

Congregation Beth Israel of the Palisades
at the New Synagogue of Fort Lee
שבת מברכים פרשת וישב
Shabbat M'varchim Parashat Vayeshev
December 1, 2018 | Kislev 23, 5779



TORAH STUDY

**This Week: Shabbat M'varchim Parashat Vayeshev
B'reishit 37.1-40.23, pages 226-245**

SECOND ALIYAH: A man encounters Yosef, who is “wandering” around looking for his brothers. The root word for wandering here is taf-ayin-hey (ת-ע-פ). Is there a significance to the word used here?

SEVENTH ALIYAH: Dreams opened the parashah, and now dreams close the parashah. What significant fact might this bracketing be telling us about Yosef?

The haftarah, Amos 2.6-3.8, begins on page 247.

**Next Week: Shabbat Chanukah v'Rosh Chodesh Parashat Miketz
B'reishit 41.1-44.17, pages 250-270**

Added reading No. 1: B'midbar 28.9-15, Pages 930-931
Added reading No. 2: B'midbar 7.42-47, Pages 808-809

THIRD ALIYAH: Pharaoh had no idea whether what Yosef said would actually occur, yet appoints him viceroy—or did he have a clue?

SIXTH ALIYAH: In verse 43.29, is there sarcasm in Yosef's voice (“Is this your youngest brother?”), and why does a blessing follow?

The haftarah, Z'chariah 2.14-4.7, begins on page 1270.

For haftarot, we follow S'fardi custom.

WHAT TAMAR TAUGHT YEHUDAH—AND US

When he learned that his daughter-in-law Tamar was pregnant, Yehudah leapt to the only conclusion he could draw, namely that she had committed adultery, for which the punishment was death. Tamar was brought out to face her sentence. She came, holding the staff and seal that Yehudah instantly recognized as his own. She said, “I am pregnant by the person to whom these objects belong.” Yehudah realized what had happened and said, “She is more righteous than I.”

This moment is a turning-point in history. Yehudah is the first person in the Torah explicitly to admit he was wrong. We do not realize it yet, but this seems to be the moment at which he acquired the depth of character necessary for him to become the first real baal t'shuvah. We see this years later, when he—the man who proposed selling Yosef as a slave—becomes the man who is willing to spend the rest of his life in slavery so that his brother Binyamin can go free. It is from here that we learn the principle that a penitent stands higher than even a perfectly righteous individual. Yehudah the penitent becomes the ancestor of Israel's kings while Yosef, the righteous, is only a viceroy, mishneh le-melekh, second to the king.

Thus far Yehudah. But the real hero of the story was Tamar. She had taken an immense risk by becoming pregnant. Indeed she was almost killed for it. She had done so for a noble reason: to ensure that the name of her late husband was perpetuated. But she took no less care to avoid Yehudah being put to shame. Only he and she knew what had happened. Yehudah could acknowledge his error without loss of face. It was from this episode that the sages derived the rule: Rather risk being thrown into a fiery furnace than shame someone else in public.

It is thus no coincidence that Tamar, a heroic non-Jewish woman, became the ancestor of David, Israel's greatest king. There are striking similarities between Tamar and the other heroic woman in David's ancestry, the Moabite woman we know as Rut.

There is an ancient Jewish custom on Shabbat and festivals to cover the challot or matzah while holding the glass of wine over which Kiddush is being made. The reason is so as not to put the challah to shame while it is being, as it were, passed over in favor of the wine. There are some very religious Jews, sadly, who will go to great lengths to avoid shaming an inanimate loaf of bread, but have no compunction in putting their fellow Jews to shame if they regard them as less religious than they are. That is what happens when we remember the halachah, but forget the underlying moral principle behind it.

Never put anyone to shame. That is what Tamar taught Yehudah and what she teaches us, as well.

