

BS"D



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## INTERNET PARSHA SHEET ON VAYEISHEV - 5765

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From: TorahWeb.org [torahweb@torahweb.org] Sent: December 01, 2004 Subject: Rabbi Mordechai Willig - Reuven's Teshuva: A Model for Life-Long Growth <http://www.torahweb.org/thisWeek.html>

RABBI MORDECHAI WILLIG

REUVEN'S TESHUVA: A Model for Life-Long Growth

"Reuven returned to the pit" (37:29). The Medrash (84:19) understands "returned" to mean repented (see Rashi). Hashem tells Reuven, "No one has ever repented. You are the first to repent. By your life, your descendant will be the first to call for general repentance, as it is written, 'Return, Yisroel, unto Hashem (Hoshea 14:2)'. Reuven was the first to repent without being confronted and chastised by Hashem, as Adam and Cain were before they repented. His teshuva was not from fear, but was the first repentance from love. This teshuva meahava reaches Hashem's throne of glory, as indicated in Hoshea's words, "unto (ad) Hashem (Yoma 86a)" (Medrash Hamevuor).

Hoshea continues, "return to (shuvu el) Hashem" (14:3). Perhaps "to" means towards Hashem. Even if one cannot return all the way unto Hashem and His throne of glory, he must, nonetheless, move closer to Him [1]. The plural "shuvu" may indicate that most teshuva is incomplete. The singular "shuva" may refer to the rare person who reaches all the way unto Hashem. Anticipated failure to reach the end of the road should not deter one from beginning the journey.

On Yom Kippur, even turning to face (lifnei) Hashem enables purification (Vayikra 16:30). In contrast to those whose backs are to Hashem, our eyes look to Hashem (Sukkah 51b). On Succos we rejoice that Hashem grants purity for minimal teshuva on Yom Kippur. However, we must continue to strive to return towards Hashem and even unto Him

II In a place where ba'alei teshuva stand, the originally righteous, tzadikim gemurim, cannot (Berachos 34b). Maharsha rejects the simple meaning, and interprets a ba'al teshuva as one who was tempted by sin and overcame the temptation. Thus a moshail b'rucho is greater than a chasid hame'uleh (Rambam, Shmone Perakim chap. 6).

The proof text, "shalom shalom larachok v'lakarov" (Yeshaya 57:19) may provide a different interpretation. A karov is one who is near to Hashem in comparison to a complete ba'al teshuva who has reached all the way to Hashem and is considered greater.

Often, today's ba'alei teshuva observe laws too often neglected by others, who suffer by comparison. This is analogous to righteous converts, whose zeal in performing mitzvos is "difficult" for born Jews who are not so meticulous (Tosafos Kiddushin 71a).

"When does a ba'al teshuva become an indistinguishable part of the tsibbur? When he begins to talk in shul!" This recently printed comment illustrates the extraordinary single mindedness associated with ba'alei teshuva. This includes a refusal to succumb to the failings of most originally observant Jews.

In the shema, we are all commanded to love Hashem with all our hearts, souls, and powers (Devarim 6:5). Such love is able to overcome all other loves - of others, of life, and of money (Rashi). Only by repenting, from non-observance of imperfect observance, with love, me'ahava, can one reach this level.

The second paragraph of the shema is in plural form and omits "me'odecheim". The community at large, even if serving Hashem, cannot reach the level of loving Hashem totally (Tanchuma, Noach, 2). A ba'al teshuva, unburdened by the accepted foibles of the tzibbur, is sometimes able to rise above "tzaddikim gemurim".

Perhaps "gemurim" connotes completed, one who has finished his spiritual development. Although a tzaddik gamur may be close to Hashem, a ba'al teshuva, who is constantly striving for perfection, can surpass him.

Since no one is perfect, all of us should aim to be ba'alei teshuva. After all, Reuven repented for only one indiscretion. Yet, since he did so out of love, his example, and the articulation of his descendant Hoshea, continue to inspire teshuva forever.

The colloquial usage of ba'al teshuva, limited to one who repents from non-observance, is unfortunate. It reflects insufficient desire by observant Jews to transcend their completed state of righteousness, formed, and limited, by communal norms. A great rov mistakenly assumed that a questioner was from a non-observant background. The individual protested, "Rebbe, I am not a ba'al teshuva." The rov responded, "Why not?" Indeed.

1. The Malbim interprets el as closer than ad. Ad is teshuva from fear, as the end of the pasuk - for you have stumbled through your iniquity - is understood (Yoma 86b). If Medrash Hamevuor is correct, the opening phrase calls for preemptive teshuva from love, by which one can reach Hashem and His throne. The subsequent phrase, which chastises iniquitous stumblers, refers to teshuva miyirah. If el is less far reaching than ad, the next pasuk (14:3) refers to this lesser form of teshuva.

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### Begin Visein Tal Umatar This Motzei Shabbos Dec. 4

Some items of background that may be helpful.

<http://www.ezratorah.org/kislev.htm>

MOTZEI SHABBOS, Dec. 4, 22 Kislev At Maariv of Motzei Shabbos, we begin to include "Vesain Tal Umatar" into the Shemonah Esrei. If one became aware, after he had completed the Bracha M'vorech Hashunim, that he had omitted "Vesain Tal Umatar" he should wait to insert it right before "Ki Ata Shmaye" of Shema Koleina. If he had already completed the Bracha Shomeya Tefillah, he may insert it before saying "Retzei". If he had already begun "Retzei" he must return to the Bracha "Berech Aleinu", which is the proper place for "Vesain Tal Umatar". If he had already completed the Shemonah Esrei and stepped backward, then he must repeat the entire Shemonah Esrei. In any situation in which a person must repeat the entire Shemonah Esrei, he may fulfill his obligation by listening to every word of the Chazzan's Repetition from beginning to end, with the intention of thus fulfilling his obligation. (It is advisable to repeat 101 times [at the very least 90 times]: Ves Kal Minei Svuasa Letova Vesain Tal Umatar" so as to make the inclusion of "Vesain Tal Umatar" habitual and fluent, thus eliminating any future doubt as to whether one included "Vesain Tal Umatar" in the Shemonah Esrei or not.)

From: Chaim Shulman <crshulman@aol.com>

Reminder We begin Visein Tal Umatar at Maariv on Motzei Shabbos Dec. 4. By way of background, from what I understand the original date for visein tal umatar in chutz laaretz was about Nov. 22 (60 days after the autumnal equinox of about September 23). But in the 20th & 21st centuries we begin Visein Tal Umatar at Maariv of Dec. 4, or in the case of a solar leap year Maariv of Dec. 5 (like 5764 where Feb 2004 has 29 days). [Some refer to this as Dec. 5 or 6, because they are listing the Jewish day that it begins, although it begins the night before.] The reason we didn't switch to Dec. 5 & Dec. 6 in 2000 despite the fact that in halacha we don't adjust for the Gregorian calendar's elimination of a leap year at the turn of the century, is that as 2000 is divisible by 400 even the Gregorian adjustment didn't eliminate that leap year (Gregorian only eliminates leap year in 3 out of every 4 turn of centuries). But in 2100 (Dec. 2099 to be exact), if Mashiach has not yet come, since it won't be a leap year by the Gregorian calendar (and the halacha still follows the Julian calendar that each fourth year is a leap year including turn of century years) the halacha would move the Visein Tal Umatar date to Maariv of Dec. 5 & 6.

See also, <http://dafyomi.shemaisrael.co.il/taanis/insites/tn-dt-10.htm>  
[http://www.ucalgary.ca/~elsegal/Shokel/941215\\_Conundrums.html](http://www.ucalgary.ca/~elsegal/Shokel/941215_Conundrums.html) (Above 2 are also in Parsha Sheet Vayeitze64) <http://www.judaic.org/halakhot/talumatar.pdf>  
[http://www.otmall.com/mj\\_ht\\_arch/v22/mj\\_v22i57.html](http://www.otmall.com/mj_ht_arch/v22/mj_v22i57.html)  
[http://www.lookstein.org/articles/veten\\_tal.htm](http://www.lookstein.org/articles/veten_tal.htm)

From: RABBI AARON ROSS <aross@soinmail.com>

<http://www.chaburas.org/teintal.html>

#### V'TEIN TAL U'MATAR LIVRACHA

Special thanks to Gil Melmed and Jeremy Spierer for providing some of the information used in this Chabura. The opening section comes mainly from a shiur given by Rav Shlomo Levi of Yeshivat Har Etzion

#### I. THE NATURE OF V'TEIN TAL U'MATAR

Throughout the course of the year, there are several additions that are made to the regular weekday Shemoneh Esrei. Ya'aleh v'yavoh is added on Rosh Chodesh and Chol HaMoed, Al HaNissim is added on Chanukah and Purim, and several lines are inserted between Rosh Hashanah and Yom HaKippurim. In addition, there are two lines that are added (or omitted) based not on a holiday, but rather on the season. The first is "mashiv ha-ruach u'morid ha-geshem," added into the second blessing beginning on Shmini Atzeret. The second is "v'tein tal u'matar livracha," added into the ninth blessing beginning on the seventh of Cheshvan in Israel and on December 4th (or 5th) outside of Israel. Both are prayers for rain, and both should be inserted beginning on Succot, as that is the beginning of the rainy season. However, as the mishna in Ta'anit 2a points out, rain on Succot itself is viewed as a curse, and thus we delay until one has stopped sitting in the succah. If this is so, why do we not begin saying v'tein tal u'matar until fifteen days after Succot - why is it any different from mashiv ha-ruach? The gemara in Ta'anit 4b explains that really we should begin saying both on Shmini Atzeret. However, mashiv ha-ruach is merely a praise of the might of Hashem, whereas v'tein tal u'matar is a specific request for rain. Praise can be given at any time. However, during the first few days after Succot, all of the people who made pilgrimage to Jerusalem for the holiday were still returning home, and rain would be very difficult for them. Thus, we delay the request until the seventh of Cheshvan, which was enough time for all of them to return home.

