

Va-yeishev

Genesis 37:1 - 40:23

This translation was taken from the JPS Tanakh

Chapter 37

¹ Now Jacob was settled in the land where his father had sojourned, the land of Canaan. ² 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. ³ Now Israel loved Joseph best of all his sons, for he was the child of his old age; and he had made him an ornamented tunic. ⁴ 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.

⁵ Once Joseph had a dream which he told to his brothers; and they hated him even more. ⁶ He said to them, "Hear this dream which I have dreamed: ⁷ 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" ⁸ 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.

⁹ 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." ¹⁰ 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?" So his brothers were wrought up at him, and his father kept the matter in mind.

¹² One time, when his brothers had gone to pasture their father's flock at Shechem, ¹³ Israel said to Joseph, "Your brothers are pasturing at Shechem. Come, I will send you to them." He answered, "I am ready." ¹⁴ 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, ¹⁵ a man came upon him wandering in the fields. The man asked him, "What are you looking for?" ¹⁶ He answered, "I am looking for my brothers. Could you tell me where they are pasturing?" ¹⁷ The man said, "They have gone from here, for I heard them say: Let us go to Dothan." So Joseph followed his brothers and found them at Dothan.

¹⁸ They saw him from afar, and before he came close to them they conspired to kill him. ¹⁹ They said to one another, "Here comes that dreamer! ²⁰ Come now, let us kill him and throw him into one of the pits; and we can say, 'A savage beast devoured him.' We shall see what comes of his dreams!" ²¹ But when Reuben heard it, he tried to save him from them. He said, "Let us not take his life." ²² And Reuben went on, "Shed no blood! Cast him into that pit out in the wilderness, but do not touch him yourselves" — intending to save him from them and restore him to his father. ²³ When Joseph came up to his brothers, they stripped Joseph of his tunic, the ornamented tunic that

he was wearing,²⁴ and took him and cast him into the pit. The pit was empty; there was no water in it.²⁵ Then they sat down to a meal. Looking up, they saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead, their camels bearing gum, balm, and ladanum to be taken to Egypt.²⁶ Then Judah said to his brothers, "What do we gain by killing our brother and covering up his blood?"²⁷ Come, let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, but let us not do away with him ourselves. After all, he is our brother, our own flesh." His brothers agreed.²⁸ When Midianite traders passed by, they pulled Joseph up out of the pit. They sold Joseph for twenty pieces of silver to the Ishmaelites, who brought Joseph to Egypt.

²⁹ When Reuben returned to the pit and saw that Joseph was not in the pit, he rent his clothes.³⁰ Returning to his brothers, he said, "The boy is gone! Now, what am I to do?"³¹ Then they took Joseph's tunic, slaughtered a kid, and dipped the tunic in the blood.³² They had the ornamented tunic taken to their father, and they said, "We found this. Please examine it; is it your son's tunic or not?"³³ He recognized it, and said, "My son's tunic! A savage beast devoured him! Joseph was torn by a beast!"³⁴ Jacob rent his clothes, put sackcloth on his loins, and observed mourning for his son many days.³⁵ ALL his sons and daughters sought to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted, saying, "No, I will go down mourning to, my son in Sheol." Thus his father bewailed him.

³⁶ The Midianites, meanwhile, sold him in Egypt to Potiphar, a courtier of Pharaoh and his chief steward.

Chapter 38

¹ About that time Judah left his brothers and camped near a certain Adullamite whose name was Hirah.² There Judah saw the daughter of a certain Canaanite whose name was Shua, and he married her and cohabited with her.³ She conceived and bore a son, and he named him Er.⁴ She conceived again and bore a son, and named him Onan.⁵ Once again she bore a son, and named him Shelah; he was at Chezib when she bore him.

