



Understanding the Parsha

Genesis 37:1-40:23

We will Learn how to

- 1) interpret the main theme (subject) of a Parsha (weekly reading from the Torah),
- 2) make thematic connections to that Parsha (study the Scriptures related by a common theme [subject], line upon line and precept upon precept)
- 3) learn how to gain greater understanding of the Parsha we are looking at through its thematic connections to other portions of Scripture.

Understanding Genesis 37:1-40:23

Getting Off to a Bad Start

Read Genesis 37:1. At this point, we would expect for everything to go well with Jacob and his family. Jacob is in the land. He has twelve sons and the entire family is together. Jacob's sons simply need to find wives and begin having lots of babies in order to get this nation stuff off to a roaring start, right?

Read Genesis 37:2. The word translated generations in most English Bibles is translated as chronicles in the Artscroll Chumash. It is a translation of the Hebrew word, Toldot (תולדות). This word can mean chronicles /

history or descendants (offspring) / generations. So which do we use? What's in the story will help us to know how to translate it.

Read Genesis 36:1. The Artscroll Chumash translates this as, "*And these are the descendants of Esau...*"

This is the correct translation, because the Torah goes on to list his actual blood descendants.

Genesis 37:2 is not followed by a list of descendants. It's followed by a historical account! Which means we are about to witness a history (not a list of descendants) of Jacob! It turns out that this is a little hint about a deeper purpose of the story which begins here and will not end until Genesis 50. Remember, Jacob / Israel is the name of the entire nation. Remember to think of Jacob as the entire nation instead of one man, then we can see that Genesis 37:2 is telling us that: What follows is not just a story about the history of the man Jacob. It is also a history about the entire nation of Israel over many thousands of years! The stories of the Torah are prophetic shadows of future events that will happen in the lives of the descendants (children) of the Patriarchs and Matriarchs. This is the first hint (Remez) that the stories which follow are prophetic in nature.



Read Genesis 37:2 again. Notice the descriptions of Joseph and his brothers. The Artscroll Chumash says:

...Joseph, at the age of seventeen years, was a shepherd with his brothers by the flock..."

Unfortunately, your English Bible (like the KJV) may not even say that Joseph was a shepherd, even though the Hebrew literally says that Joseph was a shepherd (using the Hebrew word for shepherd, רעהו.)

Why is this important? Remember, we have already seen that the Torah makes statements about a person's character when it gives their occupation. That's why the unrighteous are characterized as being of the earth/field (e.g., Cain, Esau, etc.). The Torah does this to point out their fleshly, carnal nature. The righteous are characterized as being shepherds and sojourners (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, David, Yeshua, etc.). The Torah is already hinting (Remez) that Joseph has some kind of righteousness.

Does the fact that Joseph was with the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah tell us anything about the family relations?

Yes No It hints that there was † within the family relationships.

When you think that Bilhah and Zilpah were Jacob's handmaids (servants), Genesis 37:2 seems to tell us that maybe the relationship between Joseph and Leah's sons was already totally broken. After all, Joseph was only interacting with the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah, not the sons of Leah.

Relations between Joseph and the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah weren't exactly great either. In other words, the Torah has already hinted to us that the core of the nation characterized by righteousness and justice has some shortcomings.

Read Genesis 37:3-4. Do you think Jacob's special attention towards Joseph could be the reason for the strife?

Yes No The sons of Leah, Bilhah and Zilpah don't like the f מִשְׁטוֹרָה.

Based on Genesis 37:3-4, what word best describes the relationships between the brothers?

Hatred Love Happy

As we can see, not only can they not speak kind words to one another, they actually have hatred towards one another.

The cloak, a ketonet passim (כִּתְנֵת פְּסִים), was a special long-sleeved coat or garment worn by the children of kings — See II Samuel 13:18.

Based on Genesis 37, what word best describes the relationship between Jacob and Joseph?

The most important word, which is repeated twice in these two verses, is love hate

Can you think of a thematic connection to any other Scripture about the special relationship between another Patriarch and his son?

Abraham for Isaac Abraham for Ishmeal Jacob for Esau See Genesis 22:1-3

Read Genesis 37:5-8. According to these verses, what word best describes the relationship between the brothers?