Leaving aside mashiv ha-ruach, we will focus on v'tein tal u'matar. This line is different than the other additions mentioned at the outset of this Chabura. With regard to Al HaNissim, for example, either it is said or it is not said - there is nothing else that is said in its place on every other day of the year. V'tein tal u'matar, on the other hand, is inserted into the middle of a blessing, and is replaced by "v'tein bracha" during the

summer months. The question then becomes is v'tein tal u'matar merely an addition to the text of Shemoneh Esrei or is it part of the actual text? What would be the possible differences in law that would depend on this answer?

One main practical difference would be if someone forgot to say v'tein tal u'matar in Shemoneh Esrei at mincha on Friday afternoon. Normally, if a person completely forgets Shemoneh Esrei, he says it twice during the next service. However, in this case, the next Shemoneh Esrei would be one of Shabbat, which does not include v'tein tal u'matar, and thus the make-up would not be a make-up for that particular line. Is there still a reason to recite a second Shemoneh Esrei at night? With regard to a person who omits ya'aleh v'yavoh on Rosh Chodesh, the law is that he only has to make up that Shemoneh Esrei because we want him to make mention of Rosh Chodesh as many times as possible. However, if he omits it during the last prayer of Rosh Chodesh, he does not have to say Shemoneh Esrei twice during the following service. Why not? Since it is no longer Rosh Chodesh by that point, he no longer has to make mention of that special day. As a result, we see that ya'aleh v'yavoh is not considered to be part of the main text of the prayer. Had that been the case, we would have considered the omission to be a flaw in the prayer and would have required it to be repeated. As this is not the law, we can see that ya'aleh v'yavoh is merely an addition that does not affect the main text of Shemoneh Esrei.

Returning to v'tein tal u'matar, the law is the subject of dispute between Rav Chayim HaLevi Soloveitchik and Rav Tzvi Pesach Frank. Rav Chayim, basing himself on Tosafot in Berachot 26b, claims that v'tein tal u'matar is unlike ya'aleh v'yavoh in that it is viewed as being an integral part of the text of the Shemoneh Esrei. As such, its omission renders the entire prayer invalid and it must be repeated even on Friday night when that particular line would not be said. The flaw is not in that line, but in the prayer as a whole. Rav Frank responds that if ya'aleh v'yavoh is not an integral part of the text, then v'tein tal u'matar certainly is not. On what does he base this claim? The law is that if a person forgets to say v'tein tal u'matar, but remembers it before the blessing of "shomei'a tefilla," he may add it into that blessing. However, there is no recourse for forgetting ya'aleh v'yavoh other than repeating the entire Shemoneh Esrei. Rav Shlomo Levy disagrees with this proof, citing the Biur Halacha (O.C. 117:5) which points out that any part of any of the middle blessings (#4-#16) that is omitted may be added into shomei'a tefilla, and thus Rav Frank's proof does not prove that v'tein tal u'matar is not a part of the basic text of Shemoneh Esrei. However, there may yet be another proof for Rav Frank's law. If a person does not realize his omission of v'tein tal u'matar until after he has completed the blessing in which it appears then he adds that line into shomei'a tefilla. However, if it really was an integral part of the prayer, then perhaps one can argue that it should be added in as soon as one realizes his error, without waiting until shomei'a tefilla.

#### II. THE CALENDAR SHIFT

(information in this section is taken from the footnotes to the Tur found in the new Machon edition and from an internet leaflet published by the Royal Greenwich Observatory)

As was mentioned earlier, Israel begins reciting v'tein tal u'matar on the seventh of Cheshvan, while the Diaspora does not begin the recitation until December 4th or 5th. Why is there a discrepancy? Was does one follow the Jewish (lunar) calendar and one the Christian (solar) calendar?

The initial level of the answer to this question comes from Ta'anit 10a. There, Chananiah states that outside of Israel no request for rain is made until the 60th day of the autumnal equinox, i.e. November 22. Why is this so? As Rashi explains, lands outside of Israel, which in the gemara refers specifically to Babylonia, were flat and thus did not need rain so early in the year. The Tur and Beit Yoseif both discuss whether or not other countries should follow Israel or Babylonia. Suffice it to say that

the law is that all lands in the Diaspora follow the Babylonian custom. Our goal now will be to understand how November 22 became December 4.

The answer to this question requires a historical background. In the year 46 BCE, Julius Caesar established what became known as the Julian Calendar. This calendar had 12 months, and one year had 365.25 days. Every four years, the quarter-days appeared on the calendar as a leap year day. However, the actual length of a solar year is slightly less than this, approximately 365.24219 days. In the short run, this difference is negligible, but over time it adds up. This eventually caused a problem with regard to the seasons, which depended on the solar year (actually it is known with regard to the seasons as a tropical year), and were gradually failing to fall out at the proper time. To fix this situation, Pope Gregory XIII, in 1582, instituted the Gregorian calendar. Two changes were made with the change in calendar. The first is that 10 days were "lost," meaning that October 4th that year was followed by October 15th. With regard to our issue, v'tein tal u'matar that year was said on December 1st instead of November 22nd. The second change that was made was more subtle, but is perhaps more important. The rule for leap years was altered slightly, with every century year NOT divisible by 400 losing its leap-year status. Thus, 1600 was a leap year, but 1700, 1800, and 1900 were not. This had the effect of changing the average length of a year to 365.2425 days, a difference that is much less noticeable over time (a margin of error of roughly 3 days in 10,000 years). As a result, the date for v'tein tal u'matar was bumped up one day in each of those three years, bringing us to our current date of December 4th (thus, after 2100, the date will become December 5th).

The only exception to be aware of is that v'tein tal u'matar is added beginning from December 5th in the Diaspora when the following Gregorian year is a leap year. This is due to the fact that the Jewish year begins several months earlier and factors in the extra day from the beginning (This relates to the fact that the Jewish calendar is based on both the solar and the lunar ones).

### III. FROM ISRAEL TO THE DIASPORA AND BACK

Our final area of inquiry this week will be the case of a person who travels between Israel and the Diaspora during the time period between the seventh of Cheshvan and December 4th. Should an American, who has yet to add in v'tein tal u'matar, add it in for a week and then revert to not saying it until December 4th? Should an Israeli who has begun adding it stop saying it for a week and then resume upon his return home? Are we mainly concerned about where a person is at a given time or is our main concern where a person hails from? How much consistency do we demand - can a person start and stop adding it in as frequently as he crosses borders? Would a soldier who was constantly assigned to going back and forth across the Lebanese border have a different Shemoneh Esrei every time that he prayed until December 4th finally rolled around?

The Be'eir Heitev (O.C. 117::4) presents several views with regard to this question. He first brings an opinion that claims that a resident of Israel who leaves his homeland during this time period continues to say v'tein tal u'matar, even if he does not plan to return during the winter, so long as he leaves a family behind. The idea here is that the family confirms his continued status as a resident of Israel, and thus he may continue to follow the practices of Israel. He then cites a contrary view that claims that such a person follows the practice of the place he is in at a given moment, and thus omits v'tein tal u'matar if he is in the Diaspora (until Dec. 4th). The Pri Chadash has an intermediate view, claiming that such a person can continue to follow the practices of Israel as long as he plans to return during the course of the year. However, if he plans to stay outside of Israel for an extended period of time (for example, an employee of an Israeli consulate overseas), then he takes on an aspect of a resident of the Diaspora and does not begin adding v'tein tal u'matar until December 4th.

What about the reverse case? Rav Ovadiah Yoseif, in his collection of responsa Yechaveh Da'at (1:73), says that a foreigner who comes to Israel after the seventh of Cheshvan but before December 4th must include v'tein tal u'matar in his Shemoneh Esrei so long as he is in Israel. The problem comes when he leaves Israel before December 4th. Although his saying it until now is based on the view that a person follows the practice of the place that he is in, can we then tell such a person to remove this part of his prayer based on that logic? The Be'er Mayim Chayim and others claim that such a person should stop saying this line when he returns home, as he is merely an individual in the midst of the entire Diaspora community that has yet to begin saying it. On the other hand, the Chida and others state that once a person has begun saying v'tein tal u'matar he may not simply stop saying it. Thus, Rav Yoseif suggests that a person continue to say this line, but to do so in the blessing of shomei'a tefilla, where a person may add in any request that he wants to.

Chabura-Net

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From: shemalist@shemayisrael.com Sent: December 02, 2004 To: peninim@shemayisrael.com  
RABBI A. LEIB SCHEINBAUM - Hebrew Academy of Cleveland - Parshas Vayeishev

Parshas Vayeishev Yaakov settled in the land of his father's sojournings... These are the chronicles of Yaakov: Yosef. (37:1,2) Yaakov Avinu wished to settle in the land in which his father had only sojourned. This brings Chazal to infer that Yaakov sought to settle down and live in tranquility. He had endured enough struggling. He finally wanted to put it all behind him. Hashem immediately set up the kidnapping of Yosef. When the righteous seek tranquility, Hashem says to them, "Are the righteous not satisfied with what awaits them in Olam Habah, the World To Come, that they expect to live at ease also in this world?" Chazal seem to imply that Yaakov and other righteous people are not entitled to have a tranquil life. This suggestion, however, is not consistent with the last seventeen years of Yaakov's life that he clearly spent in spiritual euphoria. The nachas, satisfaction, that he received from Yosef and his other sons must have been incredible. Furthermore, what is wrong with a little tranquility, a peaceful interlude? Is there something inappropriate about serving Hashem from a vantage point of serenity, safe from crisis and disquiet?