⁶ Judah got a wife for Er his first-born; her name was Tamar.⁷ But Er, Judah's first-born, was displeasing to the LORD, and the LORD took his life.⁸ Then Judah said to Onan, "Join with your brother's wife and do your duty by her as a brother-in-law, and provide offspring for your brother."⁹ But Onan, knowing that the seed would not count as his, let it go to waste whenever he joined with his brother's wife, so as not to provide offspring for his brother.¹⁰ What he did was displeasing to the LORD, and He took his life also.¹¹ Then Judah said to his daughter-in-law Tamar, "Stay as a widow in your father's house until my son Shelah grows up" — for he thought, "He too might die like his brothers." So Tamar went to live in her father's house.

¹² A long time afterward, Shua's daughter, the wife of Judah, died. When his period of mourning was over, Judah went up to Timnah to his sheepshearers, together with his friend Hirah the Adullamite.¹³ And Tamar was told, "Your father-in-law is coming up to Timnah for the sheepshearing."¹⁴ So she took off her widows garb, covered her face with a veil, and, wrapping herself up, sat down at the entrance to Enaim, which is on the road to Timnah; for she saw that Shelah was grown up, yet she had not been given to him as wife.¹⁵ When Judah saw her, he took her for a harlot; for she had covered her face.¹⁶ So he turned aside to her by the road and said, "Here, let me sleep with you" — for he did not know that she was his daughter-in-law. "What," she

asked, "will you pay for sleeping with me?" ¹⁷ He replied, "I will send a kid from my flock." But she said, "You must leave a pledge until you have sent it." ¹⁸ And he said, "What pledge shall I give you?" She replied, "Your seal and cord, and the staff which you carry." So he gave them to her and slept with her, and she conceived by him. ¹⁹ Then she went on her way. She took off her veil and again put on her widow's garb.

²⁰ Judah sent the kid by his friend the Adullamite, to, redeem the pledge from the woman; but he could not find her. ²¹ He inquired of the people of that town, "Where is the cult prostitute, the one at Enaim, by the road?" But they said, "There has been no prostitute here." ²² So he returned to Judah and said,, "I could not find her; moreover, the townspeople said: There has been no prostitute here." ²³ Judah said, "Let her keep them, lest we become a laughingstock. I did send her this kid, but you did not find her."

²⁴ About three months later, Judah was told, "Your daughter-in-law Tamar has played the harlot; in fact, she is with child by harlotry." "Bring her out," said Judah, "and let her be burned." ²⁵ As she was being brought out, she sent this message to her father-in-law, "I am with child by the man to whom these belong." And she added, "Examine these: whose seal and cord and staff are these?" ²⁶ Judah recognized them, and said, "She is more in the right than I, inasmuch as I did not give her to my son Shelah." And he was not intimate with her again. ²⁷ When the time came for her to give birth, there were twins in her womb! ²⁸ While she was in labor, one of them put out, his hand, and the midwife tied a crimson thread on that hand, to signify: This one came out first. ²⁹ But just then he drew back his hand, and out came his brother; and she said, "What a breach you havemade for yourself!" So he was named Perez. ³⁰ Afterward his brother came out, on whose hand was the crimson thread; he was named Zerah.

Chapter 39

¹ When Joseph was taken down to Egypt, a certain Egyptian, Potiphar, a courtier of Pharaoh and his chief steward, bought him from the Ishmaelites who had brought him there. ² The LORD was with Joseph, and he was a successful man; and he stayed in the house of his Egyptian master. ³ And when his master saw that the LORD was with him and that the LORD lent success to everything he undertook, ⁴ he took a liking to Joseph. He made him his personal attendant and put him in charge of his household, placing in his hands all that he owned. ⁵ And from the time that the Egyptian put him in charge of his household and of all that he owned, the LORD blessed his house for Joseph's sake, so that the blessing of the LORD was upon everything that he owned, in the house and outside. ⁶ He left all that he had in Joseph's hands and, with him there, he paid attention to nothing save the food that he ate. Now Joseph was well built and handsome.

⁷ After a time, his master's wife cast her eyes upon Joseph and said, "Lie with me." ⁸ But he refused. He said to hismaster's wife, "Look, with me here, my master gives no thought to anything in this house, and all that he owns he has placed in my hands. ⁹ He wields no more authority in this house than I, and he has withheld nothing from me except yourself, since you are his wife. How then could I do this most wicked thing, and sin before God?" ¹⁰ And much as she coaxed Joseph day after day, he did not yield to her request to lie beside her, to be with her.

