

**Vayeishev**

**Genesis 37:1–40:23**

Ceaser

# Overview

**Jacob settles in Hebron with his twelve sons. His favorite is 17-year-old Joseph, whose brothers are jealous of the preferential treatment he receives from his father, such as a precious many-colored coat that Jacob makes for Joseph. Joseph relates to his brothers two dreams he has which foretell that he is destined to rule over them, increasing their envy and hatred towards him.**

**Shimon and Levi plot to kill him, but Reuben suggests that they throw him into a pit instead, intending to come back later and save him. While Joseph is in the pit, Judah has him sold to a band of passing Ishmaelites. The brothers dip Joseph's special coat in the blood of a goat and show it to their father, leading him to believe that his most beloved son was devoured by a wild beast.**

**Judah marries and has three children. The eldest, Er, dies young and childless, and his wife Tamar is given in levirate marriage to the second son, Onan. Onan sins by spilling his seed and he, too, meets an early death. Judah is reluctant to have his third son marry her. Determined to have a child from Judah's family, Tamar disguises herself as a prostitute and seduces Judah himself. Judah hears that his daughter-in-law has become pregnant and orders her executed for harlotry, but when Tamar produces some personal effects he left with her as a pledge for payment, he publicly admits that he is the father. Tamar gives birth to twin sons, Peretz (an ancestor of King David) and Zerach.**

# Overview

**Joseph is taken to Egypt and sold to Potiphar, the minister in charge of Pharaoh's slaughterhouses. G-d blesses everything he does, and soon he is made overseer of all his master's property. Potiphar's wife desires the handsome and charismatic lad; when Joseph rejects her advances, she tells her husband that the Hebrew slave tried to force himself on her and has him thrown in prison. Joseph gains the trust and admiration of his jailers, who appoint him to a position of authority in the prison administration.**

**In prison, Joseph meets Pharaoh's chief butler and chief baker, both incarcerated for offending their royal master. Both have disturbing dreams, which Joseph interprets; in three days, he tells them, the butler will be released and the baker hanged. Joseph asks the butler to intercede on his behalf with Pharaoh. Joseph's predictions are fulfilled, but the butler forgets all about Joseph and does nothing for him.**

**"And Jacob settled," begins the Parshah of Vayeishev, "in the land of his father's dwelling, in the Land of Canaan."**

**His Charan years were behind him, with Laban many miles away on the other side of a pile of stones attesting to a non-aggression pact between them. A truce of sorts had been made with Esau. Dinah had been rescued and avenged, and his beloved Rachel had been buried and mourned.**

**The 100-year-old Patriarch now hoped that he had experienced enough hardship and heartbreak for a lifetime, and looked forward for some tranquil years in "the land of his father's dwelling" (Hebron) as his sons shepherded his flocks in the hills and valleys of Canaan.**

**But this was not to be.**

**Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age; and he made him a many-colored coat.**

**And when his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably to him.**

**Matters were not helped by the fact that Joseph preferred the company of the children of Bilhah and Zilpah—whom Leah's sons regarded as their inferiors because they were the "sons of the handmaids"—and that he was constantly bringing his father critical reports of his brothers' behavior.**

**And Joseph had dreams.**

**Joseph dreamed a dream, and he told it to his brothers... "Behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and, lo, my sheaf arose, and also stood upright; and, behold, your sheaves stood round about, and bowed down to my sheaf."**

**And his brothers said to him: "Shall you indeed reign over us? Or shall you indeed have dominion over us?" And they hated him yet the more for his dreams, and for his words.**

**And he dreamed yet another dream, and told it to his brothers: "Behold, the sun and the moon and eleven stars bowed down to me."**

**His father rebuked him: "What is this dream that you have dreamed? Shall I and your mother and your brothers indeed come to bow down ourselves to you to the earth?" But Jacob said this only to diffuse the jealousy between the brothers, while "keeping the matter in mind."**

## ***And Jacob settled... (Genesis 37:1)***

***Jacob desired to settle in tranquility, but it pounced upon him the agony of Joseph. For when the righteous wish to settle in tranquility, G-d says: "Is it not enough for the righteous what is prepared for them in the World to Come, that they also ask for a tranquil life in this world?"***

***(Rashi)***

*(Midrash Rabbah; Zohar; et al)*

***These are the generations of Jacob: Joseph being seventeen years old... (37:2)***

***Should not have the verse said, "These are the generations of Jacob: Reuben, etc."? Why Joseph?***

***Because everything that happened to Jacob, happened to Joseph. As Jacob was born circumcised, so was Joseph born circumcised: as Jacob's mother was infertile, so was Joseph's mother infertile; as Jacob's mother had difficulty in childbirth, so did Joseph's mother have difficulty in childbirth; as Jacob's mother bore two sons, so did Joseph's mother bear two sons; as Jacob was hated by his brother, so was Joseph hated by his brothers; as Jacob's brother sought to kill him, so did Joseph's brothers seek to kill him. ....***