Horav Shimon Schwab, zl, explains that each of the Avos, Patriarchs, served as a standard bearer who declared and publicized Hashem's Name throughout the world. Each had his own unique personality and manner of service, which he promulgated throughout the world. Avraham Avinu taught the world the concept of monotheism: that there was a G-d Who created and supervises every aspect of the world. Yitzchak Avinu did the same in his own unique manner. When Yaakov was in Shechem and Beth El, he erected alters to Hashem, sharing his heritage with the populace. When he arrived in Eretz Canaan, the land of his father's sojourning, he restricted his avodah, service, to the Almighty and instead began to concentrate on his own personal sheleimus, completion. He felt it was time to devote his time and energy to raising his sons and daughters. Teaching the world, proclaiming Hashem's Name throughout humanity, became secondary to inculcating the next generation with Torah values and Torah outlook. This is the idea that supported Yaakov's quest for tranquility: He sought time off from his responsibility for spreading Hashem's Name throughout the world. He did not renege this role; he just wanted to apply himself fully to raising his family.

Veritably, we may add that children learn best from their parents' actions and deeds. It is not easy to spend one's time away from home saving other neshamos, Jewish souls, and it is quite true that one's own children might resent their parents who are involved in saving the world at the

expense of their families. On the other hand, the children simultaneously learn to respect their parents' values. They see what is important to their parents when they observe what and how much their parents are willing to give up in order to disseminate Torah. It is a difficult decision for a mechanech, Torah educator, to make, one that can, at times, come back to haunt him. Perhaps this is what Hashem was conveying to Yaakov: both objectives have equal significance. You cannot sit back and exchange one for the other. You must work extra hard to achieve success simultaneously in both arenas of educational outreach - in the home and in the world. If we make the proper effort, Hashem will see to it that we achieve success.

The man asked him, saying, "What do you seek?"

The Kotzker Rebbe, zl, explained this pasuk homiletically. The man, whom Chazal explain was the Malach, Angel, Gavriel, asked Yosef, "What do you seek?" Likewise, man must ask himself, "What do you seek?" What are your goals and objectives in life, and what are you doing to achieve them? Only when a person has defined his goals does Hashem offer His Divine assistance in attaining them.

Horav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlita, adds that while this is a question that should be posed by each and every one of us, what should a young Bar-Mitzvah boy say? Until today, he was a child, with no responsibilities and certainly few goals. Suddenly, today, he is thrust into a new role - that of adult decision maker who must determine and define his objectives for life! He first cites a story that occurred with the Sfas Emes, who at a young age, ascended to leadership of the Gur community with its thousands of chasidim, many of them erudite Torah scholars. Among his chasidim were accomplished Torah leaders who, each in his own right was able to serve as Rebbe. As is usually the case, one person had the chutzpah, audacity, to question the Rebbe's right to assume leadership over such an august group of scholars.

The Sfas Emes answered his query with an analogy. A group of mountain climbers attempted to scale Mount Everest. Much time and planning went into preparing for this great feat. They finally began the climb. After much toil and overcoming many challenges, they reached the summit. Their excitement was euphoric. So much work, but such great success. After all, this was an accomplishment to which few people in the world could lay claim. We can only imagine their utter shock, when upon reaching the summit, they noticed a young boy walking around as if it was an everyday occurrence to be taking a stroll on the summit of Mount Everest! They had spent months in preparation for the climb. The actual climb was fraught with danger most of the way. They finally achieved success, only to be greeted by a young child who took being on the top of Mount Everest for granted! How was this to be understood? "How did you get up here?" they all asked the boy. "Who held your hand as you scaled the treacherous rocks and slippery face of the mountain?" they wondered.

The young boy looked at them. With a big smile, he replied, "You climbed the mountain. I was born here!"

"A similar idea applies to my position," remarked the Sfas Emes. "Veritably, many of the great scholars of Gur have scaled the mountain of Torah erudition and have successfully reached the summit. They have climbed the spiritual ladder that elevates them, bringing them closer to Hashem. Much effort, toil and perseverance have gone into this incredible achievement. I, however was born here. I was born into the kedushah, holiness, and taharah, purity. My parents and grandparents, the saintly patriarchs of the Gerrer dynasty, are the mountain. I was born to them on the mountain."

Rav Zilberstein explains that all young Jewish boys are born on the mountains of holiness and purity, following in a tradition of generations of Torah Jews who valued and appreciated the Torah. Thus, every Jewish child has unique supernatural qualities that grant him the ability for unprecedented spiritual growth and knowledge. This notion, the ability

for exemplary achievement, must accompany us as we go through life. Making the questions, "What do you seek? What are your goals and objectives?" all the more compelling.

Peninim on the Torah is in its 14th year of publication. The first nine years have been published in book form. The Ninth volume is available at your local book seller or directly from Rabbi Scheinbaum. He can be contacted at 216-321-5838 ext. 165 or by fax at 216-321-0588. Discounts are available for bulk orders or Chinuch/Kiruv organizations. This article is provided as part of Shema Yisrael Torah Network Permission is granted to redistribute electronically or on paper, provided that this notice is included intact. For information on subscriptions, archives, and other Shema Yisrael Classes, send mail to parsha@shemayisrael.co.il <http://www.shemayisrael.co.il> Jerusalem, Israel 732-370-3344

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From: ohr@ohr.edu Sent: November 29, 2004 To: weekly@ohr.edu Subject: Torah Weekly - Parshat Vayeshev TORAH WEEKLY - For the week ending 4 December 2004 / 21 Kislev 5765 - from Ohr Somayach | [www.ohr.edu](http://www.ohr.edu) Brighten The Darkness For The Poor Of Jerusalem <http://www.kerenyandy.org/> Parshat Vayeshev <http://ohr.edu/yhiy/article.php/1949>

Written and compiled by RABBI YAAKOV ASHER SINCLAIR

OVERVIEW Yaakov settles in the land of Canaan. His favorite son, Yosef, brings him critical reports about his brothers. Yaakov makes Yosef a fine tunic of multi-colored woolen strips. Yosef exacerbates his brothers' hatred by recounting prophetic dreams of sheaves of wheat bowing to his sheaf, and of the sun, moon and stars bowing to him, signifying that all his family will appoint him king. The brothers indict Yosef and resolve to execute him. When Yosef comes to Shechem, the brothers relent and decide, at Reuven's instigation, to throw him into a pit instead. Reuven's intent was to save Yosef. Yehuda persuades the brothers to take Yosef out of the pit and sell him to a caravan of passing Ishmaelites. Reuven returns to find the pit empty and rends his clothes. The brothers soak Yosef's tunic in goat's blood and show it to Yaakov, who assumes that Yosef has been devoured by a wild beast. Yaakov is inconsolable. Meanwhile, in Egypt, Yosef has been sold to Potiphar, Pharaoh's Chamberlain of the Butchers. In the Parsha's sub-plot, Yehuda's son Er dies as punishment for preventing his wife Tamar from becoming pregnant. Onan, Yehuda's second son, then weds Tamar by levirate marriage. He too is punished in similar circumstances. When Yehuda's wife dies, Tamar resolves to have children through Yehuda, as this union will found the Davidic line culminating in the Mashiach. Meanwhile, Yosef rises to power in the house of his Egyptian master. His extreme beauty attracts the unwanted advances of his master's wife. Enraged by his rejection, she accuses Yosef of attempting to seduce her, and he is imprisoned. In jail, Yosef successfully predicts the outcome of the dream of Pharaoh's wine steward, who is reinstated; and the dream of Pharaoh's baker, who is hanged. In spite of his promise, the wine steward forgets to help Yosef, and Yosef languishes in jail.

INSIGHTS A Picture and a Thousand Words "Then there was an opportune day when he entered the house to do his work - no man of the household staff being there in the house..." (39:11)

One of the great revolutions in the Torah world was the institution of the Daf Yomi. The Daf Yomi literally means "The daily page." In 1923, at the First International Congress of the Agudath Israel World Movement in Vienna, Rabbi Meir Shapiro of Lublin proposed that every day across the world one page of the Babylonian Talmud should be learned. In this way, the entire Talmud could be completed in a little over seven years. The idea was eagerly received and has become a tremendous success. This Daf Yomi project has completed numerous cycles, and tens of thousands of Jews connect to their heritage daily through their "Daily Daf."

At the end of that Congress the heads of the world's great Torah institutions gathered for the closing session. A photographer got up to record this momentous event. As he raised his camera many of those luminaries raised their hands in front of their faces. Because of their great modesty they did not want themselves to be photographed.

Rabbi Meir Shapiro stood up and said, "My masters, do not cover your faces! A generation is coming whose only link to their Judaism will be the light that shines out from your holy faces."

A picture is worth a thousand words.

In this week's Torah portion, Potiphar's wife, Zulaicha, repeatedly tries to seduce Yosef. Yosef was outstandingly handsome. So much so that when he would pass by, women peeling citrus fruit with sharp knives would cut into their fingers without feeling the pain, so entranced were they by his beauty.

Zulaicha tried to seduce Yosef for over a year. She began by changing her dress three times a day to attract his attention. When this failed, she tried bribing him with a thousand talents of gold. Yosef was unimpressed. Persuasion turned to coercion and she began to threaten him.

One day Zulaicha found her opportunity. The day of the Nile's overflowing was a national religious holiday. All of Potiphar's household went out to join the singing and dancing in praise of the Nile god. Ever the faithful servant, Yosef excused himself from these festivities and stayed at home to attend to his master's bookkeeping. Zulaicha, claiming a headache, also stayed at home, knowing that she and Yosef would be alone together in the house.

She dressed herself in her finest clothes and bedecked her hair with a crown of jewels. She perfumed herself with scent and her house with incense, and then she draped herself across the doorway where Yosef would have to pass to get to his work. When Yosef failed to appear, she called, "Yosef, why don't you go to your work?" As Yosef approached, she stretched her arm across the doorway to prevent him from passing and whispered "I swear, if you don't do what I want, you're a dead man." Yosef made an oath that he would never acquiesce to her desires, but she persisted. He felt himself bombarded with a combination of threats and bribes. A vision suddenly appeared in front of him. He saw his father Yaakov's image and that of his mother Rachel. In the vision Yaakov said to him "Yosef! There will be twelve precious gems in the chosen (the breastplate of the kohen gadol) - one for each tribe. If you sin, your place will be empty!"