—Adapted from the writings of Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks

CBIOTP STANDARDS & PRACTICES

1. Men must keep their heads covered in the building and must wear a talit when appropriate. Women may choose to do either or both, but it is not mandatory.
2. Anyone accepting a Torah-related honor must wear a talit, regardless of gender.
3. Only one person at a time may take an aliyah.
4. No one should enter or leave the sanctuary during a K'dushah. One should not leave the sanctuary when the Torah scroll is being carried from or to the ark.
5. No conversations may be held in the hallway outside the sanctuary, or while standing in an aisle alongside a pew.
6. The use of recording equipment of any kind is forbidden on sacred days.
7. Also forbidden are cell phones, beepers and PDAs, except for physicians on call and emergency aid workers (please use vibrating option).
8. No smoking at any time in the building, or on synagogue grounds on Shabbatot and Yom Kippur.
9. No non-kosher food allowed in the building at any time.
10. No one may remove food or utensils from the shul on Shabbatot. An exception is made for food being brought to someone who is ailing and/or homebound.

MAZAL TOV CORNER

[If we don't know about it, we can't print it;
if we can't print it, we can't wish it.]

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Monday Barbara Isenberg,
Barbara Bing Rosenberg
Tuesday Steven Bing
Wednesday Henriette Kadoch,
Michelle Rauch

This week's Shabbat Booklet
is sponsored by
JUDY GOLUB
to mark the yahrzeit yesterday of
her late uncle,
CHARLES SILVERMAN, ז"ל
May his memory be for a blessing.

MITZVAH MEMO

Please bring non-perishable food
and other items to the shul.

* * *

Do you know someone who is homebound?
Let us know, so we can check in on them.

THE IMAHOT:

Following is the text adopted by the Ritual Committee for
use by the Prayer Leader in reciting the Amidah, and
those wishing to insert the Matriarchs in their Amidot:

ברוך אתה אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ וְאִמּוֹתֵנוּ, אֱלֹהֵי
אֲבֹרָה וְשָׂרָה, אֱלֹהֵי יִצְחָק וְרִבְקָה, וְאֱלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב, רַחֵם
וְלֵאמֹר. הָאֵל הַגָּדוֹל הַגִּבּוֹר וְהַנּוֹרָא, אֵל עֲלִיוֹן, גּוֹמֵל
חֲסִדִּים טוֹבִים, וְקוֹנֵה הַכֹּל, וְזוֹכֵר חֲסִדֵי אֲבוֹת, וַיַּמְבִּיא
גּוֹאֵל לְבָנָי בְּנֵיהֶם לְמַעַן שְׁמוֹ בְּאַהֲבָה.

Recite this only between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur:

זְכֵרְנוּ לַחַיִּים, מִלֶּךְ חַפֵּץ בַּחַיִּים, וְכַתְּבֵנוּ בְּסֵפֶר הַחַיִּים,
לְמַעַן אֱלֹהִים חַיִּים.

מִלֶּךְ עוֹזֵר וּמוֹשִׁיעַ וּמַגֵּן. בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה אֱלֹהֵינוּ, מֶלֶךְ אֲבֹרָה
וְעִזְרָת שָׂרָה.

This week's kiddush & luncheon
are sponsored by
GARY MILLER
to mark the yahrzeit last Shabbat
of his late stepfather,
HARRY GIPS, ז"ל
May his memory be for a blessing

TOMORROW!

As night falls and Chanukah begins,

**COME LIGHT
THE LIGHTS
WITH US!**



5:00 p.m.—Cliffside Park Municipal Building
5:30 p.m.—Edgewater Community Center (1167 River Road)
6:00 p.m.—Sunrise Assisted Living (315 River Road)
Help us bring Chanukah cheer to the residents

Tamar and the status of women in biblical times

Until now, we have seen woman as sexual commodity, conniving manipulator, and disobedient subject. Now we see her—and hear her—in a somewhat different light: as procreator of biblical man.

The B'reishit story that best reflects this role is the bizarre soap opera involving sex for pay between Yehudah and his disguised daughter-in-law Tamar. The brief vignette, which appears in the middle of the Joseph story, is packed tightly with numerous layers, each inviting multiple interpretations.