**..... Jacob was a shepherd and Joseph was a shepherd, Jacob was persecuted, and Joseph was persecuted; Jacob was blessed with ten blessings and Joseph was blessed with ten blessings; Jacob was exiled from the Holy Land, and Joseph was exiled from the Land; Jacob took a wife outside the Land, and Joseph took a wife outside the Land; Jacob begot children outside the Land, and Joseph begot children outside the Land; Jacob was escorted by angels, and Joseph was escorted by angels; Jacob was made great through a dream, and Joseph was made great through a dream; the house of Jacob's father-in-law was blessed on his account, and the house of Joseph's father-in-law was blessed on his account; Jacob went down to Egypt and Joseph went down to Egypt; Jacob ended the famine and Joseph ended the famine; Jacob adjured [his children] and Joseph adjured [his brothers]; Jacob charged [his children] and Joseph charged [his brothers]; Jacob died in Egypt and Joseph died in Egypt; Jacob was embalmed and Joseph was embalmed; the bones of Jacob were brought up [from Egypt to the Holy Land], and the bones of Joseph were brought up [from Egypt to the Holy Land]....**

**Jacob fathered Tribes, and Joseph fathered Tribes; Jacob was lost to his father for 22 years, and Joseph was lost to his father for 22 years; Jacob was indentured on account of a woman, and Joseph was imprisoned on account of a woman; Jacob supported Joseph for 17 years, and Joseph supported Jacob for 17 years...**

**(Midrash Rabbah; Zohar; et al)**



**And Joseph brought to his father their evil report (37:2)**

**Said the sages: two righteous men were punished on account of the bearing of malevolent reports: Jacob and Joseph. Because Joseph spoke evilly of his brothers, he was incarcerated in prison for 12 years; and because Jacob listened to these reports, the Divine spirit departed from him for 22 years. This teaches us that one who speaks negatively of another is punished once, while someone who listens to negative talk of another is twice punished.**

**(Pirkei d'Rabbeinu HaKadosh)**

**Israel loved Joseph more than all his children... And his brothers envied him (37:3, 11)**

**"Love is strong as death" (Song of Songs 8:6)–this is the love with which Jacob loved Joseph... "Envy is harsh as the grave" (ibid.)–this is the envy of the brothers to Joseph. What can love achieve in the face of envy?**

**(Midrash Tanchuma)**

**Said Resh Lakish in the name of Rabbi Eleazar ben Azariah: A man must not discriminate among his children, for on account of the coat of many colors which our father Jacob made for Joseph, "They hated him..."**

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*Joseph dreamed a dream, and told it to his brothers... "Behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and, lo, my sheaf arose, and also stood upright; and, behold, your sheaves stood round about, and bowed down to my sheaf." (37:5-7).*

*We live in a disjointed and fragmented world. Its countless components each seem to be going its own way, each creation seeking only its own preservation and advancement. Our own lives include countless events and experiences, espousing different priorities, pulling us in different directions.*

*But this is but the most superficial face of reality. The deeper we probe nature and its laws, the more we uncover an underlying unity. The more we assimilate the lessons of life, the more we discern a "guiding hand" and a coherent destiny. The more we utilize our talents and resources, all the more do the various aspects of our uniquely individual role fall in place.*

*This is the deeper significance of Joseph's dream. We are all bundlers in the field of life. Here, each stalk grows in its own distinct little furrow; our challenge is to bring focus to this diversity, to gather these stalks together and bind them as a single sheave.*

***But this alone is not enough. As Joseph saw in his dream, his brothers' individual bundles stood in a circle and bowed to his. This means that while every individual should view the various components of his life as a distinct "bundle," the piecing together of his life is not an end in itself, but the means to a higher goal. In the words of our sages, "The entire world was created only for my sake; and I was created only to serve my Creator." So while every person should view his entire world—the resources and opportunities which Divine Providence has sent his way—as being there for him, this "bundle" must in turn be dedicated to the fulfillment of his Divinely ordained mission in life.***

***The way this is achieved is by subjugating one's own bundle to "Joseph's bundle." The Torah is G-d's communication of His will to man, and charts the course for man to serve his Creator. And each generation has its "Joseph," an utterly righteous individual whose life is the perfect embodiment of Torah's ethos and ideals. This is the tzaddik whom the "bundles" of the various tribes of Israel surround and subjugate themselves to, turning to him for guidance as how best to realize the purpose of their lives.***

***(The Lubavitcher Rebbe)***

### The Sale of Joseph

Jacob sends Joseph to check up on his brothers, who have gone north with the flocks. Joseph locates them in Dotan, near Shechem.

And when they saw him afar off, even before he came near to them, they conspired against him to slay him.

And they said, a man to his brother, "Behold, here comes the dreamer...

"Let us slay him, and cast him into some pit, and we will say, 'An evil beast has devoured him'; and we shall see what will become of his dreams."

But Reuben, the eldest of the brothers, says to them: "Let us not kill him... Shed no blood, but cast him into this pit that is in the wilderness, and lay no hand upon him." Reuben said this, attests the Torah, "so that he might save him out of their hands, to deliver him back to his father."

