

## PARASHAT VAYESHEV

### *Genesis 37:1–40:23*

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*Vayeshev*, which means “and he settled,” contains the story of Jacob and his sons, who have settled in the land of Canaan. There is jealousy between the other brothers and Joseph, who dreams of ruling them. They plot Joseph’s death, but Judah persuades them to sell him to a caravan of Ishmaelites heading for Egypt. Afterwards, they report to Jacob that Joseph was killed by a wild animal. Later, Judah’s son Er dies, leaving his wife, Tamar, as a widow. Judah promises that his young son Shelah will marry Tamar, but Judah fails to keep his word. Therefore, Tamar disguises herself and tricks Judah into sleeping with her. When Judah is told that Tamar has “played the harlot” and is pregnant, he orders that she be put to death. Defending herself, Tamar reveals to Judah that he is the father of the child she is carrying. Realizing that he has not treated Tamar fairly, Judah declares: “She is more in the right than I, since I did not give her to my son Shelah.” The Torah portion continues with the adventures of Joseph in Egypt, where he is sold to Pharaoh’s chief steward, Potiphar, and quickly rises from being a slave to becoming manager of his master’s house. Potiphar’s wife is attracted to Joseph and tries to seduce him. Angry because Joseph refuses her advances, she reports to Potiphar that Joseph tried to force himself upon her. Potiphar has Joseph thrown into prison. There he meets Pharaoh’s chief cupbearer and chief baker. They tell him of their dreams, and Joseph interprets them. (Later, as Joseph has predicted, the cupbearer is returned to Pharaoh’s service, but the chief baker is put to death.)

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