

**FOUR BIG JEWISH QUESTIONS FOR THIS MOMENT
STRIFE AND RECONCILIATION:
HOW THE JOSEPH STORY INFORMS OUR TIME**

RABBI SHARON KLEINBAUM

JUNE 5, 2024

PAGE 1 OF 3

GENESIS CHAPTER 37:1-16.

37

Vayeshev

וישב יַעֲקֹב בְּאֶרֶץ מִגְוָרֵי אָבִיו בְּאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן:

Now Jacob was settled in the land where his father had sojourned, the land of Canaan.

אֵלֶּה הַיְשׁוּבֹת יַעֲקֹב יוֹסֵף בֶּן־שִׁבְעֵעָשָׂר שָׁנָה הִזָּה רָעָה אֶת־אֲחָיו בְּצֹאן וְהוּא נָעַר אֶת־בְּנֵי בְלָהָה וְאֶת־בְּנֵי־זִלְפָּה נְשֵׁי אָבִיו וַיִּבְאֵר יוֹסֵף אֶת־דְּבַתָּם דָּעָה אֶל־אָבִיהֶם:

This, then, is the line of Jacob: At seventeen years of age, Joseph tended the flocks with his brothers, as a helper to the sons of his father's wives Bilhah and Zilpah. And Joseph brought bad reports of them to their father.

וַיִּשְׂרָאֵל אֶהָב אֶת־יוֹסֵף מִכָּל־בְּנָיו כִּי־בֶן־זִקְנִים הוּא לוֹ וַעֲשָׂה לוֹ כְּתֹנֶת פָּסִים:

Now Israel loved Joseph best of all his sons—he was his “child of old age”; and he had made him an ornamented tunic.

וַיֵּרְאוּ אֲחָיו כִּי־אַתָּו אֶהָב אָבִיהֶם מִכָּל־אֲחָיו וַיִּשְׂנְאוּ אֹתוֹ וְלֹא יָכְלוּ דַבְּרוֹ לְשָׁלָם:

And when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of his brothers, they hated him so that they could not speak a friendly word to him.

וַיַּחֲלֹם יוֹסֵף חֲלוֹם וַיְגַד לְאֲחָיו וַיֹּסְפוּ עוֹד שִׁנְאוּ אֹתוֹ:

Once Joseph had a dream which he told to his brothers; and they hated him even more.

וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵיהֶם שְׁמַעוּ־נָא הַחֲלוֹם הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר חֲלַמְתִּי:

He said to them, “Hear this dream which I have dreamed:

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PAGE 2 OF 3

וְהָיָה אֲנַחְנוּ מֵאֲלֵמִים אֲלֵמִים בְּתוֹךְ הַשְּׂדֵה וְהָנָה קָמָה אֲלֵמְתִי וְגַם־נִצְבָה וְהָנָה תִּסְבִּינָהּ
אֲלֵמְתֵיכֶם וְתִשְׁתַּחֲוּיִן לְאֵלְמֵתִי:

There we were binding sheaves in the field, when suddenly my sheaf stood up and remained upright; then your sheaves gathered around and bowed low to my sheaf.”

וַיֹּאמְרוּ לֹא אַחִיו הַמֶּלֶךְ תִּמְלֹךְ עֲלֵינוּ אִם־מִשׁוֹל תִּמְשַׁל בְּנוּ וְיִוָּסְפוּ עוֹד־שָׁנָא אֶתְּוּ עַל־חֲלֹמְתִיו וְעַל־
דְּבָרָיו:

His brothers answered, “Do you mean to reign over us? Do you mean to rule over us?” And they hated him even more for his talk about his dreams.

וַיַּחֲלֹם עוֹד־חֲלוֹם אַחֵר וַיְסַפֵּר אֶתְּוּ לְאַחִיו וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֵּה חֲלֹמְתִי חֲלוֹם עוֹד וְהָנָה הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ וְהַיָּרֵחַ
וְאַחַד עֶשְׂרִי כֹכָבִים מִשְׁתַּחֲוּיִם לִי:

He dreamed another dream and told it to his brothers, saying, “Look, I have had another dream: And this time, the sun, the moon, and eleven stars were bowing down to me.”

וַיְסַפֵּר אֶל־אָבִיו וְאֶל־אַחֲרָיו וַיִּגְעַר־בּוּ אָבִיו וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ מַה הַחֲלוֹם הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר חֲלַמְתָּ הַבּוֹא נְבוֹא אֲנִי
וְאִמְךָ וְאַחֲיֶךָ לְהִשְׁתַּחֲוֹת לְךָ אֶרְצָה:

And when he told it to his father and brothers, his father berated him. “What,” he said to him, “is this dream you have dreamed? Are we to come, I and your mother and your brothers, and bow low to you to the ground?”

וַיִּקְנְאוּ־בּוּ אַחֲרָיו וְאָבִיו שָׁמַר אֶת־הַדְּבָר:

So his brothers were wrought up at him, and his father kept the matter in mind.

וַיֵּלְכוּ אַחֲרָיו לְרָעוֹת אֶת־צֹאן אָבִיהֶם בְּשֶׁחֶם:

One time, when his brothers had gone to pasture their father’s flock at Shechem,

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PAGE 3 OF 3

ויאמר ישראל אל-אֵיֹוסֵף הֲלוֹא אֲחֵיךָ רֹעִים בְּשֶׁכֶם לֵכָה וְאֶשְׁלַחְךָ אֵלֵיהֶם וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ הַנְּנִי:
Israel said to Joseph, "Your brothers are pasturing at Shechem. Come, I will send you to them." He answered, "I am ready."

וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ לֵךְ-נָא רְאֵה אֵת-שְׁלוֹם אֲחֵיךָ וְאֵת-שְׁלוֹם הַצֹּאן וְהַשְּׁבִנִי דָבָר וַיִּשְׁלַחְהוּ מֵעֵמֶק חֶבְרוֹן וַיָּבֵא שְׂכֵמָה:
And he said to him, "Go and see how your brothers are and how the flocks are faring, and bring me back word." So he sent him from the valley of Hebron. When he reached Shechem,

וַיִּמְצָאֵהוּ אִישׁ וְהָנָה תַּעֲהָ בַשָּׂדֶה וַיִּשְׁאַלְהוּ הָאִישׁ לֵאמֹר מֵה־תִּבְקֶשׁ:
a man came upon him wandering in the fields. The man asked him, "What are you looking for?"

וַיֹּאמֶר אֶת-אָחִי אֲנֹכִי מִבְּקֶשׁ הַגִּידְה־נָא לִי אֵיפֹה הֵם רֹעִים:
He answered, "I am looking for my brothers. Could you tell me where they are pasturing?"