And it came to pass, when Joseph was come to his brethren, that they stripped Joseph of his coat, the many-colored coat that was on him. And they took him, and cast him into a pit; and the pit was empty; there was no water in it.

## The Sale of Joseph

And they sat down to eat bread. And they lifted up their eyes and looked, and, behold, a company of Ishmaelites came from Gilad with their camels bearing gum balm and laudanum, going to carry it down to Egypt.

And Judah said to his brothers: "What profit is it if we slay our brother, and conceal his blood? Come, and let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and let not our hand be upon him; for he is our brother and our flesh."

Reuben was not there when Judah proposed that Joseph be sold; when he comes back, intending to rescue Joseph, he finds the pit empty. He berates his brothers, but the deed has already been done; now they must find a way to explain Joseph's disappearance to their father.

They dip Joseph's coat in the blood of a goat, and bring it to their father. "This we have found," they say.

And he recognized it and said, "It is my son's coat; an evil beast has devoured him. Joseph has surely been torn in pieces." And Jacob rent his clothes, and put sackcloth on his loins, and mourned for his son many days.

All his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted; and he said, "For I will go down to the grave mourning my son."

Joseph, in the meantime, is taken to Egypt, where he is sold to Potiphar, a minister in Pharaoh's court.

***So he sent him out of the vale of Hebron, and he came to Shechem (37:14)***

***A place predestined for evil: in Shechem Dinah was violated; in Shechem Joseph was sold by his brothers; and in Shechem the kingdom of the House of David was divided (I Kings:12:1). (Talmud, Sanhedrin 102a)***

***A man found him wandering in the field; and the man asked him, saying: "What do you seek?" And he said: "I seek my brothers; tell me, I pray you, where they feed their flocks." And the man said: "They are departed from here; for I heard them say, 'Let us go to Dotan.'" And Joseph went after his brothers, and found them in Dotan. (37:15-17)***

***"The man" was the angel Gabriel.***

***(Midrash; Rashi)***

***And Reuben heard it, and he delivered him out of their hands (37:21)***

***Had Reuben known that the Torah would write of him, "And Reuben heard it, and he delivered him out of their hands," he would have loaded Joseph on his shoulders and carried him back to his father.***

***(Midrash Rabbah, Vayikra 34:9)***

***And they took him, and cast him into a pit; and the pit was empty; there was no water in it (37:24)***

***From the implication of what is said, "And the pit was empty," do I not know that there was no water in it? What then is taught by, "there was no water in it"? There was no water, but there were snakes and scorpions in it.***

***(Talmud, Shabbat 22a)***

***And Reuben returned to the pit; and, behold, Joseph was not in the pit (37:29)***

***Where had he been? Rabbi Eleazar said: He was taken up with his fasting and sackcloth (in repentance over his sin in violating his father's marital bed), and when he became free he went and looked into the pit.... Rabbi Judah said: Every one of them attended his father one day, and that day it was Reuben's turn.***

***(Midrash Rabbah)***



***And they took Joseph's coat, and killed a kid of the goats, and dipped the coat in the blood (37:31)***

***G-d pays back man measure for measure... even the righteous does He pay back measure for measure. Jacob deceived his father with goatskins (cf. Genesis 27:16), and his sons deceived him with the blood of a goat...***

***Likewise, Judah, who deceived his father with the blood of a goat, was deceived by Tamar with a "kid of goats."***

***(Midrash; Rashi)***

***And Jacob rent his clothes, and put sackcloth on his loins, and mourned for his son many days (37:34)***

***Why didn't G-d reveal to him the truth? Because when the brothers sold Joseph, they made a vow that none of them would tell their father of their deed, and they included G-d in their vow.***

***(Midrash; Rashi)***

## Judah and Tamar

The saga of Joseph is interrupted to relate an incident in the life of Judah. Judah separates from his brothers, marries, and has three children: Er, Onan and Sheilah. When Er comes of age, Judah marries him to a woman by the name of Tamar.

Er "was wicked in the sight of G-d" and dies young. Judah tells Onan to perform "the duty of a brother-in-law" to marry the widow of a childless brother and "raise up progeny for your brother" (a practice called yibbum – cf. Deuteronomy 25:5). Onan, who does not desire to father children that will be regarded as his brother's, "spilled his seed to the ground." He, too, dies an early death in punishment for his sin.

Since Onan, too, had died childless, Sheilah was now supposed to marry Tamar. But time passes and Tamar realizes that Judah has no intention of marrying her to his third son. She resolves to find a way to have a child from Judah's family, if not from Sheilah, then from Judah himself.

And it was told to Tamar, saying, "Behold your father-in-law is going up to Timna to shear his sheep." And she put off her widow's garments, and covered herself with a veil, and wrapped herself, and sat by the crossroads which is by the way to Timna...

## Judah and Tamar

When Judah saw her, he thought her to be a harlot, because she had covered her face. And he turned to her by the way, and said: "Come now, please, let me come in to you"; for he knew not that she was his daughter-in-law.

Judah promises her "a kid from the flock" in payment, but she insists that he leave "your signet, and your cord, and your staff that is in your hand" with her as a pledge until the payment is sent. Tamar becomes pregnant from him.

