



## *Vayeshev*

SHABBAT ALL WEEK LONG

*Bringing the Inspiration of Shabbat into the Workweek*

# PARSHAH OVERVIEW

## *Vayeshev*

Jacob settles in Hebron with his twelve sons. His favorite is seventeen-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 of his dreams, which foretell that he is destined to rule over them, increasing their envy and hatred toward 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, Perez (an ancestor of King David) and Zerah.

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 into prison. Joseph gains the trust and admiration of his jailers, who appoint him to a position of authority in the prison administration.

## QUESTION

The question screaming for an answer is,  
what was Judah thinking?  
Did a man of his moral caliber truly intend  
to lie with a prostitute?

Some even see Yehudah and Tamar's marriage as the source for the contemporary custom to seal a wedding exclusively by giving a ring:



There is a parallel and truer G-dly realty that is unbound by the mores of nature. It is from this supranatural world that all morality, purpose, and spirituality stem.





When a man and woman unite, a G-dly energy, which is beyond nature, is drawn into nature—the perfect representation of what is accomplished by pairing the energies of  $z''a$  and *Malchut*.



Ultimate truth can only stem from an absolute G-d Who is unchanged and unbound by the ever-changing mores of nature.





The *Sefer Hachinuch* explains that Shabbat is meant to serve as a reminder that the mundane world isn't as mundane as it seems:





On Shabbos, the entire world is elevated to a higher plane of consciousness, and our soul has better reception, if you will. We are given a heightened ability to connect with and feel our inner G-dly guiding light and moral compass.



## KEY POINTS

1. The story of Judah and Tamar isn't what the direct reading of the Torah indicates. Judah married Tamar. In fact, a source for the notion of a wedding ring is in this story Torah indicates. Judah married Tamar. In fact, a source for the notion of a wedding ring is in this story.
2. Marriage is the union of male and female, which in kabbalistic language represents the union of the supernatural with the natural.
3. The miracle of childbirth is a physical manifestation of this phenomenon.
4. A “signet ring” encapsulates this impossible bridging: “ring” is synonymous with nature, and “signet” is associated with the absolute truth of G-d.
5. Shabbat is also associated with a signet ring, the implication being that the transcendence of Shabbat ought to spill into the week.