First, the story serves as the biblical foundation for the ritual of “Levirite marriage.” This ritual, which is elaborated later in the Torah, requires a brother to impregnate his widowed sister-in-law if his dead brother has left her without a male child. The “Levirite (Latin for brother-in-law) marriage” is designed to protect the blood line of the dead brother, so that “his name shall not be blotted out.” Indeed, the resulting male child, though genetically the son of the living brother, is legally the son of the dead one, whose name he carries and whose property he inherits.

In the Tamar story, Yehudah—the fourth son of Jacob, whose name will be given to the Jewish people—marries a Canaanite woman, who bears him three sons. Yehudah arranges for his oldest son, Er, to marry Tamar, a woman of unspecified, but probably not Jewish, heritage. In any event, God found Er to be wicked and slew him. The commentators speculate over the precise nature of Er's evil. Whatever the reason, Tamar was now childless and husbandless. So Yehudah instructed his son Onan to fulfill his Levirite duty by impregnating his sister-in-law.

Onan was now faced with a clear conflict of interest. If he satisfied his Levirite duty and succeeded in producing a male heir, Onan would deprive himself (and his future children) of Yehudah's inheritance. As matters now stood, Onan was Yehudah's eldest son and heir, but if Tamar had a male child, that child—Er's son by law—would become the primogenetic heir, since Er's line would continue through that child.

No wonder, then, that Onan, knowing that “the seed would not be his,” deliberately spilled his seed on the ground “so as not to provide seed for his brother.” God was not pleased at Onan's obvious circumvention of the Levirite duty, and He slew Onan, too. This left poor Tamar with two dead sex partners and no seed.

Her father-in-law, Yehudah, had yet a third son, and since neither of his other sons had managed to impregnate Tamar, Yehudah was obliged to promise Tamar the seed of that son, his youngest, Shelah. He did so, but without intending to keep his promise, since he was worried that sex with Tamar carried some kind of black-widow curse. Considering the fate of his first two sons, who can blame him? So Yehudah—who is presented as rather cold and calculating; we never see him grieving the loss of his first two sons—orders Tamar to go back to live with her father's family until Shelah has grown up, hoping that distance will discourage her from holding him to his promise. The dutiful daughter-in-law

follows Yehudah's command and moves back to her village.

Eventually, she realizes she has been duped. Shelah, who has now grown up, is never going to perform his Levirite duty, and she is going to end up a childless widow, with no claim to Yehudah's fortune and no status in Yehudah's clan.

With the benefit of a bit of biblical hindsight, we realize this could not be allowed to happen, since Tamar is slated to become the foremother of King David and the prophet Yishayahu, as well as the eventual mashiach. Indeed, Tamar is the best and last hope that Yehudah will have any male heirs, since his first two sons were struck down before fathering any children and his youngest virtually disappears from biblical view following this story and does not seem to have fathered any children. The entire future of the Jewish people, who eventually derive from the clan of Yehudah, is now at risk and in the hands—or, more precisely, the empty womb—of Tamar. Tamar must beget a male child from the seed of Yehudah.

According to midrashic commentary, Tamar had been given the gift of prophecy and knew she was destined to become “the mother of the royal line of David, and the ancestors of Yishayahu.” For the resourceful Tamar prophecy is no substitute for action: She must give destiny a shove in the right direction. Her actions move us to the next layer of this complex story.

Convinced that Yehudah will never let Shelah impregnate her, Tamar takes advantage of two facts she has just learned: first, that Yehudah has recently been widowed; and second, that he is about to pass on a road not far from her village. Again, we see a relatively cold Yehudah quickly completing his obligation to mourn his deceased wife and rushing to join the sheepshearing festivities. As



Robert Alter notes, “sheepshearing was the occasion for elaborate festivities, with abundant food and drink.” Determined to carry the seed of Yehudah—if not by way of his children, then by way of Yehudah himself—Tamar dresses herself as a harlot and sits by the side of the road, her face covered by a veil. Yehudah propositions her and agrees to pay her a baby goat in exchange for sex. Tamar agrees to Yehudah’s proposition and demands a pledge until he can arrange to have the goat sent to her. He gives her his signet and staff, they have sex, and she becomes pregnant. When Yehudah returns home, he is determined to pay his debt to the harlot and retrieve his telltale possessions, but his messenger can find no trace of any harlot near the place where Yehudah encountered the veiled woman.