And it came to pass about three months after, that it was told to Judah, saying: "Tamar your daughter-in-law has played the harlot; and also, behold, she is with child by harlotry."

And Judah said: "Bring her out and let her be burnt."

When she was brought forth, she sent to her father-in-law, saying, "By the man, whose these are, am I with child"; and she said: "Discern, I pray you, whose are these—the signet, and the cord, and the staff."

Judah acknowledged them, and said: "She has been more righteous than I..."

Tamar gives birth to twins: Peretz ("bursting forth" because he pushed his way first out of the womb despite the fact that his brother's hand emerged first) and Zerach ("shining" because the midwife had tied a crimson thread on his hand to mark him as the first born).

***And it came to pass at that time... (38:1)***

**The sons of Jacob were engaged in selling Joseph, Jacob was taken up with his sackcloth and fasting, and Judah was busy taking a wife, while the Holy One, blessed be He, was creating the light of Messiah. (Peretz, born of Judah and Tamar, is the ancestor of King David and the Messiah.)**

**(Midrash Rabbah)**

***And it came to pass at that time, that Judah went down from his brothers (38:1)***

**They took him down from his greatness when they saw their father's agony. They said: You told us to sell him; if you would have told us to return him, we would have listened to you.**

**(Rashi)**

***Er, Judah's firstborn, was wicked in the sight of G-d; and G-d slew him (38:7)***

**Er was guilty of the same sin as Onan, of spilling his seed, as it is written regarding Onan, "And G-d... slew him also" (38:10)—Onan's death was by the same cause as Er's. And why did Er spill his seed? So that Tamar should not become pregnant and ruin her beauty.**

**(Talmud; Rashi)**

***It was told to Tamar: Behold, your father-in-law is going up to Timna to shear his sheep (38:13)***

**Yet in the case of Samson it says, And Samson went *down* to Timna (Judges 14:1). For Timna sat on the slope of a hill: one ascended to it from one side and descended to it from the other.**

**(Rashi)**

**The town of Timna is thus the prototype for all of life's destinations. One never simply goes to Timna—one either ascends or descends to it; the same is true of the journey of life. There are no two parallel points on the slope of human development, where every step is either a step up or a step down from its predecessor.**

**This is also the lesson implicit in the lights of Chanukah (which always falls in proximity with the Torah reading of *Vayeishev*). One who kindles a single flame on the first night of the festival observes the mitzvah of kindling the Chanukah lights in the most optimal manner possible. But to kindle that same flame on the following night is not only a failure to increase light but a decline in relation to yesterday's achievement: on the second night of Chanukah, a single flame represents a *less than optimal* observance of the mitzvah. For in the diagonal trajectory of life, our every deed and endeavor either elevates or lowers us in relation to our prior station.**

**(The Lubavitcher Rebbe)**

*And she covered herself with a veil, and wrapped herself (38:14)*

Two women covered themselves with a veil and gave birth to twins: Rebecca and Tamar. Rebecca, as it is written, "And she took her veil, and covered herself" (Gen. 24:65); Tamar, as it is written, "And she covered herself with her veil, and wrapped herself."

(Midrash Rabbah)

*When Judah saw her, he thought her to be a harlot; because she had covered her face (38:15)*

Because she had covered her face he thought her to be an harlot? But because she had covered her face in her father-in-law's house, he did not recognize her now.

Said Rabbi Samuel ben Nachmani in the name of Rabbi Jonathan: Every daughter-in-law who is modest in her father-in-law's house merits that kings and prophets should issue from her. From where do we know this? From Tamar. Prophets issued from her, as it is written: "The vision of Isaiah the son of Amotz"; and kings issued from her through David [who is descendent from Peretz].

(Talmud, Sotah 10b)

*When Judah saw her, he thought her to be a harlot... And he turned to her (38:15-16)*

Said Ulla: Both Tamar and Zimri (cf. Numbers 25) committed harlotry. Tamar committed harlotry and gave birth to kings and prophets. Zimri committed harlotry and on his account many tens of thousands of Israel perished.

(Talmud, Nazir 23b)

**Said Rabbi Jochanan: Judah wished to pass her by, but G-d sent the angel who is in charge of lust have his effect on him, saying to him: "Where are you going, Judah? Whence then are kings to arise, whence are redeemers to arise?" Thereupon, "And he turned to her"—despite himself and against his wish.**

**(Midrash Rabbah)**

**The Zohar points out that Moshiach (the Messiah) is the product of a number of morally dubious unions: Judah and Tamar; Boaz and Ruth; David and Batsheba.**

***And he said, "What pledge shall I give you?" And she said: "Your signet, and your cord, and your staff that is in your hand" (38:18)***

**A prophetic spirit was enkindled within her: "your signet" alludes to the royal house of David; "your cord" alludes to the Sanhedrin; "and your staff" alludes to the Messiah, as in the verse, "The staff of thy strength the L-rd will send out of Zion" (Psalms 110:2)—all of whom are the progeny of Judah and Tamar.**

**(Midrash Rabbah)**

***When she was brought forth, she sent to her father in law, saying: "By the man, whose these are, am I with child" (38:25)***

**She did not wish to shame him by saying explicitly, "I am pregnant by you," only, "By the man, whose these are," saying to herself: "If he wishes to admit it, he will admit it himself; if not, they will burn me, but I will not shame him." From this our sages derived: One should cast himself into a fiery furnace rather than shame his fellow in public.**

**(Rashi; Talmud)**

## The Libel

Back to Joseph, who is rising in the ranks of the servants of Potiphar, his Egyptian master. "His master saw that G-d was with him, and that G-d made all that he did to prosper in his hand. And Joseph found favor in his sight.... and he made him overseer over his house, and all that he had he put into his hand."