¹¹ One such day, he came into the house to do his work. None of the household being there inside, ¹² she caught hold of him by his garment and said, "Lie with me!" But he left his garment in her hand and got away and fled outside. ¹³ When she saw that he had left it in her hand and had fled outside, ¹⁴ she called out to her servants and said to them, "Look, he had to bring us a Hebrew to dally with us! This one came to lie with me; but I screamed loud. ¹⁵ And when he heard me screaming at the top of my voice, he left his garment with me and got away and fled outside." ¹⁶ She kept his garment beside her, until his master came home. ¹⁷ Then she told him the same story, saying, "The Hebrew slave whom you brought into our house came to me to dally with me; ¹⁸ but when I screamed at the top of my voice, he left his garment with me and fled outside."

¹⁹ When his master heard the story that his wife told him, namely, "Thus and so your slave did to me," he was furious. ²⁰ So Joseph's master had him put in prison, where the king's prisoners were confined. But even while he was there in prison, ²¹ the LORD was with Joseph: He extended kindness to him and disposed the chief jailer favorably toward him. ²² The chief jailer put in Joseph's charge all the prisoners who were in that prison, and he was the one to carry out everything that was done there. ²³ The chief jailer did not supervise anything that was in Joseph's charge, because the LORD was with him, and whatever he did the LORD made successful.

Chapter 40

¹ Some time later, the cupbearer and the baker of the king of Egypt gave offense to their lord the king of Egypt. ² Pharaoh was angry with his two courtiers, the chief cupbearer and the chief baker, ³ and put them in custody, in the house of the chief steward, in the same prison house where Joseph was confined. ⁴ The chief steward assigned Joseph to them, and he attended them.

When they had been in custody for some time, ⁵ both of them — the cupbearer and the baker of the king of Egypt, who were confined in the prison — dreamed in the same night, each his own dream and each dream with its own meaning. ⁶ When Joseph came to them in the morning, he saw that they were distraught. ⁷ He asked Pharaoh's courtiers, who were with him in custody in his master's house, saying, "Why do you appear downcast today?" ⁸ And they said to him, "We had dreams, and there is no one to interpret them." So Joseph said to them, "Surely God can interpret! Tell me [your dreams]."

⁹ Then the chief cupbearer told his dream to Joseph. He said to him, "In my dream, there was a vine in front of me. ¹⁰ On the vine were three branches. It had barely budded, when out came its blossoms and its clusters ripened into grapes. ¹¹ Pharaoh's cup was in my hand, and I took the grapes, pressed them into Pharaoh's cup, and placed the cup in Pharaoh's hand." ¹² Joseph said to him, "This is its interpretation: The three branches are three days. ¹³ In three days Pharaoh will pardon you and restore you to your post; you will place Pharaoh's cup in his hand, as was your custom formerly when you were his cupbearer. ¹⁴ But think of me when all is well with you again, and do me the kindness of mentioning me to Pharaoh, so as to free me from this place. ¹⁵ For in truth, I was kidnapped from the land of the Hebrews; nor have I done anything here that they should have put me in the dungeon."

¹⁶ When the chief baker saw how favorably he had interpreted, he said to Joseph, "In my dream, similarly, there were three openwork baskets on my head. ¹⁷ In the uppermost basket were all kinds

of food for Pharaoh that a baker prepares; and the birds were eating it out of the basket above my head." ¹⁸ Joseph answered, "This is its interpretation: The three baskets are three days. ¹⁹ In three days Pharaoh will lift off your head and impale' you upon a pole; and the birds will pick off your flesh."

²⁰ On the third day — his birthday — Pharaoh made a banquet for officials, and he singled out his chief cupbearer and his chief baker among his officials. ²¹ He restored the chief cupbearer to his cupbearing, and he placed the cup in Pharaoh's hand; ²² but the chief baker he paled-just as Joseph had interpreted to them.

²³ Yet the chief cupbearer did not think of Joseph; he forgot him.