

Vayeshev- Evil Intentions in the Hands of a Good Elohim



Torah: Bereshiyth [Genesis] 37:1- 40:23

Introduction: When we read our Torah portion, we come to see the pitfalls of favouritism & see how it can create hatred so perverse that it can lead to thoughts of murder. By Ya'acov [Jacob] giving the coat of strips which was a display among Semitic chiefs of an insignia of Rulership he truly sows the seeds of discontent. Yoseph as a youth however was surely still quite immature which then led to him boasting & revealing his dreams which surely only increased the brother's resentment of him. This epic tale I hope will encourage us that when things seem to follow an ever-descending trajectory of difficulty, Elohim is still always in control. Therefore, this is the theme of our study.

The Events that Happen:

- Since Rachel has died at the birth of Benyamin Ya'acov [Jacob] begins to highly favour Yoseph.
- The brother's plan the demise of Yoseph & carry out that plan.
- The interlude of Tamar occurs with Yahudah accepting his failure in the matter.
- Yoseph serving in the house of Potiphar overseeing the whole house.
- Yoseph is tempted by the wife of Potiphar & imprisoned.
- In Prison Yoseph interprets the dream of the Baker & Butler.

The Seeds of Jealousy:



Our saga now begins with an immature Yoseph being favoured by Ya'acov and Yoseph bearing evil tales about his brothers. Surely it is in this environment where resentment begins to develop. Amazingly the whole epic tale of Ya'acov is also bound up in favouritism since Esav was favoured by his father & Ya'acov [Jacob] by his mother & see where that got Ya'acov & yet the sin of the father had been passed on to the sons.



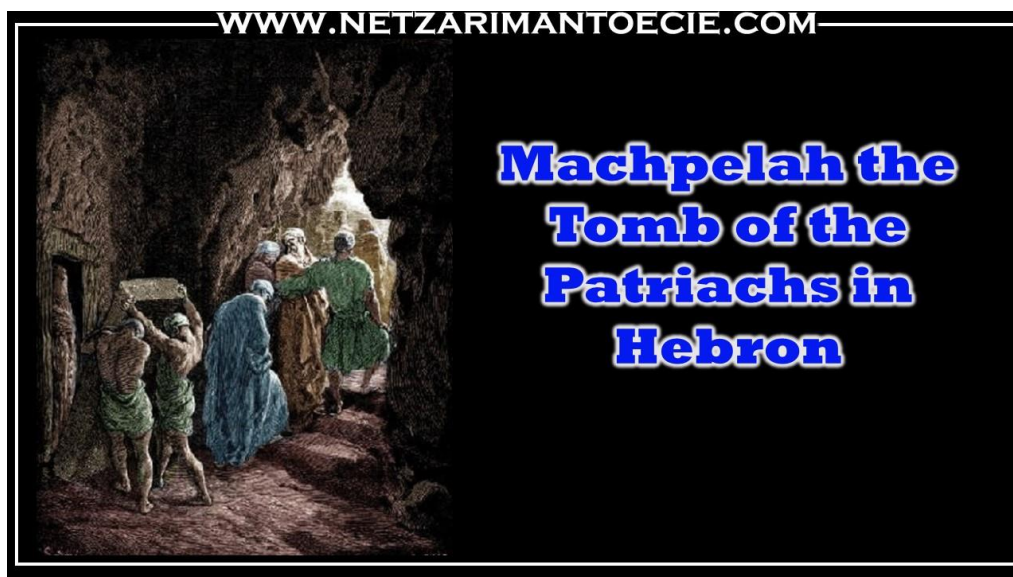
It seems that when Yoseph revealed his dreams, the brothers clearly perceived his thoughts of grandeur and his thoughts of an elevated position which finally broke the Camel's back just like stealing the blessing of Esav had, directing the brothers to think of murder. It seems that Yoseph [Joseph], in his youthful pride and zeal, needed some preparation in order to

occupy that position of leadership. He needed a few more spins on the potter's wheel to rub off some of those rough edges. The story of Yoseph [Joseph] reminds us, that Elohim [God] is sovereign and governs the affairs of mankind, even during those times in life when we are tempted to doubt that Elohim [God] is really in control.