Potiphar's wife was attracted to the handsome, fortuitous youth.

And it came to pass after these things, that his master's wife cast her eyes upon Joseph; and she said, "Lie with me."

He refused, and said to his master's wife: "Behold, my master... has committed all that he has to my hand. There is none greater in this house than I; neither has he kept back anything from me but you, because you are his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against G-d?"

Potiphar's wife persisted, and on one occasion, when no one else was home, she grabbed hold of his clothes. To get away from her, Joseph "left his garment in her hand, and fled, and went outside." She decides to avenge herself on him, and tells her husband that Joseph tried to force himself on her; "When I lifted up my voice and cried," she claimed. "he left his garment with me, and fled."

Joseph is thrown into the royal dungeon.



**And Joseph was brought down to Egypt... (39:1)**

**Said Rabbi Tanchuma: This is comparable to a cow upon whom it was desired to place a yoke, but the cow was withholding her neck from the yoke. What did they do? They took her calf from behind her and drew him to the place where they wanted her to plow, and the calf was bleating. When the cow heard her calf bleating, she went despite herself, because of her child. By the same token, G-d wished to fulfil the decree (Genesis 15:13), "Know ye, [that your children will be strangers in a land that is not theirs]...", so he plotted all these events (of Joseph's sale to Egypt)...**

**(Midrash Tanchuma)**

**Jacob might have had to be brought down to Egypt in chains, but than G-d declared: "He is My firstborn son; shall I then bring him down in disgrace?" Now, if I provoke Pharaoh [with the intention to bring him down], I will not bring him down with befitting honor. Therefore I will draw his son before him, and so he will follow despite himself.**

**(Midrash Rabbah)**

**. And Joseph was of beautiful form and beautiful appearance (39:6)**

**When he saw himself in a position of rulership, he began to eat and drink and curl his hair. Said G-d: "Your father is in mourning and you curl your hair! I shall incite the bear against you." Immediately, "His master's wife cast her eyes upon Joseph..."**

**(Rashi)**

**And it came to pass after these things, that his master's wife cast her eyes upon Joseph (39:7)**

**Why does the Torah adjoin the incident of Potiphar's wife to the incident of Tamar? To tell us that just as Tamar acted for the sake of Heaven, so did Potiphar's wife act for the sake of Heaven. For she saw through her astrologers that she was destined to produce children from him. But she did not know whether through herself or through her daughter (Joseph married Potiphar's daughter, as per Genesis 41:45)**

**(Rashi)**

**And she said: "Lie with me." (39:7)**

**Said Rabbi Samuel ben Nachman said: Accursed are the wicked! In another passage [we find Ruth saying], "Spread therefore thy skirt over thy handmaid" (Ruth 3:9); but this one spoke like an animal: "Lie with me."**

**(Midrash Rabbah)**

**And he refused. And he said to his master's wife: "...How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against G-d?" (39:8-9)**

**Said Joseph to her: "I am afraid of the Holy One, blessed be He." Said she: "But He is not here"... She drove him from room to room and from chamber to chamber, until she brought him to her bed. Above it was engraved an idol, which she covered with a sheet. Said Joseph to her: "You have covered its face... How much more then should you fear Him of whom it is written (Zechariah 4:10), "The eyes of the L-rd, that run to and fro through the whole earth"!**

**A matron asked Rabbi Jose: "Is it possible that Joseph, at seventeen years of age, with all the hot blood of youth, could act thus? [Surely the Torah is not telling us the whole truth!]" Thereupon he produced the Book of Genesis and read the stories of Reuben and Judah. "If Scripture did not suppress anything in the case of these, who were older and in their father's home, how much the more in the case of Joseph, who was younger and his own master."**

**(Midrash Rabbah)**

**How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against G-d?" (39:9)**

**Should not Joseph had said, "How then can we do this great wickedness, and sin against G-d"?**

**But Joseph did not want to share in anything with her—not even the pronoun "we."**

**(Rabbi Bunim of Pshischa)**

## More Dreams

Joseph's charisma, enterprising spirit, and Divine blessing follow him to prison. Before long,

the officer of the prison committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners that were in the prison; and whatever they did there, he was the doer of it.... because G-d was with him, and that which he did, G-d made it prosper.

Years pass. Then Pharaoh's chief butler and his chief baker, each of whom had committed some offence to their king, are thrown into the prison where Joseph was, and are entrusted to his care.