In the meantime, Yehudah is told that his widowed daughter-in-law is pregnant, apparently from whoring around. Furious at this family dishonor, Yehudah demands that Tamar be brought to him and burned, but the wily Tamar produces the signet and the staff and declares that “by the man to whom these belong am I pregnant.”

The commentators stress that Tamar did not directly accuse her father-in-law, waiting instead for him to acknowledge his responsibility. They suggest that the dutiful daughter-in-law would not have blown the whistle on Yehudah if he had remained silent, because she did not want to embarrass him. This seems questionable in light of the fact that she had deliberately asked for his seal, which is intended as a source of identification. Upon inspection of the seal, it would become apparent who its owner is, since a seal is the ancient equivalent of a modern credit card or driver’s license. It is fair to infer that she intended to use it as insurance against precisely the accusation she anticipated.

Confronted with the evidence, Yehudah revokes the death sentence, contritely proclaiming that Tamar is more righteous than he, since he had broken his promise to give her to his son Shelah. This part of the story ends with a strange coda: Yehudah did not “know her again.”

Why would the Torah go out of its way to tell us Yehudah did not have sex with Tamar again? Surely the reader should assume that now that he knows the harlot on the side of the road is his own daughter-in-law, he would not dream of violating the incest taboo that was later explicitly and emphatically incorporated in Vayikra 18.15. Moreover, since she is now pregnant with his—and his dead son’s—child, there is no longer a Levirite obligation. Perhaps the reason is precisely to emphasize that it is never proper to have sex knowingly with one’s daughter-in-law, even if the woman’s husband and the man’s wife are now dead, and even if it is intended to fulfill the Levirite duty.

On a larger level, the Tamar story tells us much about the dependent status of women during biblical times. Moreover, it seems the author intended to praise Tamar for her resourcefulness: She plays within the rules and still gets her due. The system was heavily weighted against women in general and against childless—really son-less—widows in particular. Tamar understood she was in no position to demand her rights, so she resorted to an approach common in Sefer B’reishit—trickery. Indeed, it can fairly be said that B’reishit accepts trickery as a way of achieving

one’s legitimate rights or accomplishing one’s destiny. Certainly Tamar is in the good company of Avraham (who tricked a pharaoh and Avimelech), Yitzchak (who tricked Avimelech), Yaakov (who tricked Eisav twice and his father, as well), Rivkah (who helped Yaakov trick Yitzchak), Lavan (who tricked Yaakov), Rachel (who tricked Lavan), Yaakov’s older sons (who tricked him), and Yosef (who tricked his brothers).

As is typical in B’reishit, then, Tamar’s trickery is part of a cycle of deception. It is payback for Yehudah tricking her into believing his third son would fulfill the Levirite obligation, and for Onan tricking her into having sex with the false expectation of impregnation. But Tamar is not victimized by further trickery, nor is she criticized for tricking Yehudah into impregnating her. Indeed, she is praised even by the man she fooled, and is rewarded by giving birth to twins who become the progenitors of the Jewish people and two of their greatest heroes, as well as the eventual mashiach.

This story, like several others in B’reishit, reflects ambivalence about the rules of status that prevailed in biblical times. Just as the second-born Yaakov is praised for securing his rights and destiny in the face of primogeniture, so too is Tamar praised for her determination and ingenuity in the face of societal rules that render a childless widow worthless. These, however, are not revolutionary stories. The heroes do not change the rules, but instead triumph by dint of their creative manipulations of the system. Tamar does not employ violence, only guile. Her deceptions are proportional and rational. She employs self-help to avoid an unjust punishment. The Torah seems to be suggesting a precursor to the common-law doctrine of “necessity,” under which ordinarily illegal actions are justified if necessary to prevent a greater evil. For example, a starving man may break into an empty home to secure food, and an endangered ship may enter a private mooring to avoid sinking. Trickery is wrong, as is sex outside of marriage and especially with one’s father-in-law, but if these actions are necessary to secure one’s right to procreate, they may be deemed justified. The imperative of motherhood—especially motherhood of biblical leaders—trumps even the rules against incest, as it did when Lot’s daughter raped their father in their mistaken belief they were saving humankind.