A Place of Concern:



Surely at this stage in our story Ya'acov is concerned more with the welfare of his family who are pasturing the flocks around **Shechem** which was a place wrought with danger since the brothers **Shimon & Levi** had seen to it that all the men of the city were slaughtered there, so Ya'acov sends Yoseph to see to their welfare. Could it also be that Ya'acov was hoping for a restoration of the brothers, as he sends Yoseph from the depth of **Hebron** [Chevron]. Why do we see him dispatched from Hebron?



The Zohar suggests that Ya'acov took Yoseph to the grave of Abraham which we know was at Hebron to affirm to him the Covenant made by Elohim to cause him to understand the importance of a restored family. Interestingly, Shechem was a place pre-destined to be a scene of misfortune. It was for **Ya'acov's sons**, it was for **Dinah** who was ravished there, and it was also there that the **house of David** was later divided as we read in **1 Kings 12:1**.

The Ever-Present Hand of Elohim:



What is truly amazing in this story is that we find Yahweh behind the scene directing events. Who was this man who found Yoseph wandering in the field? We first see the hand of Elohim through the dreams & now by a mysterious man at Shechem.

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**Rashi: Rabbi Shlomo
Yitzchaki
(1040 - 1105 CE)**

Rashi- Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki (1040 - 1105 CE) the great sage suggests it was the Messenger [Angel] **Gabriel** in the likeness of man and he seems to know exactly where the brothers were heading which in itself is a bit strange. It is with all these strange events filled with evil intentions that we see the hand of Elohim directing the scene.



We can clearly see that also in the life of our Master as shown when he defends himself & speaks to the Pharisees that their Father is the Devil after which they picked up stones and he passed through them and also in the treasury when we read this in:



Yahuchanan [John] 8:20 These words Yeshua spoke in the treasury as He taught in the Temple and no-one laid hands on Him, for His hour had not yet come.

We too can have the confidence that in our lives when we love & serve the Master that our path is in His hands as indicated in:

Tehillah [Psalm] 37:23 The steps of a good man are ordered by Yahweh, And He delights in his way.

The Plans They Are A Changing:

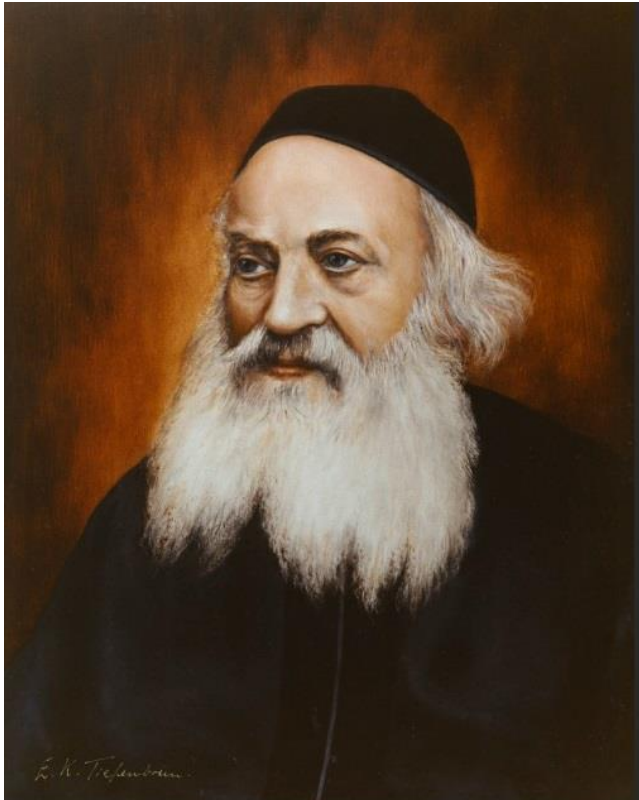
What we do see within the Brothers plans is that they are slowly progressing.

Plan A- We know from the moment they saw the dreamer coming they clearly had one plan in mind and that was to kill him.



Plan B- However, we find Reuven the elder brother suggesting to just cast him in the pit where he might die though he thought to rescue him later. Though this may seem that he cared, it may actually be selfish in that he may have thought to regain the first-born position that he had formerly lost.