One morning, Joseph finds them in a troubled mood. They've both had dreams whose meaning they cannot fathom. "Do not interpretations belong to G-d?" says Joseph. "Tell me them."

The chief butler relates his dream:

Behold, a vine was before me. And on the vine were three tendrils; and it was as though it budded, and its blossoms shot forth; and its clusters brought forth ripe grapes. Pharaoh's cup was in my hand; I took the grapes, and pressed them into Pharaoh's cup, and I gave the cup into Pharaoh's hand.

Joseph offers the following interpretation:

The three tendrils are three days. In another three days shall Pharaoh lift up your head, and restore you to your place; and you shall deliver Pharaoh's cup into his hand, after the former manner when you were his butler.

## More Dreams

**The chief baker, liking Joseph's interpretation of his colleague's dream, tells his own: I also in my dream, behold, I had three baskets of white bread on my head. And in the uppermost basket there was of all manner of baked food for Pharaoh; and the birds did eat them out of the basket upon my head.**

**Which Joseph interprets:**

**The three baskets are three days. In another three days shall Pharaoh lift up your head from off you, and shall hang you on a tree; and the birds shall eat your flesh from off you.**

**Joseph has a favor to ask from the soon-to-be-freed butler:**

**But think of me when it shall be well with you, and show kindness, I pray you, to me, and make mention of me to Pharaoh, and bring me out of this house.**

**For I was stolen away out of the land of the Hebrews; and here also have I done nothing that they should put me into the dungeon.**

**Three days later, Pharaoh celebrates his birthday, and remembers the two ministers he had ordered thrown in jail; he reinstates the chief butler and hangs the chief baker, "as Joseph had interpreted to them."**

**"The chief butler did not remember Joseph," concludes our Parshah, "but forgot him."**

***And it came to pass about this time, that Joseph went into the house to do his work (39:11)***

***This means that he went to satisfy his desires [i.e., he was ready to succumb to Potiphar's wife]...***

***At that moment his father's image came and appeared to him through the window and said: "Joseph, your brothers will have their names inscribed upon the stones of the ephod... Is it your wish to have your name expunged from amongst theirs and be called an associate of harlots?"***

***(Talmud, Sotah 36b)***

***When his master heard the words of his wife, which she spoke to him, saying, "These things did your servant to me," his anger burned (39:19)***

***"These things"—she said this to him during intercourse.***

***(Rashi)***

***And it came to pass after these things, that the butler of the king of Egypt, and his baker, offended their lord the king of Egypt (40:1)***

***A fly was found in the goblet prepared by the butler, and a pebble in the baker's confection.***

***(Midrash Rabbah; Rashi)***

***And the chief butler did not remember Joseph, but forgot him (40:23)***

***Because Joseph placed his trust in him, he had to remain imprisoned for another two years...***

***Thus it says (Psalms 40:5): "Fortunate is the man who places his trust in G-d, and does not turn to the arrogant."***

***(Rashi)***

# The Mashiach

## The Term

The term " Mashiach " literally means "the anointed one," and refers to the ancient practice of anointing kings with oil when they took the throne. The Mashiach is the one who will be anointed as king in the End of Days.

The word " Mashiach " does not mean "savior." The notion of an innocent, divine or semi-divine being who will sacrifice himself to save us from the consequences of our own sins is a purely Christian concept that has no basis in Jewish thought. Unfortunately, this Christian concept has become so deeply ingrained in the English word "messiah" that this English word can no longer be used to refer to the Jewish concept.

# Mashiach

What is the Messiah (Mashiach) supposed to accomplish? He will:

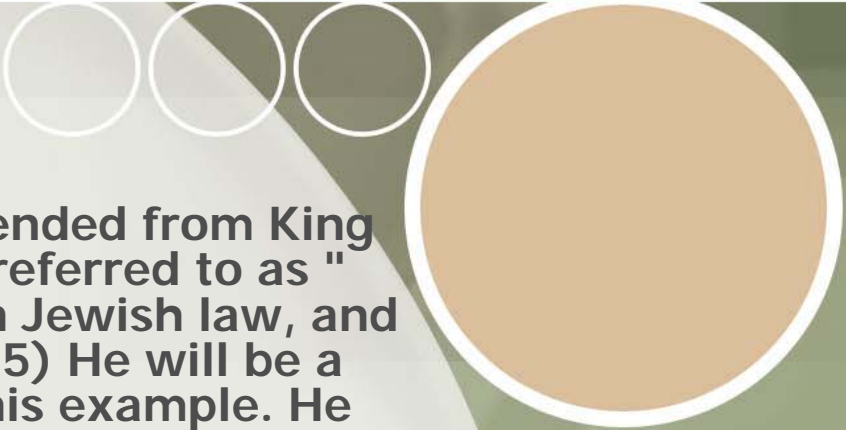
- 1) Build the Third Temple (Ezekiel 37:26-28).
- 2) Gather all Jews back to the Land of Israel (Isaiah 43:5-6).
- 3) Usher in an era of world peace, and end all hatred, oppression, suffering and disease. As it says: "Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall man learn war anymore." (Isaiah 2:4)
- 4) Spread universal knowledge of the God of Israel, which will unite humanity as one. As it says: "God will be King over all the world -- on that day, God will be One and His Name will be One" (Zechariah 14:9).

