph is not yet ready to

serve. Joseph lacks discernment concerning the effects of sharing his dreams with his brothers. Joseph also lacks discipline in speaking *lashon hara* concerning his brothers.¹⁸ Thus Joseph needs refining before he will be able to faithfully carry out his calling as firstborn. It is in the furnace of Egypt that YHWH will apply the heat of the refiner's fire to Joseph and burn from him the dross of arrogance, self-confidence, and self-ambition. Separated from his father, betrayed by his brothers, kidnapped by Midianites, sold to Ishmaelites, enslaved by an Egyptian butcher, slandered by the master's wife, imprisoned and forgotten by his cell mates, Joseph is made ready for service. It is hard to imagine what Joseph must have been thinking and feeling. How difficult it is to hold onto the dreams in such real and trying circumstances. But again and again the Torah reminds us that YHWH was with Joseph through every transition.

"And YHWH was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man: and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian. And his master saw that YHWH was with him, and that YHWH made all that he did to prosper in his hand." (Genesis 39:2-3)

"The keeper of the prison looked not to anything that was under his hand; because YHWH was with him, and that which he did, YHWH made to prosper." (Genesis 39:23)

It is here in prison that Joseph learns another valuable lesson. After faithfully and honestly interpreting the dreams of his cell mates, Joseph asks the chief cup bearer to remember him when he is restored to favor with the Pharaoh. But the Torah sadly reports,

"Yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph, but forgot him." (Genesis 40:23)

Here Joseph learns not to depend upon man but upon YHWH alone for help. Likewise we too must simply submit to the flames of the refiner's fire and put our faith in YHWH alone.

I have met many brothers and sisters who have recently caught the vision of the Torah-observant life. On fire for YHWH ELOHIM and armed with but a little new truth, they sense a calling to ministry. I remember myself five years ago, thinking that I was ready to go out and teach the world all about the Torah. Now, after five years, I stand before people with fear and trembling at the realization that YHWH may be using me to reach some new believer. After five years of constant studying, I know less now than when I first began. We often begin like naïve Joseph, angering and offending our brothers with our dreams and talking about being called. We lack the discernment to know how and when we are to share YHWH'S vision. We lack discernment as to how our sharing is going to affect our brethren. We are so caught up in our own dreams and ambitions that we think little of those we are sharing with. Like Joseph we are surprised and shocked when our brothers, friends, and family fail to see the great excitement in our message. We are devastated when our family, friends, and brethren turn their backs on us and seek to silence us. Frustrated and despairing, we are devastated when we cry out in our depression and no one will help us out of our pit. We are only mildly relieved when strangers will listen, yet our own kinfolk refuse to give us an audience. It stings when we hear the reports and lies that others are spreading about us. Having burned our bridges behind us, we feel trapped and enslaved to our calling. In the dark, we are drawn to others like ourselves that have been hurt and rejected, and in this common pain we find a sense of solace and

meaning. It is here in the pit that others begin sharing their dreams and wondering what it all means. We too begin questioning and wondering if we had misinterpreted the dream, if we had misunderstood the calling. All of our trust in others is gone. We have been forsaken and forgotten. Now, all alone with YHWH, with no pride, no ambitions, no real sense of self or self-confidence, with nothing but the Spirit of the Holy One... now we are ready to fulfill our calling and live our dream.

I hear this story over and over again. So many people question how this could possibly be the will and hand of the Holy One, and yet it is; every moment, every second, every test. The hard part is seeing His presence in it. Trusting YHWH is not always easy. We like to know and understand exactly how we are serving. Naaman the leper was angry with Elisha for giving him such simple directions to be cleansed of his affliction - he was a great warrior and wanted a valiant quest. Washing in the river seemed just too simple... but it worked.¹⁹ We too want to be of service to the Holy One, but we envision it in some fanciful fashion that glorifies us more than it does YHWH. If we are to truly be servants of YHWH ELOHIM, we must learn to submit to divine providence and simply trust that YHWH will and is using us for his plans and purposes, regardless of what it means for our lives. Like Joseph, we must learn to be willing to serve YHWH in our father's house, among our brethren, in the field, as a slave (employee), or even in prison (whatever our bondage may be). How difficult it is to realize that even now, right where we are, YHWH may be using our lives and stories to touch other lives, to advance His cause, and to bring about the fulfillment of His promises. When we have reconciled all of this with our dream, we are ready for the ministry.

SHAVUA TOV!

¹ Evil inclination

² The Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Shabbat, Vol. 2 Jacob Neusner, Hendrickson Publishing Pp. 236-237

³ Exodus 20:4-5

⁴ Genesis 29:32-30:21 Leah's children are Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, followed by Issachar, Zebulun and Dinah

⁵ Bilhah's children are Dan and Naphtali

⁶ Zilpah's children are Gad and Asher

⁷ Genesis 35:22

⁸ Genesis 34:25-30; 49:5-7

⁹ Genesis 38:1ff

¹⁰ Genesis 17:1ff; 21:1ff

¹¹ Genesis 25:33-34

¹² Kestenbaum Tikkun, Messorah Publications, Pg. 85

¹³ Genesis 45:21. The term "children of Israel" does appear twice before this at Genesis 32:32 and 36:31, but is used in these references parenthetically.

¹⁴ Genesis 34:7, 13, 25, 27; 35:5, 22, 26; 49:2

¹⁵ Radak; Septuagint

¹⁶ Ibn Ezra; Bachya; Ramban on Exodus 28:2

¹⁷ Ibn Janach; Radak, *Sherashim*

¹⁸ *Targum Yonathan*

¹⁹ Rashbam; Ibn Ezra; Baaley Tosafoth; *Bereshith Rabbah* 84

²⁰ *Lekach Tov*

²¹ Rashi

²² Ibn Janach

²³ 2 Samuel 13:18 (cf. Ralbag *ad loc.*)

²⁴ Genesis 34:5-17

²⁵ Genesis 36:29-43

²⁶ Kestenbaum Tikkun, Messorah Publication, Pg. 87

²⁷ *Lashon hara* is the same as gossiping or giving an evil report; cp. Genesis 37:2

²⁸ 2 Kings 5:10ff