Plan C- However Yahudah [Judah] after the brothers saw Yishmaelites traders in the distance proposes that they might sell Yoseph.



The Sage Rashbam however suggests the Midianites sold him based on this verse in:

Bereshiyth [Genesis] 37:28 Midianite traders passed by. They draw Yoseph up and lifted him out of the pit and sold Yoseph to the Yishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver.

Rashbam suggests the brothers did not sell him, rather the Midianites sold him.

We do know that Reuven returned to the pit and found it empty and tore his garments and returned to the brothers who formulated the deception just as Ya'acov had with his father & they then took the coat, killed a goat and brought it to their Father and said these words:



Bereshiyth [Genesis] 37:33 Recognize, if you please: is it your son's tunic or not?

The Hebrew word for recognize is only used in two places in the whole Torah and is used again when Tamar shows **Yahudah** [Judah] his signet, wrap and staff & says in:

Bereshiyth [Genesis] 38:25 Recognize, if you please whose are the seal, this wrap and this staff.



The whole dilemma of who sold Yoseph can be rectified with the words of Yoseph when he reveals himself in this verse:

Bereshiyth [Genesis] 45:4 Then Yoseph said to his brothers, “please come near to me.” And when they came near, he said, “I am Yoseph your brother, whom you sold into Mitsrayim [Egypt].”

In the Hands of a Good Elohim:

The conclusion that we can come to in this epic tale is that in every moment Yahweh is directing the path even though the intentions are evil. Yahweh in his goodness in the face of great anger uses time to modify the plans of man to fulfill his plan which is meant for good. If we can draw anything out of this portion it is that even in the worst of times the hand of Elohim is working out his plan for the good and we just need patience and faith in Him.

An example that we spoke about last week was Richard Wurmbrand who spoke up against Communism and was imprisoned for 14 Years much of them in Solitary. How could this be seen as the plan of Elohim. However, when he was released through a ransom, he migrated to the U.S. established the Organisation “**Voice of the Martyrs**” which today helps many thousands of believers in hundreds of Countries.

This is best expressed by the Words of **Shaul** [Paul] in his letter to the Romans in:



Romiyim [Romans] 8:28 And behold, we know that all things work together for good to those who love Elohim, to those who are called according to His purpose.

May the deep truth of these words, continue to encourage and inspire us all to pursue the ways of Elohim.

Amein!

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AMOS

The Shepherd Prophet

Haftarah:
Amos 2:6-11

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This portion reveals a Judgement upon Yisrael because of their greed which had led to selling one another into slavery for some insignificant debt with uncontained sexual passion.

The Tanakh is filled with instruction about care for the poor and sexual purity as mandated repeatedly. Violations of these, are both truly an affront to the Holy name of Yahweh especially by those calling themselves the people of Elohim. Just as the evil intentions of the brothers of Yoseph were an affront to Yahweh so Yisrael was an affront to him. May we always remember that Yahweh is Holy & our lives reflect the Holiness of whom we serve.

Netzarim Ketuvim: Ma'esay Ha Shiliychiyim [Acts] 7:9-16



In this reading **Tsephanyah** [Stephen] addresses the Sanhedrin to reveal how the mighty hand of Elohim is clearly at work. Stephen lays before them the history of Yisrael to show the divine working of Elohim to preserve his people from annihilation through a great famine and how Yoseph was raised up to a most exalted position to be governor of all **Mitsrayim** [Egypt]. This surely reveals that the hand of Elohim was dictating the path of His people that they might believe in the promised one that was to come in whom we too have put our hope to the praise of Yahweh our Elohim.

There is a strange reading here because we do know that in fact Ya'acov bought this tomb from Chamor at Shekhem since Stephen was possibly quoting from the Samaritan Pentateuch which says the Abraham was buried in Shekhem therefore this apparent error.

However, may we, never lose sight of the thought that we are not just wanderers with no direction but that our life is being directed by our Master so that we can be witnesses of His goodness in a wicked & lost World. May we never forget our purpose through praying for believers, supporting the Work of our Master in lands beyond our home and never forgetting those who went before us just as Stephen recalled in his speech to the Sanhedrin, since that shows the divine path that the Word of Yahweh has taken that we too might be called to His Divine purpose & Salvation.