The messiah will be a human being, born naturally to husband and wife. He is not to be a god, nor a man born of supernatural or virgin birth. The very idea that God would take on human form is repulsive because it contradicts our concept of God as being above and beyond the limitations of the human body and situation.

The Jewish People believe that G-d ALONE is to be worshipped, and not a being who is His creation, be he angel, saint, or even the Mashiach himself.



# The Mashiach



The Mashiach will be a great political leader descended from King David (Jeremiah 23:5). The Mashiach is often referred to as "Mashiach ben David". He will be well-versed in Jewish law, and observant of its commandments. (Isaiah 11:2-5) He will be a charismatic leader, inspiring others to follow his example. He may also be a great military leader, who will win battles for Israel. He will be a great judge, who makes righteous decisions (Jeremiah 33:15).

But above all, he will be a human being, not a god, demi-god or other supernatural being. It has been said that in every generation, a person is born with the potential to be the Mashiach. If the time is right for the messianic age within that person's lifetime, then that person will be the Mashiach. But if that person dies before he completes the mission of the Mashiach, then that person is not the Mashiach.

# When Will the Mashiach Come?

There are a wide variety of opinions on the subject of when the Mashiach will come. Some of Judaism's greatest minds have cursed those who try to predict the time of the Mashiach's coming, because errors in such predictions could cause people to lose faith in the messianic idea or in Judaism itself. This actually happened in the 17th century, when Shabbatai Tzvi claimed to be the Mashiach. When Tzvi converted to Islam under threat of death, many Jews converted with him. Nevertheless, this prohibition has not stopped anyone from speculating about the time when the Mashiach will come. Although some scholars believed that G-d has set aside a specific date for the coming of the Mashiach, most authorities suggests that the conduct of mankind will determine the time of the Mashiach's coming. In general, it is believed that the Mashiach will come in a time when he is most needed (because the world is so sinful), or in a time when he is most deserved (because the world is so good). For example, each of the following has been suggested as the time when the Mashiach will come:

- if Israel repented a single day;
- if Israel observed a single Shabbat properly;
- if Israel observed two Shabbats in a row properly;
- in a generation that is totally innocent or totally guilty;
- in a generation that loses hope;
- in a generation where children are totally disrespectful towards their parents and elders;

# What Will the Mashiach Do?

Before the time of the Mashiach, there shall be war and suffering (Ezekiel 38:16) The will be the final war of Gog and Magog.

The Mashiach will bring about the political and spiritual redemption of the Jewish people by bringing us back to Israel and restoring Jerusalem (Isaiah 11:11-12; Jeremiah 23:8; 30:3; Hosea 3:4-5). He will establish a government in Israel that will be the center of all world government, both for Jews and gentiles (Isaiah 2:2-4; 11:10; 42:1). He will rebuild the Temple and re-establish its worship (Jeremiah 33:18). He will restore the religious court system of Israel and establish Jewish law as the law of the land (Jeremiah 33:15).

# False Messiahs

## Ancient claimants

1. Judas, son of Hezekiah (4)
2. Simon of Peraea (4 BCE)
3. Athronges, the shepherd (
4. Judas, the Galilean (6 CE)
5. John the Baptist (c.28 CE)
6. Jesus of Nazareth (c.30 CE)
7. The Samaritan prophet (36
8. King Herod Agrippa (44
9. Theudas (45 CE)
10. The Egyptian prophet (52-
11. An anonymous prophet
12. Menahem, the son of Judas
13. John of Gischala (67-70
14. Vespasian (67 CE)
15. Simon bar Giora (69-70
16. Jonathan, the weaver (73
17. Lukuas (115 CE)
18. Simon ben Kosiba (132-
19. Moses of Crete (448)

## Medieval claimants

1. Muhammed (570-c.632)
2. Abu Isa' al-Isfahani (c.700)
3. Moses al-Dar'i (c.1127)
4. David Alroy (c.1147)
5. A Yemenite Messiah (c.1172)
6. Abraham ben Samuel Abu'lafia (1230-1291)

## Later claimants

1. Asher Lämmlein (c.1500)
2. Isaac Luria (1534-1573)
3. Hayyim Vital (after 1542)
4. Sabbathai Zwi (1626-1676)
5. Jacob Frank (1726-1786)
6. Moses Guibbory (1899-1985)
7. Menachem Mendel Schneerson (1902-1994)

# Olam Ha-Ba: The Messianic Age

The world after the messiah comes is often referred to in Jewish literature as Olam Ha-Ba (oh-LAHM hah-BAH), the World to Come. This term can cause some confusion, because it is also used to refer to a spiritual afterlife. In English, we commonly use the term "messianic age" to refer specifically to the time of the messiah.

