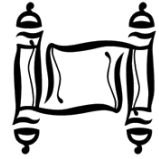




Shabbat Table Talk Page

General Questions:

- What's the *name* of this week's Torah reading? (Vayeshev / וַיֵּשֶׁב)
- What does the Hebrew name *mean*? (“and he settled,” from יָשַׁב, “to dwell”)
- Which chapters of the Torah are included in the reading? (Gen. 37:1-40:23)
- What are some of the main events? (Joseph dreams of his exaltation; his brothers hate him and sell him into slavery; Judah is seduced by Tamar; Joseph becomes a servant at Potiphar's house; Joseph is falsely accused and imprisoned; Joseph interprets the dreams of Pharaoh's servants)



Specific Questions:

- Which son did Jacob love more than all his other sons, and why? (Joseph: he was the son of his old age, and was the firstborn son (bechor) of his beloved wife Rachel; Gen. 37:3)
- What special present did Jacob give Joseph, and why? (An ornamented tunic (*ketonet passim*: כִּתְּוֹנֶת פָּסִים), to indicate his special status in the family; Gen. 37:3)
- Why did the brothers hate Joseph? (They were envious of his status as Jacob's favorite and they hated his dreams; they thought he wanted to become a king over them; Gen. 37:4-11)
- What were the two dreams of Joseph? (First: the brothers' bundles of wheat bowed down to his bundle of wheat; second: the sun (Jacob), the moon (Bilhah), and the eleven stars (the other brothers – including Benjamin – bowed down to him; Gen. 37:5-10)
- When Jacob sent Joseph to look for his brothers, what did they immediately want to do to him? (They wanted to kill him and throw his body into a pit; Gen. 37:18-20).
- Who saved Joseph's life by recommending that he be thrown into the pit alive? (Reuben, who later planned to rescue him; Gen. 37:21-22)
- When Joseph finally reached his brothers, what did they do to him? (They stripped him of his tunic and threw him into a pit; Gen. 37:23-24)
- What did the brothers do after they did this? (They sat down and ate a meal; Gen. 37:25)
- Who devised the idea to sell Joseph into slavery? (Judah; Gen. 23:26-27)
- To whom was Joseph sold and for how much? (To the Ishmaelites, for 20 shekels of silver, who later sold him to the Midianites (who in turn sold him to Potiphar Gen. 37:27, 37:36)
- What happened to Joseph's tunic? (The brothers dipped it into the blood of a goat and showed it to Jacob, so that he would be deceived into thinking Joseph was dead; Gen. 37:1-4)
- What happened to Judah at about this time? (He married, had three sons, but two died)



- What was the name of Judah's daughter in law? (Tamar)
- What were the names of Tamar's twin sons of Judah? (Zarach and Peretz; Gen. 38:27-30)
- Who was Potiphar? (An officer of the Pharaoh and captain of the guards; Gen. 39:1)
- Why was Joseph thrown into prison? (He was falsely accused by Potiphar's wife that Joseph wanted to "marry" her; Gen. 39:1-20)
- Who else was put into prison with Joseph? (The butler of Pharaoh [for serving him wine with a fly in it] and the baker of Pharaoh [for serving him bread with a stone in it]; Gen. 40:1-4)
- What were the dreams of each and how did Joseph interpret these dreams? (The butler dreamed he squeezed three bunches of grapes into Pharaoh's cup; the baker dreamed he had three baskets of bread on his head and a bird was eating from them; Joseph interpreted that in three days the butler would be restored to office, whereas the baker would be executed; Gen. 40:5-23).
- How many years did Joseph remain in prison after interpreting the dreams of the butler and baker? (Two. The sages note that the butler "forgot Joseph" for two years because Joseph had asked him twice to remember him before Pharaoh: one year for each request).

Some Discussion Ideas:

- Despite being 17 years old, Joseph is described as *na'ar* (נַעַר) - a boy - in Gen. 37:2. While he lived at home with Jacob, in what ways did Joseph act like a child in relation to his other brothers? According to the sages, God later punished Joseph with the false accusation of Potiphar's wife because he was still acting like a boy. Do you agree with the sages?
- Since Joseph was his favorite son, why did Jacob send him on a dangerous journey – *alone* – to search for his alienated brothers at Shechem?
- Nehama Liebowitz notes that the "certain man" who directed Joseph to find his brothers in Dothan (Gen. 37:15-17) was the providential key of the entire story of Joseph. Do you agree that this "certain man" was a providential agent sent by God to initiate Israel's bondage in Egypt?
- Why didn't the brothers hate *Jacob* instead of Joseph?
- Why is the story of Joseph interrupted by the account of Judah and Tamar? (Gen. 38)?
- Levirate marriage (*yibbum*) is a type of marriage in which the brother of a deceased man is obligated to marry his brother's widow (and the widow is obligated to marry her deceased husband's brother). It is mentioned in the Torah (Deut. 25:5-6). Discuss why this social arrangement was regarded as necessary in ancient Israel.
- In the genealogy of the Messiah given in Matthew (1:1-16), only four women (besides Mary) are explicitly named: Tamar (who seduced the father of her late husband), Rahab (a prostitute), Ruth (a Moabitess), and "the wife of Uriah" (i.e., Bathsheba, an adulteress). What characteristic(s) do you think unite these women? (see Ruth 1:16; 4:12; 1 Kings 1:13-31; Heb. 11:31; James 2:25).