The Divine Presence rested on the choshen; if Yosef had transgressed, his stone would have been removed, for G-d detests immorality.

Sometimes only the holy faces of our forbears stand in the breach to protect us against a world that glorifies immorality and the unbridled pursuit of pleasure.

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From: Shlomo Katz [[skatz@torah.org](mailto:skatz@torah.org)] Sent: December 01, 2004 To: [hamaayan@torah.org](mailto:hamaayan@torah.org) Subject: HaMaayan / The Torah Spring - Parashat Vayeishev Hamaayan / The Torah Spring Edited by Shlomo Katz Vayeishev: The Lost Jewel Volume 19, No. 9 21 Kislev 5765 December 4, 2004

Sponsored by Yitzchok and Barbie Lehman Siegel in memory of his uncle Dovid ben Zvi Halevi a"h

"They took Yosef's tunic, slaughtered a young goat, and dipped the tunic in the blood." (37:31)

R' Elchanan Wasserman z"l (rosh yeshiva in Baranovitch, Poland; martyred in the Holocaust) writes: It is a very wondrous phenomenon that, for thousands of years, Jews have been the victims of blood libels. There is no nation that is more careful not to eat blood than are the Jews.

Does not the Gemara teach that a lie cannot gain a foothold if it does not have some small basis in fact? How, then, have blood libels been propagated successfully?

He answers: Obviously, this is a punishment for the Jewish People for some sin. "If I were not unworthy [of reaching such a conclusion]," R' Wasserman writes, "I would say that it is a punishment for the sin of dipping Yosef's tunic in blood." ("And if I have erred, may Hashem forgive me," he concludes.) (Kovetz Ma'amarim)

"Then there was an opportune day when he entered the house to do his work -- no man of the household staff being there in the house." (39:11) Rashi quotes an opinion from the Gemara which says that Yosef was prepared to give in to Potiphar's wife on that day, but a vision of his father's face appeared to him, and he resisted temptation and did not sin.

The Gemara (Yoma 35b) teaches that Yosef's example will "convict" sinners who fail to overcome their desires. How so? The Heavenly Court will say: If Yosef could refrain from sinning, although he was merely a teenager alone with Potiphar's wife, then certainly adults could refrain from sinning.

R' Shmuel Brazovsky shlita (the Slonimer Rebbe in Yerushalayim) asks: How can Yosef be an example for others? Can't every sinner say, "If Yaakov had appeared to me when I was about to sin, I also would not have sinned"?

R' Brazovsky answers: We are taught that when Hashem tests a person, he takes away from the person the spiritual accomplishments and any deep understanding of G-d that the person previously attained. If so, how did Yosef manage to see Yaakov? At a time when a person is tested, he is not able to "see" spiritual things!

The answer is that a person can never be deprived of the traits that are closest to him, for they are his essence. Yosef was able to "see" Yaakov because Yosef always kept Yaakov in his sights. Ever since he had arrived in Egypt, he had asked himself in every situation: "What would my father do?" This explains, too, why other sinners cannot claim that if Yaakov had appeared to them they too would not have sinned. The fact that Yaakov (or another tzaddik) did not appear to them is their own fault, for they did not constantly ask themselves, "What would so-and-so do in this situation?" (Quoted in *Otzrotaihem Shel Tzaddikim*)

Chanukah Why did our Sages institute a holiday to recall the victory over the Greeks and not to recall other miracles, for example, Devorah's victory over Sisera (Shoftim ch.4) or the miraculous vanquishment of Sanchaiev's army (Melachim II 19)? R' Levi Yitzchak of Bereditchev z"l (late 18th century) explains: Our Sages saw that some miracles are one-time events, while others create spiritual forces that are reawakened each year when the anniversary of the event returns. The defeats of Sisera and of Sanchaiev belong to the former category, while Chanukah belongs to the latter category. This is what the Gemara means when it relates the story of Chanukah and concludes, "The following year, they established a holiday." Only when Chazal saw that the spiritual awakening associated with the miracles returned on the miracle's anniversary did they establish a holiday. This is also what we mean when we recite the blessing, "Who did miracles for our fathers in those days, at this time." The miracle was not only "in those days." It returns in some form "at this time" as well. (*Kedushat Levi*)

R' Baruch Zvi Moskowitz z"l (20th century rabbi in Budapest and Vienna) offers a different answer to R' Levi Yitzchak's question. He writes: Our Sages instituted a holiday to recall the miracle of Chanukah more so than other miracles because they anticipated that Antiouchus's decree prohibiting Torah study and mitzvah observance would be repeated again and again later in history. They hoped that celebrating the Chanukah miracle would inspire Jews who found themselves subject to such anti-Semitic decrees. (R' Moskowitz writes that he said this at a time when it needed to be heard, presumably referring either to the Nazi or Communist periods in the history of Hungarian Jewry.)

[Based on this interpretation, the Gemara's statement that Chanukah was instituted "le'shanah ha'acheret" does not necessarily mean that it was instituted "the following year," as R' Levi Yitzchak explains. It could mean that Chanukah was instituted "for another year."] Based on the foregoing, we can understand why the obligation of Chanukah lights may be observed with one candle per household, but halachah states that it is preferable that each child light his own candle. R' Moskowitz explains: Any amount of light, representing Torah, can drive away the darkness of anti-Semitic decrees. However, to be truly successful in defeating the heirs of the Greeks, a person must ensure that not only he studies Torah, but that his children do as well. (*Tenuvot Baruch Vol. III p.8*)

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<http://www.ezrastorah.org/kislev.htm>  
MOTZEI SHABBOS, Dec. 4, 22 Kislev At Maariv of Motzei Shabbos, we begin to include "Vesain Tal Umatar" into the Shemonah Esrei. [See above for rest of Ezras Torah halacha on Vesain Tal Umatar]  
"We should increase our charity contributions during the days of Chanukah because they are specifically appropriate for rectifying the defects of one's soul through charity, and especially by supporting the needy among those who study torah." (Kitzur Shulchan Aruch Laws of Chanukah). EREV CHANUKAH TUESDAY, Dec. 7, 24 KISLEV No Tachanun at Mincha.

FIRST DAY CHANUKAH TUESDAY NIGHT, 25 KISLEV Tuesday night, December 7, after sunset (according to some, after the appearance of three stars) we light the Chanukah lights and make the following three Brachos: Lehadlik Ner Shel Chanukah, Sheasah Nisim, and Shehecheyanu. After lighting we recite "Haneros Halalu" etc." We also light the Chanukah Menorah, with all of its Brachos, in the southern side of the Shul (where the Menorah was lit in the Holy Temple) so as to make a public declaration of the miracle. "Shehecheyanu" is recited only on the first night. The first candle that is lit is at the extreme right of the Menorah.

MAARIV The usual weekday Maariv. We say Al Hanisim in Shemonah Esrei. If one omitted Al Hanisim he does not repeat the Shemonah Esrei (the same holds true for Al Hanisim in the Blessing after Meals (Birkas Hamazon).

[Rav Henkin noted that the Talmud states that one can fulfill his basic obligation of lighting Chanukah lights with one candle each night for a man and his entire household. The lighting was done outside, by the door of the house, so as to publicize the miracle to passersby. In later times the custom practiced was to light inside the house, by the left side of the door. It is better, however, to light in a window that is in view of the street, or at the very least, that is in view of an alley or courtyard where people walk.

The established custom is to light the Chanukah lights in a way that the Talmud called the most beautiful of all Lemhadrin Min Mehadrin whereby on the first day one lights one candle, and on each day an additional candle is added, that candle being lit first. By the eighth day we light eight candles.

The Talmud's basic decree was for the head of the household to light for everyone in the house. They, in turn, must observe the candles being lit and hear the Brachos. If there are visitors in the house at the time of the lighting of the Menorah, they should either contribute oil (or candles) or pay a few cents so that they become partners in the Mitzvah. The custom now is for even visitors to light their own Menorah, at the proper time, with their own Bracha, even if a member of the family is lighting the Menorah for them at home. The individual family members may, if they so wish, light their own Menorahs and make their own Brachos. If they do so, they should light each Menorah in a separate place.

One may not derive any practical benefit from the Chanukah lights. Therefore, we light an additional light, called the Shammash, so that if one needs some light, he should use the Shammash.

It is best to light at the time of the initial appearance of the stars (except for Saturday night when one, perforce, must light later). Under extenuating circumstances, one may light at midnight or even later, if members of the family are still awake to see the Chanukah lights.

There must be enough oil to last one half hour past the time when the stars appear. If one is lighting after the appearance of the stars there must still be enough oil to burn for half an hour.

If the Chanukah lights are accidentally extinguished prior to their having burned the requisite time, one is not obligated by Halacha to rekindle them; it is, however, advisable that one rekindle them without a Bracha.]

(There is a custom to give children Chanukah Gelt as part of the process of publicizing the miracle.)

WEDNESDAY MORNING, Dec. 8 SHACHRIS Al Hanisim in Shemonah Esrei; Chazzan's Repetition; complete Hallel; Half-Kaddish; Torah Reading: three Aliyahs in Parshas Naso (Numbers 7); Kohen reads (1-11); Levi reads (12-14); Yisroel reads (15-17); Half-Kaddish; Yehalilu; Ashrei; Uva Letzion; (no Lamenatzayach);

Kaddish Tiskabel; Aleinu; Psalm of the Day; Mizmor Shir Chanukas (is said after the Psalm of the Day throughout Chanukah); Mourner's Kaddish.

(We do not say Tachanun, "Kayl Erech Apayim", the series of Yehi Ratzon after Torah Reading, and Lamenatzayach all eight days of Chanukah.)

In Shul we light the Chanukah Menorah in the morning too, (without a Bracha) so as to publicize the miracle.

On the weekdays of Chanukah we observe the following order: In Shemonah Esrei and Bircas HaMazon we add Al Hanisim. At Shacharis we recite the complete Hallel followed by a half-Kaddish (with the exception of Shabbos and Rosh Chodesh when the Hallel is followed by a Kaddish Tiskabel.).