Olam Ha-Ba will be characterized by the peaceful co-existence of all people. (Isaiah 2:4) Hatred, intolerance and war will cease to exist. Some authorities suggest that the laws of nature will change, so that predatory beasts will no longer seek prey and agriculture will bring forth supernatural abundance (Isaiah 11:6-11:9). Others, however, say that these statements are merely an allegory for peace and prosperity. All of the Jewish people will return from their exile among the nations to their home in Israel (Isaiah 11:11-12; Jeremiah 23:8; 30:3; Hosea 3:4-5). The law of the Jubilee will be reinstated.

# Olam Ha-Ba: The Messianic Age

**In the Olam Ha-Ba, the whole world will recognize the Jewish G-d as the only true G-d, and the Jewish religion as the only true religion (Isaiah 2:3; 11:10; Micah 4:2-3; Zechariah 14:9). There will be no murder, robbery, competition or jealousy. There will be no sin (Zephaniah 3:13). Sacrifices will continue to be brought in the Temple, but these will be limited to thanksgiving offerings, because there will be no further need for expiatory offerings.**

# One Prophet and Two Mashiachs

- Behold, I am sending you Elijah the prophet, before the great and awesome day of G-d will come. He will restore the hearts of fathers to their children, and the hearts of children to their fathers. - Malachi 3:23-24
- The 'four carpenters' to whom the prophet also refers, are Elijah, Melchizedek, the Messiah of war, called by some Messiah son of Joseph, and the final Messiah, Messiah son of David. These Messiahs are referred to in the 32<sup>nd</sup> chapter of Isaiah, and their existence is constantly mentioned. Seven or eight Messiahs are sometimes said to be promised in the words of the Prophet Micah (5. 5), 'Then shall we raise against him seven shepherds and eight principal men,' but it is held that there will be but four (Zech. 1. 20), and these are they: Elijah the Tishbite, an unnamed man of the tribe of Manasseh, Messiah of war--an Ephraimite, and Messiah the Great, the descendant of David.--Midr. Song of Songs.
- Solomon's Song has also reference to Messiah. 'The voice of the turtle is heard in our land' means the voice of Messiah.--Midr. Song of Songs.
- When King Solomon speaks of his 'beloved,' he usually means Israel the nation. In one instance he compares his beloved to a roe, and therein he refers to a feature which marks alike Moses and the Messiah, the two redeemers of Israel. just as a roe comes

# One Prophet and Two Mashiachs

- within the range of man's vision only to disappear from sight and then appear again, so it is with these redeemers. Moses appeared to the Israelites, then disappeared, and eventually appeared once more, and the same peculiarity we have in connection with Messiah; He will appear, disappear, and appear again.-  
- Numb. Rabba
- The fourteenth verse in the second chapter of Ruth is thus explained. 'Come thou hither' is the prediction of Messiah's kingdom. 'Dip the morsel in the vinegar,' foretells the agony through which Messiah will pass, as it is written in Isaiah (cap. 51), 'He was wounded for our sins, He was bruised for our transgressions.' 'And she set herself beside the reapers' predicts the temporary departure of Messiah's kingdom. 'And he reached her a parched corn' means the restoration of His kingdom.--Midr. Ruth
- To three individuals God said, 'Ask, and it shall be given to thee.' These are Solomon, Ahaz, and Messiah, to the last of whom it was promised, 'Ask of Me, and I shall give Thee the heathens for Thine inheritance.'--Gen. Rabba



# One Prophet and Two Mashiachs

- In a similar strain we read, Israel is to overcome ten of the heathen nations of the world; seven of them have already been conquered; the remaining three will fall at the advent of Messiah.--Gen. Rabba .
- But, despite all this, Messiah will not come till all those who are to be created have made their appearance in the world.--Gen. Rabba
- In tracing the descent and history of the Israelites, the Bible enumerates the generations of the heads of the families of the earth whose history touched that of the chosen people. 'These are the generations of the heavens and the earth' is the first instance of the use of the word תולדות in such a connection. If regard be had to the Hebrew text of the verse, it will be found that here the word referred to is written in full, i.e. spelt תולדות , with the additional ו, whilst in all other places where the word occurs the word is always spelt with one ו, thus, תלדות . This, it will be found,

# One Prophet and Two Mashiachs

- is the invariable usage until we come to, 'Now these are the generations of Perez' (Ruth 4. 18). Here we once again find the word תולדות spelt in full. These are the only two instances in the whole of the Bible. The first refers to the time before the sin and fall of Adam, which brought death into the world, and, in consequence, all succeeding תלדות , 'generations,' were deprived of some of the possibilities of life, and this is indicated by the omission of the ו. But the enumeration of the descendants of Perez, bringing appreciably nearer the promised abolition of death through the agency of his descendant, the Messiah, is hailed as the occasion to celebrate the restoration to perfect man of what he had lost through the imperfection of the first of his kind, and hence the word תולדות is here spelt in full.--Exod. Rabba

**All of what we are, we see, we did and will do,  
is the Work of HaShem.**

**“May it be Your Will, HaShem, that the Holy  
Temple be rebuilt speedily in our days and  
grant us our share in Your Torah....”**

**Shabbat Shalom**

**And**

**Chag Chanuka Sameach**