

Kriyat HaTorah Companion 2.0

Questions Raised in Each Aliya

Vayeshev

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Aliya 1 | 37:1-11

Examine verse 37:1.

Why is the status of Ya'akov mentioned now following the lineage of Eisav?

Rashi suggests that the events of Ya'akov's life were recorded now to create contrast with the barebones details offered regarding Eisav's life events. The **Rashbam** suggests that Ya'akov was inheriting his ancestral home because he had purchased the birthright from Eisav, therefore this is mentioned immediately after we are told of Eisav inheriting a new, foreign land. The **Ramban** suggests that unlike Eisav, Ya'akov was to reside in a land that he did not own. The nomad status was the inheritance of Avraham and would be the reality of the descendants of Ya'akov. The **Ohr HaChaim** sees this verse as a statement regarding how the upcoming story of Yosef's exile, which then forced the Jewish people down to Egypt, will conclude with a return to the land of Avraham and Yitzchak.

Aliya 2 | 37:12-22

Examine verses 37:12-14.

Why does Ya'akov send Yosef to check on his brothers? Does Ya'akov know that Yosef was hated by his brothers?

Rashi suggests that the words in verse 14 that describe Chevron as "a valley" lead us to believe that Ya'akov understood the historical necessity for Yosef and the brothers to interact. Describing Chevron, which is in the hills, makes it unusual to describe it as a valley. Therefore, this statement is actually placing this action in context of who was buried (the valley may refer to a grave) in Chevron (Avraham) and the promise God made to him. The **Ohr HaChaim** suggests that Ya'akov understood the danger that Yosef faced and therefore commanded Yosef, so he would be protected by fulfilling the Mitzvah of *kibbud av*.

Aliya 3 | 37:23-36

Examine verse 37:24.

Why does the Torah describe the pit as both empty and lacking water?

Rashi suggests that the pit was empty and stating that there was no water in it was necessary because there were scorpions and snakes in it. The **Siftei Chachamim** explains that snakes and scorpions generally hide in the cracks and crevices and therefore a pit can be perceived as completely empty even when there are some smaller animals within them. The **Chizkuni** suggests that the lack of water in the pit is important to mention in order to show that the brother did not want to drown Yosef; rather, their intent was to hold him until they could create a plan. The **Netziv** adds to this by saying that the pit being empty means there were no large rocks that Yosef could have bashed his head on and therefore again, it seemed to be a relatively safe place to "hold" Yosef.

Aliya 4 | 38:1-30

Examine verse 38:1.

Why is this story written here? What does this story have to do with Yosef's story?

Rashi suggests that the brothers blamed Yehuda for his role in the sale of Yosef. They accused Yehuda of leading them down the wrong path and therefore Yehuda was feeling degraded & isolated from his brothers. The **Sforno** suggests that Yehuda lost two of his sons, helping him relate to Ya'akov's grief. This shared grief created a greater connection between Ya'akov and Yehuda. The **Bekhor Shor** suggests that Yehuda could not be around the mourning and depression that now filled his father's home, so he distanced himself. *The isolation that Yehuda feels following a low point in his family history has to be indicative to Yehuda's general disposition towards the sale of Yosef.*

Aliya 5 | 39:1-6

Examine verses 39:1-2.

What does verse 2 add to our understanding of Yosef's current circumstances?

The **Sforno** suggests that this verse is stating a number of important realities about Yosef's current situation: "The Lord was with Yosef": This was stated to show us that God was protecting Yosef from being taken advantage of. "And he was a successful man": There was no work that he undertook that was not successful. "And he stayed in the house of his Egyptian master": Yosef had access to even the most private rooms of his master. Yosef was a frequent visitor to the bedroom of Potiphar to conduct business and ensure smooth functioning of the overall household.

Aliya 6 | 39:7-23

Examine verse 39:7.

Why is this story introduced with the statement, "after a time..."? Why does Potifar's wife proposition Yosef?

Rashi suggests the opening words actually indicate a proximity in time. Meaning, it was not too long after he started working for Potifar that this incident took place. The **Bekhor Shor** suggests that Yosef's prominent rise to power was made more dramatic by his distinct appearance compared to his fellow Egyptians. It was in all likelihood, he suggests, that his appearance was completely different and garnered the attention of admirers. The **Ktav VeHakabalah** ties his success to Potifar's wife's attention. As he grew in his power, Potifar's wife noticed him more and grew in her attraction towards him.

Aliya 7 | 40:1-23

Examine verse 40:1.

What was the error of the Butler & Baker? Why do the words "Melech Mitzrayim" divide the butler and baker?

Rashi suggests that Yosef became the subject of communal gossip that in turn became a desecration of God's name, so God caused there to be a new controversy that would grab the attention of the Egyptians i.e. "butler-and-baker-gate." The **Kli Yakar** suggests that the mistake of the Butler was an accident. Even though being Butler to the King required extra diligence, nevertheless, it was an accident, so the Butler maintained his status as Butler to the Pharaoh. The Baker's mistake was negligence, therefore he loses his connection to the Pharaoh and is condemned from the get-go.

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