(On each weekday of Chanukah we have three Aliyahs from a section at the end of Parshas Naso, concerning the offerings brought by the N'siim (Princes) during the dedication of the Tabernacle. The first two Aliyahs are read in the paragraph whose day corresponds to that day of Chanukah; e.g., on the third day of Chanukah the first two Aliyahs would read from "Beyom Hashlishie"; [On other weekdays of Chanukah, the readings of the Kohen and Levi for the respective day, follow the division of Levi and Yisroel on the first day, see above]. The third Aliyah continues with the entire offering of the next day.)

From: [debra@etzion.org.il](mailto:debra@etzion.org.il) Sent: December 02, 2004 To: [yhe-parsha@etzion.org.il](mailto:yhe-parsha@etzion.org.il)  
Subject: PARSHA65 -09: Parashat Vayeshev YESHIVAT HAR ETZION ISRAEL KOSCHITZKY VIRTUAL BEIT MIDRASH (VBM) PARASHAT HASHAVUA  
This parasha series is dedicated in memory of Michael Jotkowitz, z"l.

The htm version of this shiur is available at: <http://vbm-torah.org/archive/parsha65/09-65vayeshev.htm> PARASHAT VAYESHEV  
In memory of Chana Friedman z"l (Chana bat Yaakov u'Devorah) on her ninth yearzeit. This shiur is in memory of Israel Koschitzky z"l, whose yearzeit falls today, on the 19th of Kislev. May the world-wide dissemination of Torah through the VBM be a fitting tribute to a man whose lifetime achievements xemplified the love of Eretz Yisrael and Torat Yisrael. Please pray for a refuah sheleimah for Chaya Chanina bat Marcel. Mazal tov to Sam and Ofi Michelson upon the birth of Asher Eliyahu. May the entire Michelson/Katz family be zocheh to raise him, their older children Daniel, Yonatan, Menachem and Yael, as well as Asher's soon-to-be named twin, le-Torah, le-chuppa, u-le-ma'asim tovim!

FROM THE VALLEY OF CHEVRON TO THE VALLEY OF DOTAN: In the Footsteps of Yosef and the Midrash

BY RAV YAAKOV MEDAN

#### INTRODUCTION

Yosef's journey from his father's house and the valley of Chevron to Shekhem and Dotan, to check on his brothers' welfare, introduces the reader to three important places in the region, as well as to aspects of the shepherds' way of life, caravans of traders, and wild beasts. The geography and cameos of life reflected in the parasha are a rich source of interest and inspiration to those who appreciate biblical "realia," and they are justifiably enthusiastic about analyzing it. But this journey is at the same time the beginning of an important historical process - the Egyptian exile. In addition, it is filled with heavy moral problems. For these reasons, it is a source of much discussion and philosophizing among the Sages of the Midrash, who usually examine events principally from these two perspectives - the historical and the moral. In this shiur, we shall address the relationship between these two approaches - the "realistic" and the midrashic - and the question of whether there are connections between them, or whether they are parallel paths with no points of contact. Let us clarify the question: the realists seize the details of the situation, related to the time and place of the action, as elements that are critical for an understanding of it. The Midrash, specifically because of its broad scope and perspective, is generally perceived as ignoring the time and place of the action in order to connect it to the chain of history as a whole, in all its periods. The Midrash, in this view, draws the essence or moral of the story out of its limiting details in order to present it as a general moral statement that is applicable at all times and in all places. If this is the case, then the realistic path and the midrashic path are indeed parallel roads that cannot meet.

PART I: THE VALLEY OF CHEVRON

A. DID YAAKOV LIVE ON THE MOUNTAIN OR IN THE VALLEY?

"He sent him from the valley of Chevron, and he came to Shekhem." (37:14)

"[What do we mean by 'the valley of Chevron?'] Is not Chevron on the mountain, as it is written, 'They ascended through the Negev and came to Chevron?' Rather, [the phrase 'valley (emek) of Chevron' means] from a profound (amok) piece of advice from the righteous one who was buried in Chevron, to fulfill what was told to Avraham in the Covenant of the Parts - 'Your descendants shall be strangers [in a land that is not theirs, and they shall

serve them and suffer four hundred years]." (Rashi) It is worth noting that Rashi, who did not merit to see Eretz Yisrael, brings proof from the verses as to Chevron's location in the mountains. The Midrash, authored mainly by the Sages of Eretz Yisrael, asks briefly: "But Chevron is in the mountain, and here it says that he sent him from the valley of Chevron!" (Bereishit Rabba 84, 11) - bringing no proof at all. The Sages of the Midrash were obviously familiar with Chevron, and knew that it was located in the mountains. They also knew that the inhabited places in the mountain region were on the mountain tops, not in the valleys and wadis. The mountaintops were easier places to defend, and suffered less from gushing water and mud; the wadis and valleys were better suited for agriculture, because of the abundant water supply and silt. However, the biblical "reality" enthusiasts prefer the view that Yaakov lived in the valley over any other theory. Even if the city of Chevron was situated on the mountain [1], they contend that Yaakov lived in the valley, in a wadi in Al-Kina, at the foot of the hill on its northern side [2]. It is also possible, they maintain, that Yaakov lived to the west of the hill, in Wadi Tufach (next to the Tufach junction on the "peace road," at the site where the ancient oak tree is identified as "eshel Avraham," next to the Muscovia) - a place with a legend from the Byzantine period that identifies it with Elonei Mamrei [3]. In their view, Yosef was indeed dispatched from Yaakov's home in the Chevron valley. If there is any reason to delve into the significance of the names of this valley, it is only because of the uniqueness of the expression "valley of Chevron," and because the Torah chooses not to use the more commonly accepted name: Elonei Mamrei. Perhaps this is how Rashi understood it, for if the general location of Chevron is on the mountain, while the "valley of Chevron" is not a whole region, like the Valley of Sara or the Valley of Dotan, but rather just a wadi in a mountainous area, then there would be no reason for the Torah to note the name of this valley. But as we have said, it seems that the authors of the Midrash recognized the dwelling places in Chevron, both Tel Chevron (the "hill of Chevron") and the place known today as Elonei Mamrei [4]. The places of habitation were naturally on the mountain, and therefore the Midrash has no problem with the wording of the verses; it addresses only the question of the situation: if indeed Yaakov lived on the mountain, why did he send Yosef from the valley? **B. VALLEY OF CHEVRON - ME'ARAT HA-MAKHPELA** We find three principal answers to our question above. The first is to be found in the midrash quoted above by Rashi: "He went to fulfill the profound counsel that G-d had placed between Himself and the pleasant friend [Avraham], who was buried in Chevron." In my view (I learned this from R. Chanan Porat), Chazal never meant to detract from the significance of the valley in their interpretation. But the valley (Wadi Al-Kina, Wadi Chevron mentioned above) was not where Yaakov lived. Rather, the valley is the location of Me'arat ha-Makhpela. The cave is not right next to the city, but rather at the edge of the field of Efron the Hittite (23:9). The fields, as we have already noted, were in the valley, which was full of silt and saturated with water. Efron's field, together with all the trees that were in the field and the cave together with them, were purchased by Avraham. In the expression "valley of Chevron," the Sages detected a hint at Me'arat ha-Makhpela. Perhaps they understood that before Yaakov sent Yosef on his dangerous journey northward, he went with his son to pray at the grave of grandfather Avraham in the valley of Chevron, and from there he sent him. In this interpretation, Chazal perceive a clear connection between what Avraham saw at the time of the deep sleep that fell upon him, in the Covenant between the Parts, when he was told, "Your descendants will be strangers... for four hundred years" (15:12-13), and what his grandson Yosef saw in his dream. Both visions were about to start being fulfilled with Yosef's departure from Me'arat ha-on his way to Shekhem. A similar idea is presented by Chazal concerning Kalev ben Yefuneh, in the commentary on the verse, "They ascended from the Negev and came [written in the singular - i.e., 'he came'] as far as Chevron." They teach the phrase "he came" refers to Kalev, who went to prostrate himself on the graves of the forefathers because of the counsel of the other spies (see Sota 34a and Rashi on Bamidbar 13:22). Chazal apparently understood that the spies ascended via the valley of Arad, on the ancient road leading up from Negev ha-Keini and Negev Kalev, through Karmel, Ma'on and Zif, on the way to Chevron. If our assumption is correct - that the spies entered the land through the eastern route rather than the western route - then it is entirely possible that, having trekked through the low places, arrived at Chevron via Wadi Kina from the south, up to the east of Chevron. Since in many midrashim Chazal understand the expression "up to," or "as far as" ('ad), as meaning "up to but not including," the words "he came as far as Chevron" may be understood to mean "up to somewhere close to Chevron," and from this direction, of Wadi Kina - up to Me'arat ha-Makhpela. This is the basis of Chazal's explanation that "he came as far as Chevron" refers to Kalev, "who went to pray at