Hatred Love Closeness Hint it is used twice in these few verses.

Read Genesis 37:9-11. Put yourself in Joseph's shoes. Do you think he was totally innocent while telling about his dreams?

Yes No Can you detect a little pride in him. He already knows his brothers hate him. This just isn't the kind of thing (I'm going to rule over you) you should keep telling people who hate you, unless you're trying to get a few digs in.

What new word describes the relationship between the brothers?

Jealousy Kindness Peaceful

The result of the strife is that Joseph's brothers have rejected him.

What seemed to increase the hatred of Joseph's brothers?

Joseph's d דְּרָמָה.

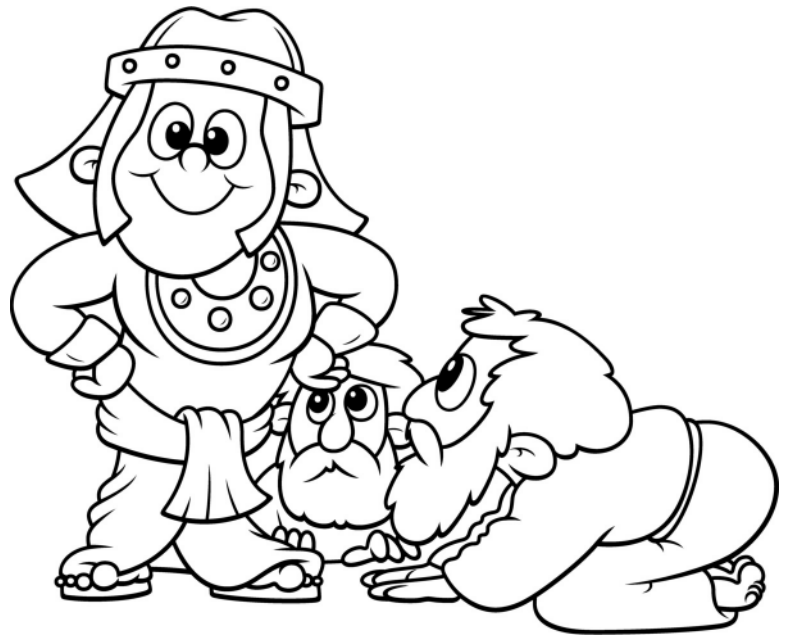


Remember the Scripture said that they hated him even more because of the dreams. Also, the dreams seem to be prophetic (about the future). In other words, the dreams seem to be prophetic predictions that Joseph would become a ruler and his brothers' would become his servants.

What overall theme would you give these first eleven verses?

The Torah has done a great job painting a picture of the family strife by repeatedly using the word hatred. I would write something like, Discord or Chaos in the Emerging Nation. What did you say?

Do you think the nation of righteousness and justice will blossom from such an environment? I don't think so. In fact, I'd say it was impossible. As I said before, the family simply needs to have children and grow to form a nation. Instead, the Torah paints a picture of division, strife, jealousy and hatred. These are the adjectives that best describe the beginning nation. Truly, it is a house divided against itself, doomed to fall. Remember, the Holy One will deal with sin. Therefore, we should expect the Holy One to deal with these issues of division, strife, jealousy and hatred.



Find the hidden words for this weeks Parsha

E	N	C	O	E	C	I	T	S	U	J
S	E	L	B	L	O	O	D	I	C	A
A	N	O	E	L	S	H	E	E	P	C
S	M	A	E	R	D	G	A	F	A	O
D	F	K	S	E	C	E	I	P	0	2
I	S	H	M	E	A	L	I	T	E	S
B	R	E	G	Y	P	T	V	E	L	N
O	L	S	H	E	P	H	E	R	D	E
C	E	N	A	T	I	O	N	E	R	W
A	L	E	T	C	A	R	A	V	A	N
J	O	S	E	P	H	T	S	E	R	W

JACOB
 JOSEPH
 HATE
 NATION
 JUSTICE
 PIT
 CLOAK
 SHEPHERD
 SHEEP
 DREAMS
 ISHMEALITES
 20 PIECES
 CARAVAN
 EGYPT
 BLOOD