In addition to foreshadowing a legal defense—necessity—the story of Tamar is also the first biblical account of a criminal trial. Primitive as it is, Yehudah’s summoning and sentencing of Tamar is a legal proceeding. To be sure, it is an Alice in Wonderland trial, with the death sentence preceding the evidence. Eventually, however, Tamar is permitted to present her case and reverse the judgment. Yehudah is legislator, prosecutor, judge, jury, and executioner. His word is law, and his law is arbitrary fiat.

Fortunately for Tamar, he is a benevolent despot who is willing to acknowledge the error of his ways. Yehudah rules neither because he is righteous nor because the people have selected him, but rather because of his status as the head of his clan. In a primitive world without formal law, one’s position determines rights. In such a world, guile is needed to overcome the injustices of status.

—Adapted from Alan Dershowitz’s *The Genesis of Justice*

May He who blessed | מי שברך

May He who blessed our ancestors bless and heal all those whose names are listed here, those whose names will be called out, and those whose names we do not know because either we are unaware of their illness or they are.
We pray He mercifully quickly restore them to health and vigor. May He grant physical and spiritual well-being to all who are ill. אמן

Sydelle Klein	Rifkah bat Chanah	Julia Yorke
Bonnie Pritzker Appelbaum	Rut bat Hadassah	Susan Yorke
Deenah bat Sarah Leah	Shimona bat Flora	Alter ben Hassia
Rut bat Esther	Sura Osnat bat Alta Chayah	Avraham Akivah bat Chanah Sarah
Miriam Zelda bat Gittel D'vorah	Tzipporah bat Yaffa	Aharon Hakohen ben Oodel
Miriam Rachel bat Chanah	Yospeh Perel bat Michlah	Chaim ben Golda
Harav Mordechai Volff ben Liba Miryam	Michelle Blatteis	Ezra ben Luli
Michael Bybelezer	Diane Fowler	Gil Nechemiah ben Yisraela
M'nachem Mendel ben Chaya Dina	Marj Goldstein	Mordechai Yitzchak ben Tirtzach
Simchah bat Zelda	Judy Golub	Harav R'fael Eliyahu ben Esther Malkah
Adina bat Freidel	Ruth Hammer	Harav Shimon Shlomo ben Taube v'Avraham
Baila bat D'vorah	Goldy Hess	Yidel ben Etil
Basha bat Surah	Fay Johnson	Yisrael Yitzhak ben Shayndel
Chavah bat Sarah	Selma Kamil	Yitzchak ben Tziviva
Chayah bat Flora	Micki Kuttler	Yonatan ben Malka
Devora Yocheved bat Yehudit	Katie Kim	Yosef ben Flora
Esther bat D'vorah	Elaine Laikin	Larry Carlin
HaRav Ilana Chaya bat Rachel Esther	Mira Levy	Joseph Favia
Malka bat Esther	Robin Levy	Shannon Johnson
Masha bat Etil	Karen Lipsy	Adam Messing
Masha bat Rochel	Barbara McClanahan	Gabriel Neri
Mindel bat D'vorah	Gail Schenker	Jeff Nicol
Ninette bat Aziza	Linda State	Mark Alan Tunick
Pinyuh bat Surah	Mary Thompson	
Ruchel Leah bat Malkah	Michelle Lazar	
Rita bat Flora	Norma Sugerman	

We pray for their safe return...

May He who blessed our ancestors bless, preserve, and protect the captive and missing soldiers of Tzahal—Ron Arad, Zecharia Baumel, Guy Chever, Zvi Feldman, Yekutiel Katz, and Zeev Rotshik—as well as those U.S. and allied soldiers, and the civilians working with them and around them, still missing in Afghanistan and Iraq, and all other areas of conflict, past and present.

And may He bless the men and women of the U.S. Armed Forces and Tzahal, and those who serve the United States and Israel in foreign lands in whatever capacity, official or unofficial, members of our community or related to members, and their colleagues and companions. Guide them in peace and return them speedily to their families alive and unharmed. אמן

Are we in your will? Shouldn't we be?