the graves of the forefathers." This midrash sits well with the description of Yosef setting off for his dangerous journey after going to pray at the graves of the forefathers (at this time, it was the grave of Avraham and Sara alone). The problem that Kalev faced - a plot by the princes of ten of the tribes - was similar to the problem that Yosef had faced. Yosef's prayer signifies the beginning of the "profound counsel" - the prophecy of "Your descendants will be strangers." Kalev's prayer at the same site signifies the purpose of that counsel: the prophecy that "the fourth generation will return here." **C. DISPATCH FROM THE VALLEY - BECAUSE OF THE MITZVA OF ESCORTING** The second answer is anchored in the following explanation, offered by the Seforno: "He sent him from the valley of Chevron" - he escorted him [from the city on the mountain] as far as the valley." There is a parallel Midrash Sekhel Tov: "He sent him" - he escorted him, with a view to returning." The Seforno, it seems, had difficulty with the same question that troubled Rashi, Radak, and the Midrash, and which we addressed above: why did Yaakov send Yosef from the valley, if Chevron is situated on the mountain? The Seforno solves the problem very simply: although Yaakov lived on the mountain, he escorted Yosef to the valley, and then parted from him. If indeed Yaakov lived in Tel Chevron, then he apparently must have escorted Yosef to the Wadi of Chevron, but if he lived in the place known today as Elonei Mamrei (on the hill next to the "Glass Junction"), then he accompanied him northwards, to Wadi A-Zarka, which lies between Chevron and Chalchul - a wadi that joins up with Wadi Netziv, and onwards to Wadi Guvrin. Ba'al ha-Turim, on the other hand, arrives at the idea that Yaakov accompanied Yosef on his way from a completely different direction: "He accompanied him as far as Chevron. He said to him: Father, return home. Yaakov answered: It is written, 'Our hands have not spilled this blood' - meaning that [the elders of the city] did not send him off without escorting him. And with these words he parted from him. And it was thus that Yosef remembered him, and this is as it is written, 'He saw the wagons (agalot) that Yosef had sent.'" [The "agalot" were a sign to Yaakov that Yosef remembered the last subject they had discussed, the "egla arufa."] The Ba'al ha-Turim is referring here to the midrash which teaches: "He gave them a sign as to what he was engaged in when they parted: the law of the egla arufa (heifer whose neck is broken)" - Rashi 45:27 and Bereishit Rabba 94:3. The Ba'al ha-Turim is not hinting that he had a problem with the "valley of Chevron" when he speaks of the mitzva of escorting that Yaakov fulfilled with regard to Yosef, nor does the Seforno hint at the midrash of Chazal concerning the heifer whose neck is broken. However, the Riva - quoted in the commentary of Ba'alei ha-Tosfot and in the Moshav Zekeinim - connects the two points: "Is Chevron then not on the mountain? This is meant to teach us that he accompanied him as far as the valley. Yosef said: 'Father, return home.' He answered, 'It is written, 'Our hands have not spilled this blood...' - and this is as it is written, 'He saw the wagons...'." In any event, it is specifically the topographical paradox that leads the Sages of the Midrash and Ba'alei ha-Tosfot to their conclusion as to the mitzva of escorting and the related mitzva of the heifer whose neck is broken. The moment of parting in the valley, and the moment of reunification (when Yaakov saw the "agalot" and remembered the "egla arufa," whose neck is broken in the wadi) were joined together by Chazal into the same symbol. **D. VALLEY OF CHEVRON AS THE PLACE OF LEARNING ABOUT THE HEIFER** The Chizkuni offers a third answer, which is a variation on the second: "The city is located on the mountain, and Yaakov escorted him as far as the valley. Our Sages taught that Yaakov accompanied Yosef and they were engaged in the matter of the heifer whose neck is broken, and from there he sent him off." (Chizkuni 37:14) There is no hint in the Chizkuni that Yaakov studied the matter of the heifer with Yosef because he was accompanying him, as the Ba'alei ha-Tosfot explain. On the contrary, Yaakov accompanied him because they were engaged in learning this subject. According to this view, the author of the midrash seems to be connecting the heifer in the wadi to the valley of Chevron, understanding that Yaakov went down with Yosef to the valley in order to teach him and illustrate the law of the heifer whose neck is broken. We have already mentioned that the common practice was to settle the mountaintops and hilltops. These areas are relatively rocky and unsuited to agriculture, but they are good for protection from the enemy. The lower places - streams and wadis - were designated for agriculture because of the water flowing to them, the silt that they contained and the fact that these were inferior areas from a security point of view. The cleft of the valleys was therefore an open area between two inhabited places located on the hills on either side. A murderer seeking to carry out his deeds in secret - like Kayin, who killed Hevel when they were in the field - would lie in wait for him outside the inhabited place, like the rapist who ambushes a girl who is engaged to another man in the field; she cries out but there is no one

to save her (Devarim 22:27). There, at a distance from human habitation, the murderer carries out his attack. The place that is hidden and distant from all habitation is the river bed. It is to this ravine, between the two inhabited places, that the Torah commands us to bring the heifer. Concerning this rocky wadi, full of water and surrounded by fertile fields, the Torah stipulates: "...a wadi which has not been ploughed, nor sown" (Devarim 21:4). Its soil, which covered the blood of the victim and hid his murder, is cursed; it shall not give of its strength to man any longer. We are told the same of Kayin who, after killing Hevel, covers the blood and tries to escape from his punishment. Thus the parasha of the heifer presents the law, "The elders of that city shall bring the heifer down to a rocky wadi, which has not been ploughed, nor sown," as a continuation of what was told to Kayin: "Now - you are cursed from the earth that opened its mouth to accept the blood of your brother from your hand; when you plough the ground, it shall no longer give you its strength..." (Bereishit 4:11-12). It is to such a wadi - to the valley of Chevron - that Yaakov took Yosef as they were learning Torah together, in order to teach him the laws of the heifer and how the distance from the wadi to the nearest city is measured. Yaakov had no books of Halakha; his teaching was handed down orally and experientially - by bringing him down to the wadi and demonstrating the laws. Thus we may assume that when they were in the field, he taught Yosef the laws related to the field, and when they were in a vineyard he taught him the laws pertinent to a vineyard. In any event, the fact that he sent Yosef off from the valley of Chevron - according to Chizkuni's understanding of the Midrash - is a function of their studying together the laws related to a wadi, the parasha of the heifer whose neck is broken. This interpretation does not provide any explanation as to why Yaakov and Yosef were engaged in this particular halakhic issue. But perhaps Yaakov sensed somehow, without being fully conscious of it, the brothers' scheme to kill Yosef and cover his blood, to cast him into the pit and thereby hide their crime? Then the valley of Dotan and the wadi in which the pit was located (since a pit is usually found in a wadi) would be a place to which the curse, "It shall not be ploughed, nor sown," would apply forever. The pit, temporarily empty, would become a pit that would never contain any water, and in which snakes and scorpions would creep eternally. In any event, this interpretation of the midrash again derives from intimate knowledge of the geography and topography of the valley of Chevron and the valley of Dotan, and of the habits of farmers, were so familiar to the Sages of the Midrash. Let us summarize the three interpretations presented by Chazal for the expression, "the valley of Chevron." The first interpretation concerns the prayer offered by Yaakov and by Yosef at the grave of Avraham at Me'arat ha-Makhpela. This taught us the importance of "service of the heart" - prayer. The prayer services were instituted to correspond with the daily sacrifices (Berakhot 27b), and they, like the sacrifices, are the root of Divine service. The second interpretation introduces the subject of the broken-necked heifer, from one perspective - the mitzva of escorting that we learn from it; it was because of this law that Yaakov took the trouble to accompany Yosef as far as the valley. The mitzva of escorting is certainly a branch of the great tree that represents "gemillut chasadim" (acts of kindness), and so Yaakov acted accordingly towards his son Yosef. The third interpretation involves the actual study of the subject of the broken-necked heifer in the valley itself, at the riverbed. There the victim is generally found, there the heifer's neck is broken, and there - at the riverbed - Yosef learned from Yaakov the laws pertaining to this parasha. Yaakov is learning Torah with his son, just as they are about to part for such a long period. We learn that the world exists by the merit of Torah, Divine service, and acts of kindness (Avot 1:2): these are the "image of Yaakov" that Yosef takes on his long journey. PART II: SHEKHEM

#### A. A PLACE DESTINED FOR TROUBLE

"His brothers went to pasture their father's flocks in Shekhem." (37:12) The reader is at once curious: why are these people, whose father's house is in Chevron, taking the sheep all the way to Shekhem? Our assumption will be that a realistic understanding of the situation in which Yaakov's sons lived was the basis for Chazal's view of Shekhem as a place destined for trouble for all generations. Their view, which serves as a background to what we shall propose, comes to answer a question that arises specifically from the most literal level of the text: what are people who live in Chevron doing in the distant pastures of Shekhem? The Midrash teaches as follows: "Rechavam went to Shekhem, for it was to Shekhem that all of Israel came, in order to coronate him.' We learn in the name of R. Yossi: This is a place destined for trouble. In Shekhem Dina was raped, in Shekhem Yosef was sold by his brothers, and in Shekhem the kingdom of the house of David was divided." (Sanhedrin 102a; compare Bereishit Rabba 37:14) We may interpret this as meaning that, according to the Midrash, Shekhem has some special quality of dispute,

controversy and trouble (there are further examples of this quality of Shekhem elsewhere in Tanakh and also afterwards). A "special property" is a power bestowed by decree of the Creator; He decided thus, and His decision cannot be questioned. This inexplicable power is the great enemy of any "realistic" interpretation, making it difficult for us to explain the literal text and to understand the purpose of the brothers' journey to Shekhem. What we can understand is that Shekhem turned from a thriving city to a wasteland because of Shekhem ben Chamor and his brutal treatment of Dina, and the legitimacy granted to this deed - at least retroactively - by the people of Shekhem and Chamor, their prince. In the wake of this deed, Shimon and Levi went to kill all the males of Shekhem. From a hint in Yaakov's words to Yosef (48:22) and an explicit teaching in the midrash, we learn that, following the vengeance of Shimon and Levi, a war broke out against many cities in the area of Shekhem, with Yaakov's sons and their allies emerging victorious (35:5). Perhaps Yaakov's sons sought to establish their rule over this region, settling some of their people there together with Canaanites who had converted out of fear or out of their free will to become their partners. (It is possible that it was from among these proselytes that Yaakov's sons took their Canaanite wives, according to the view of R. Nechemia.)

Since that time, Shekhem was a volcanic time-bomb with its insufficiently defined population; many mixed families lived there (such as Avimelekh, son of Gidon's handmaid, and the other squabbling inhabitants of Shekhem - Shoftim chapter 9). Shekhem is the center where all the mixed multitude that Esar-hadon, king of Ashur, brings to the land following the exile of Shomron (Ezra chapter 4). This was a vortex of hatred, dispute, tale-bearing and all the problems associated with the Second Temple Period. Shekhem's immoral act with Dina, and the bloody response of Shimon and Levi, bequeathed upon this place - forever - a population of "mixed multitude" and a mingling of Divine service with idolatry; a population with divided loyalties - between Avimelekh and his opponents during the period of the judges, and between Am Yisrael and their enemies upon the return of the exiles, during the Hellenistic and Roman periods. All of these are the reason for Shekhem being a place destined for trouble and strife. The curse, "The land was defiled and I visit its iniquity upon it; the land shall expel its inhabitants" (Vayikra 18:25), attached to the sin of sexual immorality, is fulfilled literally in Shekhem. In a halakhic context (concerning the cities of refuge), the Gemara likewise teaches: "In Shekhem there were many murderers" (see Makkot 10a and Hoshea 6:8); again, sexual immorality goes along with bloodshed. The view of Shekhem as a place destined for trouble is therefore not only symbolic or related to some inexplicable inherent quality; it has a historical background and substantiation up until the period of the authors of the Midrash. The root of the problem of Shekhem and why the brothers go there may be interpreted against the backdrop of the controversy stirred up by the campaign of revenge that Shimon and Levi undertook there. Perhaps a hint to this is to be found in another midrash from our parasha that is related to Shekhem: "The brothers went to pasture (et) the flocks of their father in Shekhem' - there is a vocalization point above the word 'et' (denoting the direct object), teaching that they really went to pasture themselves [i.e., take care of their own interests]." (Bereishit Rabba 84, 12; Sifri Be-ha'alotekha 69 and others, as well as Rashi 37:12) Perhaps it is just the vocalization point above the word 'et' that raised, for the Sages, the question of why the flocks of a Chevronite family are pasturing in Shekhem. Their conclusion was that the brothers had other business to take care of - business unrelated to their shepherding. Their business related to their reign over Shekhem and its surroundings, and contact with their loyalists living there; it was a reign of strife in a place destined for trouble. On the other hand, the controversial background explains Yaakov's grave concern for his sons - a concern that made him forget momentarily the danger to Yosef, whom his brothers hated, and whom he sends there: "Yisrael said to Yosef: 'Are your brothers not pasturing in Shekhem; go, I send you to them.' He said to him, 'Here I am.' [Yaakov] said to him: 'Go, then; check on your brothers' welfare and the welfare of the flocks, and report back to me.'" (37:13-14) Thus the text; the midrash comments: "Why was Yaakov fearful for his sons' welfare? He feared that perhaps the avengers of Shekhem would attack them, and Yaakov's sons would be killed." (Torah Sheleima, 102; this also reflects the interpretation of the Jerusalem Targum, known as the Targum Yonatan) B. A MAN FOUND HIM

"A man found him [Yosef], and behold, he was wandering in a field. The man asked him, saying: What do you seek? ... The man said: They have moved on from here, for I heard them saying, 'Let us go to Dotan.'" (37:15-17)

The Midrash (Tanchuma Vayeshev 2; Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer 38, as well as Rashi) identify this "man" as none other than the angel Gavriel, in sharp contrast to the literal interpretation offered by Ibn Ezra: "According to the literal text, he was a regular passer-by." This would seem to represent incontrovertible proof



that that Midrash abandons the earthly, defined reality of time and space, concerning itself rather with the infinite expanses of ideals. In other words, no "realistic" exegetical approach could possibly accept that the man who comes across Yosef wandering in the field is in fact an angel! But we must try to understand what this midrash is trying to teach; we may even end up arriving at something of a realistic interpretation. The midrash may be viewed in a number of different ways.

1. Linguistically: We may present three reasons to depart from the Ibn Ezra's literal description of the man as nothing more than a passer-by. Firstly, there is a three-fold emphasis on the word "ha-ish" (the man). Secondly, the man's strange wording of his answer seems to be hiding some secret: "They have moved on from here, for I heard them say, 'Let us go to Dotan.'" Thirdly, there is the very fact that the Torah dwells on such an "unimportant" detail as Yosef's conversation with a man on his way to his brothers.

2. Exegetical parallel: Chazal could be comparing Yosef, sent by his father to a dangerous place and losing his way, to Hagar, who flees to the desert and is sent there again by Avraham following the birth of Yitzchak. There we are told, "She went and wandered in the desert of Be'er Sheva" (21:14). There, too, an angel finds her and encourages her to continue in her path, promising that despite the servitude and the maltreatment that she has endured, her son will grow up and "He will dwell in the presence of all his brethren" (16:12). Yosef, too, proceeds – in accordance with the instructions of the man who finds him wandering – towards servitude and maltreatment, and from there to kingship over all his brothers. Perhaps it is for this reason that the "man" is associated with the angel appearing in chapter 16 and chapter 21.

3. Historical parallel: Midrash Tanchuma deduces that the man was in fact Gavriel from a verse in Daniel. The parallels between Daniel and Yosef are too numerous to mention, and we shall not dwell on them. The "man clothed in linen" (Daniel 10:5) is Gavriel; he appears to Daniel in his distress; he strengthens him and tells him of the future redemption to be effected by the kings of Persia. Here, too, Yosef is in a difficult situation when the man appears and hints to him (according to this Midrash) about the future exile in Egypt. None of the above considerations answers the question of what Chazal are trying to teach us in this midrash that could aid our understanding of the literal text itself and its real situation. Perhaps Chazal were addressing the simple question of what caused Yosef to "wander," i.e., to lose his way, and what perplexed him to such a degree that he needed the man's assistance. Apparently, Yosef did not become lost for no reason in a regular field. Quite innocently, he came upon a specific field – the one concerning which we read: "Yaakov came whole to the city of Shekhem, which was in the land of Canaan, on his return from Padan-Aram; and he encamped facing the city. And he bought the piece of land, upon which he had erected his tent, from the hands of the children of Chamor, the father of Shekhem, for a hundred 'kesita.' And he placed an altar there and called it E-l E-lokei Yisrael." (33:18-20) Yosef – and very likely Yaakov, too – innocently believed that the brothers had gone to Shekhem in order to realize their ownership of the field that Yaakov had purchased for a hundred "kesita." They never imagined that the brothers regarded themselves as owners of the entire region of Shekhem and its environs by virtue of their violent conquest following the episode of Dina. Hence, there was no likelihood of Yosef finding his brothers without some assistance, since the valley of Dotan is situated about 25 km north of Shekhem, but it is possible that it was still considered part of the Shekhem region – a region of which Yaakov's sons regarded themselves to be the patrons, and to which they journeyed in order to further their interests. If indeed the man met Yosef in the plot of the field that Yaakov had bought, and close to the altar that he had built, then he met him at the first spot where G-d appeared to Yaakov upon his return to Eretz Yisrael. There is room to suggest that Yaakov had made this special effort to purchase the field where Avraham had pitched his tent when he came to Eretz Yisrael, "up to the place of Shekhem" (12:6), and that G-d had appeared to him at the same place in which He had appeared to Avraham, telling him, "To your descendants I shall give this land." Moreover, the altar that Yaakov built stood on the same place where Avraham had built his first altar. Perhaps the author of the midrash is teaching that the Shekhina never moved from the altar built on the site of the first revelation, and Yosef, arriving there, merited a sort of revelation of his own in the form of the man-angel who spoke to him. For Avraham and Yaakov, the revelation took place as they took their first steps in the chosen land, while for Yosef, the revelation signaled his last steps in the land, prior to being exiled, until the end of his life, to Egypt. Perhaps the angel was even sent to accompany him in Egyptian exile, just like the angels descending the ladder had been sent to accompany his father Yaakov. In any event, it was in this very field, where (according to our theory) Yosef was seeking his brothers when

the man appeared to him, that he eventually merited to be buried some two hundred and fifty years later: "The bones of Yosef, which Bnei Yisrael had brought up from Egypt, they buried in Shekhem, in the portion of the field that Yaakov had purchased from the children of Chamor, father of Shekhem, for a hundred 'kesita,' and they became the inheritance of the children of Yosef." (Yehoshua 24:32) If the generally accepted assumption concerning Yosef's burial plot next to Shekhem is accurate, then perhaps we also know the place where Yosef wandered, and where the man-angel appeared to him.