When people prepare their wills, they usually look to leave a mark beyond the confines of their families. Thus it is that general gifts are left to hospitals, and other charitable organizations. All too often ignored, however, is the synagogue, even though its role in our lives often begins at birth, and continues even beyond death. We come here on Yom Kippur and other days, after all, to say Yizkor, the prayer in memory of our loved ones. Our Virtual Memorial Plaques remind everyone of who our loved ones were, and why we recall them. All of us join in saying the Kaddish on their yahrzeits.

Considering this, it is so unfortunate that, in our final act, we ignore the one institution in Jewish life that is so much a part of us. The synagogue is here for us because those who came before us understood its importance and prepared for its preservation. By remembering it in our wills, we will do our part to assure that the synagogue will be there for future generations, as well.

Think about it. We have always been here for anyone who needed us in the past. Do not those who need us in the future have the same right to our help? Of course they do. Do not delay! Act today! Help secure the future of your communal home.

Yahrzeits for Today Through Next Friday

זכרונם לברכה — May their memories be for a blessing!

1	Nettie Cohen*	4	Benjamin H. Bloom
	Louis Deutsch*	5	Leonard Brodsky, <i>Myra Brodsky's husband</i>
	Caroline Rosenwasser*		Bertha Schwab*
	Abraham Saul Levine*		Herman Schwartz*
	Israel Zeff Rosenfeld		Herman David Sand*
2	Israella (Irina) Kamer, <i>Lazar Kamer's wife</i>		Phyllis Rosa Goldstrom*
	Herbert David Malakoff*		Heimi Weisinger*
	Jacob Freesman*	6	Charles Silverman*, <i>Judy Golub's uncle</i>
	Menucha Weinstein*		Fanny Malakoff*
	Lillian Gartner*		Iris Woodrow*
	Jenny Malek*		Martin Krisow*
	Rose Phillips*		Moshe Weinstein*
	Harris Wilner*		Elliot Emerson
3	Joseph D. Epstein*		Harry Harrison*
	Gertrude Favia, <i>Joseph Favia's wife</i>		Mollie Sachs*
4	David Meltzer, <i>Seymour Meltzer's father</i>		Benjamin Schlesinger*
	Ester Lerner*		Harry Lebowitz*
	Charles L. Goldfarb*		Judith Siegel*
	Henry Borkowski *	7	Marc Isenberg, <i>husband of Barbara Isenberg</i>
	Robert Zerman*		Mildred Farber
	Simon Leven*		Nat Lesser
	Bernard Phillips*		Jacob Schraier*
	Moe Tamber		Louis Messer

* A plaque in this person's name is on our memorial board; yahrzeits are observed beginning sundown the night before.

Is there a yahrzeit we should know about?

Kaddish list

Julius Birnbaum
Michael Cunningham
Larry Frank
Tamara Galperin
Evyatar Shabbetai Gidasey
Ruth Gordon
Raul Green
Susan Jane Greenberg
DeMing Huang

Lisa Beth Hughes
Karol Lang
Arline Levine
Marcia Weis Meyers
Lenore Levine Sachs
Marvin Sakin
Steven Sakin
Evan Schimpf
Bila Silberman
Abe Tauber
Regina Tauber



Form of bequest to CBIOTP

The following form is suggested for guidance in preparing a bequest:

I, the undersigned, give and bequeath to Congregation Beth Israel of the Palisades, or its successor, the sum of \$_____ for its educational and religious work.

Signed

Date:

Witness 1:

Witness 2:

Congregation Beth Israel of the Palisades
at the New Synagogue of Fort Lee
ק"ק בית ישראל של הפלייסד
1585 Center Avenue, Fort Lee, NJ 07024-4716

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A Happy Chanukah to all
from
Rabbi Engelmayer,
Nadia Massuda,
and the Board of Trustees

Attention ALL Vets!
If you're not yet a member of
JWV Post 76,
YOU SHOULD BE!
For more information, call
201-869-6218

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Shabbat ends tonight with havdalah at 5:15 p.m. EST