#### PART III: THE VALLEY OF DOTAN

At first glance, it would seem that the Torah elaborates at greater length than necessary on the fact that Yaakov and Yosef believed that the brothers should be sought in Shekhem, while in fact they were in the valley of Dotan. Perhaps the Torah emphasizes the move from Shekhem to Dotan because a caravan of merchants moving from the Gilad to Egypt could have passed through the Dotan valley, but could never have passed through Shekhem. The Dotan valley is situated at the center of one of the latitudinal (east-west) roads connecting the two main longitudinal (north-south) routes – the "Kings Highway," passing through Ramat ha-Gil'ad and Ramat Moav and connecting Aram with the Red Sea, and the "Route of the Land of the Philistines," which is much the same as the coastal road of today. The caravan of Ishmaelites and Midianites passed through the Land of Canaan cross-wise on its way to Egypt, and Yaakov – who, like Yosef, believed that his sons were shepherding in the portion of land that he had bought near Shekhem – never imagined that Yosef had gone all the way to the valley of Dotan. For this reason, Yaakov made no enquiries there, he did not question anyone there about having seen him, nor did he interrogate the caravan leaders crossing Canaan on the way to Egypt. We shall address the valley of Dotan and what occurred there from two midrashic perspectives. a. Wily Legalities "The man said: They have journeyed from here, for I heard them say, 'Let us go to Dotan (Nelkha Dotayna)' - They have removed themselves from brotherly love, to seek out wily legalities (nikhlei datot) with which to kill you." (Bereishit Rabba 84; Rashi 37:17) It seems that the midrash is not answering a difficulty in the verse; it is rather expressing an idea and using the words of the verse as support. The commentators have two principal ways of explaining the sin of the brothers in particular, and the sin of the leaders of Israel in Tanakh in general. One way involves strict adherence to the literal text, with a willingness to compromise on the greatness of biblical figures – including Yaakov's sons, viewing them as being driven at times by dark desires – "For there is no man in the world who is completely righteous, doing only good and never sinning" (Kohelet 7). The second approach seeks ideological justification for every perceived misdeed of the great biblical figures, to the point of identification with the sin and an attempt to present it as innocuously as possible. In our case, this second approach would claim that Yosef was judged by his brothers for making himself a god – thinking that the sun and moon would bow to him; he was also judged a "pursuer" because of the evil reports about them that he gave to their father, etc. But any ideological justification of this sin (and, in my view, of all the other sins by the great personalities of the Tanakh) does an injustice to the truth, to morality and to the literal text – unless we assume that its purpose is not to justify the deed, but rather to try to understand the sinner's justification in his own mind. In any event, I reject any attempt at explaining the brothers' sin because of the fact that they accept money for his sale, and because of the equanimity with which they sit down to dine while Yosef cries out from inside the pit. There are two possible ways of explaining the supposed justification that would allow the brothers to carry out their plan. One was mentioned above – the attempt to portray him as deserving of the death penalty because of his actions. The second derives more straightforwardly from the verses and the midrash; we shall now discuss this view. "They plotted against him to kill him" – They said: Let us set the dogs on him." (Bereishit Rabba 84) The starting point of the midrash – even before Reuven and Yehuda moderate the brothers' plan – is that the brothers did not want to kill Yosef with their own hands, but rather through the principle of "gerama" (indirect causality), by means of their dogs. The Midrash Sekhel Tov comments: "This teaches that they did not plan to kill him with their hands, but rather to cause his death by the shepherd dogs." This hypothesis has the advantage of similarity to what they intended to tell their father – that a wild animal had devoured Yosef. But from the brothers' point of view, it had an additional advantage: it did not involve them actually laying their hands on him. In light of this midrash, Reuven's suggestion may be interpreted as a direct continuation of the brothers' desire for some justification that would serve to keep their conscience clear: "Reuven said to them: Do not spill blood; cast him into this pit that is in the desert, and do not harm him." (37:22) Reuven (whose aim was truly to save Yosef, as stated explicitly in the text) tells the brothers (according to the above midrash)

that setting dogs upon him is tantamount to murder, and that he should rather be left to his fate in the pit - to die of hunger, thirst or cold. He defines this as death without "laying their hands upon him" and without spilling blood. Yeduda speaks up next, insisting that this, too, is manslaughter: "Yehuda said to his brothers: What benefit is there if we kill our brother and cover his blood?" (37:26) From the continuation of his speech, "Our hand shall not be upon him," and from his words to Yosef many years later, "our brother died" (46:20), we understand that his chances of being alive many years after being sold were slim. Yehuda, aware of this, wanted only that the deed would not be done by himself and his brothers. The list of all the supposed justifications that appear in the commentaries, the midrashim and the verses for the terrible crime that was about to be perpetrated against Yosef, are concentrated in the midrash into a single sentence: "Let us go to Dotan" - to seek out wily legalities with which to kill you." (Bereishit Rabba 84), i.e. to seek out legal cover for the act of selling Yosef. The authors of the midrash perceived the gradual progression in the debate among the brothers and Reuven, and between them and Yehuda, their desire to escape directly responsibility for their act by means of a legal justification. The midrash attaches this interpretation to the name of the city - Dotan. The word "dat" in the sense of "law" (as opposed to the misleading expression prevalent today, identifying "dat" as religion) did not exist at all in the Hebrew of that period; it is found in Tanakh only in the Books from the Babylonian and Persian exiles: Daniel, Ezra, and - particularly - in the Book of Esther. Perhaps, then, the "wily legalities" of the brothers are somehow related to the law ("dat") promulgated by the wicked Haman in the capital of Shushan: i.e., in the legal cover that he seeks in order to annihilate Mordekhai and his nation. Indeed, there is some similarity between the situations: "The law ('dat') was promulgated in Shushan, the capital. And the king and Haman sat down to drink, while the city of Shushan was perplexed." (Esther 3:15)

Just as the brothers sit down to eat bread after deciding his fate the first time, and again at the moment that they are deciding it a second time (to sell him to the Yishmaelim), so the king and Haman calmly drink against the anguished background of Mordekhai, who dons sackcloth and cries and beseeches. The Midrash teaches: "G-d said to the tribes: You sold in the midst of feasting and drinking... Your children will be sold in Shushan in the midst of feasting and drinking, as it is written: 'The king and Haman sat down to drink.'" (Midrash Shochoer Tov, mizmor 10) The legal cover for the act allows the sinner to eat and drink with equanimity at the time of his sin, since his conscience is (supposedly) clear - after all, he has not transgressed the law. It is the brothers' journey from Chevron, the source of righteousness and judgment (see 18:19) to Dotan - the source of judgment without righteousness in the sale of Yosef - that Chazal's mention of "wily legalities" or "evil justifications" comes to teach us.

**b. Reuven's Act of Salvation** The Midrash and the commentaries ask, where was Reuven at the time of Yosef's sale to the Yishmaelim? There is no mention of him having separated from his brothers after Yosef was cast into the pit. We may explain his absence in terms of the occupation of shepherding: perhaps he left the main tent for some purpose related to the flocks. The Midrash adopts a different approach, but one that is not necessarily any less realistic: "Reuven returned to the pit" - Where had he been? R. Eliezer says, Engaged in sackcloth and fasting." (Bereishit Rabba 84, 19) From the continuation of the midrash, it turns out that Reuven was engaged in repentance over his act concerning Bilha, his father's concubine. It seems that the midrash deduces this from the verse that conclusively nullifies any moral basis for what the brothers have done: "They sat down to eat bread." (37:25) The brothers cast Yosef into the pit and then enjoy a meal. Reuven's noble effort to protect Yosef begins with him not participating in the brothers' meal. Chazal relate this to his repentance over his act with Bilha, and for this reason he was fasting. We find, then, that the mitzva that Reuven performed drew other mitzvot after it. Reuven was engaged in repentance over what he had done with Bilha and over his attempt to forcefully take over the birthright by moving his father's bed into the tent of Leah, his mother; he went on to save Yosef, the firstborn of Rachel, even though this decisively cut him off from the birthright. Many years later, Reuven was to receive a reward from G-d for the two mitzvot that he fulfilled: "G-d said to him: You were the first to save a life; by your life, the first cities to be set aside as cities of refuge will be in your boundaries, as it is written, 'Betzer in the desert.'" (Bereishit Rabba 84:15) The relationship between Betzer, the first city of refuge, and what took place in the valley of Dotan, is based on the relationship between the two verses: "Betzer in the desert, on the flatlands, for Reuven" (Devarim 4:43), and "Cast him into the pit that is in the desert" (37:22), in the valley of Dotan. But more important is the actual connection between Reuven's act of salvation and the subject of the cities of refuge in general. The Torah testifies concerning Reuven: "[He suggested throwing Yosef into the pit]

in order to save him from their hands and to return him to his father." (37:22)

Concerning a city of refuge, we read: "The congregation shall save the murderer from the hand of the avenger of the blood, and the congregation shall return him to the city of his refuge." (Bamidbar 35:25) For his sackcloth and fasting, and the repentance that he took upon himself, Reuven also received reward: "G-d said to him... Since you were the first to introduce repentance, by your life - one of your descendants will introduce his words with repentance. Who was this? Hoshea, as it is written: Return, O Israel, to the Lord your G-d." (Bereishit Rabba 84:19) We shall not delve here into the proofs that Hoshea was a descendant of Reuven. Let us merely note that all of Hoshea's prophecies were addressed to Efraim, prior to the destruction of Shomron. In these prophecies, Hoshea the Reuvenite attempts to prevent the destruction of Shomron, city of Yosef's kingdom, and Efraim's plunge into the impending Assyrian exile. Hoshea tries to do for Shomron, close to the valley of Dotan, what Reuven tried to do for Yosef in the valley: to save him from disaster. Neither Reuven nor Hoshea was successful in preventing Yosef's exile, but the repentance that both introduced will remain for all generations!

**SUMMARY** I have attempted here to steer clear of etymological and symbolic explanations of the midrash, which sever the action from the reality of time and space, focusing on the rarified ideal. I have attempted to show that Chazal's approaches to this story were variegated and diverse. The geography and topography of Eretz Yisrael were familiar to the Sages of the Midrash, who lived in Eretz Yisrael, and they used this reality to connect historical phenomena that happened in different places. They did not ignore the political problems that embroiled Yaakov's sons; they related them logically to similar problems that existed during other periods. They knew what the lives of farmers and shepherds were like, and their realistic insights are sprinkled throughout their midrashim. The Sages of the Midrash plumbed the psychological depths of the relationships between adult children and their father, between brothers within a family, between sinners and their inclinations. At the same time, they interwove verses from varied sources, viewing different periods and different personalities against the background of their parallels from other times. Scope, imagination, precision and creativity combine to create the Midrash's vibrant and colorful picture of those distant yet close events - events that took place in those days, at this place.

**NOTES:** [1] Apparently at Tel-Romeida, the south-eastern part of the modern city of Chevron. This neighborhood, known by the Arabs as "Dir Al-Arba'in," appears to preserve the name "Kiryat Arba." [2] This wadi is also known as Wadi Ein-Sadeh, or Wadi Chevron. Today it passes through the market of Chevron and the Jewish quarter, continues to the sheep market, and on southward to Zif, flowing into Nahal Be'er Sheva. [3] Grintz, Motza'ei Dorot, ha-Kibbutz ha-Meuchad, 5729, p. 328. [4] This refers to Ramat Al-Halil north of Chevron, about 300 meters east of today's "Glass Junction" (Tzomet Ha-zekhukhit), on the northern side of the road leading to Kiryat Arba. The neighborhood of Mamrei (Nimra) to the south of the site preserves the name. Translated by Kaeren Fish This shiur is abridged from the Hebrew original.