

## VAYESHEV 5779

### Parsha Summary:

- Yaakov settles in the land of Cana'an (later Israel). Yosef was seventeen years old and worked as a shepherd. He would bring negative reports about his brothers to his father. The Torah tells us that Yaakov loved Yosef more than all his other sons and he made him a special robe of fine wool. Yosef's brothers became jealous.
- Yosef related to his brothers two dreams that he had. In the first all twelve brothers are binding sheaves in the field. The brothers' sheaves gather around Yosef's sheaf and bow to it. This increases their animosity towards Yosef. In the second dream the sun, moon and eleven stars bow down to Yosef. Yaakov rebukes Yosef.
- One day when Yosef's brothers were away tending their father's sheep, Yaakov sent Yosef to see how they were. When Yosef's brothers saw him approaching they plotted to kill him. One brother, Reuven, pleaded with them not to kill Yosef but to throw him in one of the nearby pits. Reuven planned to return to the pit later and rescue Yosef.
- When Yosef arrived, his brothers strip him of his special tunic and throw him into a pit. While they were sitting down to eat, another brother, Yehudah advised them to sell Yosef to an Ishmaelite caravan of merchants travelling to Egypt.

- The Ishmaelites in turn sold Yosef as a slave to Potiphar, a prominent Egyptian.
- Meanwhile, the brothers dipped Yosef's robe into blood and took it to show their father. Yaakov assumed Yosef had been devoured by a wild beast and mourns for him.
- Yosef is successful and Potiphar places him in charge of his household. Potiphar's wife tries to seduce Yosef and he flees leaving behind a piece of his garment in her hand. She summons her household, shows them the garment and accuses Yosef of trying to seduce her.
- Potiphar has Yosef thrown into prison. Yosef earns the trust of the chief prison officer.
- Two of Pharaoh's officers, his butler and baker were thrown into prison and Yosef interprets their dreams. He tells them that both of them will be taken out of prison in three days. The baker will be hanged and the butler will be restored to his job. Yosef asks the butler to mention his plight to Pharaoh. Three days later Yosef's interpretations prove to be true. The butler forgot all about Yosef.

## Children's Service: Tot's – Year 2

- Tip: The information in the parsha summary above can be used as the basis of a quiz. Make sure if you do decide to have a quiz that it's inclusive and fair. Think through carefully before your service to decide if a quiz is a suitable activity for the dynamics of your group.

### **Yosef's Coat**

**Song:** To the tune of '*Old McDonald had a Farm*':

Yosef, he had a coat, it was so very grand,  
and everywhere that Yosef went it was loved throughout the  
land.

It was red and yellow and green and blue, orange and pink and  
purple too.

Yosef, he had a coat, it was so very grand.

Yosef he had a coat, it was so very grand,  
and when his brothers looked at him, they didn't understand.

'Why him, not us? It isn't fair.

A beautiful coat we want to wear.'

Yosef, he had a coat, it was so very grand.

### **Discuss:**

- What is your favourite colour and what colours would you choose to have on a special coat?
- What do you think Yosef felt like when he wore his coat?
- How do you think Yosef's brother felt about Yosef's special coat?

### **Activity:**

You will need a large envelope and slips of paper with sayings such as; “Get lost” or “Do you have the time?” There should be enough slips for each member of your group.

Yosef didn't get on very well with his brothers. They were jealous of him and he said things that upset them. We have here an envelope which I would like to send to my friend. I also have lots of slips of paper that I want to put into the envelope but I can't work out which slips of paper I should put in the envelope and which I should leave out! I don't want to upset him. Please will you help me decide which ones to include and which ones to leave out?

Give each child a slip of paper. They should read it aloud to the group and let the group know if they think it's a kind or nice thing to say or not and if it should go in the envelope. The group should vote on if they agree or disagree. If necessary facilitate a discussion. If they decide the paper should go in the envelope the child should put the paper inside it.

### **Yosef and his brothers**

#### **Activity:**

Show the children the pictures of the everyday objects (see below) that have been enlarged. See if the children can work out what they are. Perhaps put them into teams and have a competition.

When the children have finished working out what the objects are, lead into a discussion about the difficulty of understanding something unless we have been given the complete picture.

In the parsha this week, we are told that Yosef would bring his father Yaakov unfavourable reports about his brothers' apparent misbehavior. Our Sages teach us that the brothers were really innocent and Joseph had misinterpreted what he saw. His brothers resented him for the things he told their father. Even though Yosef had only the best of intentions, he was wrong - he should have judged his brothers more favourably.

When people give each other the benefit of the doubt, everyone gets along much better. Whenever we see our friend do something that looks like it might not be right, we make a decision -- will we give him the benefit of the doubt or pronounce him guilty on the spot? The Torah teaches us to judge each other favourably. Maybe there is a good reason why our friend did what he did, or perhaps we didn't see the whole picture.

**Story:**

### **Too Busy?**

Sara's room looked very much like the carnival her class was planning for Chanukah. Papers, streamers, balloons, tickets, prizes and boxes were scattered all around. Sara's friends were going to come over soon to help organize the carnival. Sara sat in her room staring at her book of plans. "What are we going to do?" she thought. "We don't have enough room in the school hall to set up all the stalls." She tried to plan it all again on a fresh piece of paper.

While Sara was busy working, her sister came into the room. "Sara, our class is putting on a Chanukah play. I'm one of the Maccabees from the Chanukah story and I can't decide which costume to wear."

“Oh!” blurted out Sara. “I’m busy enough with my own problems, and I can’t possibly worry about yours!” Sara went back to her plans. She didn’t notice her mother standing in the doorway of her room.

“Sara, I’m happy that you are so involved in the school Chanukah Carnival,” her mother said with a smile. “I’m sure it’s a lot of work and that you have to handle many details. Still, you might try to put your affairs aside for a moment and help someone else with theirs. Think what Yosef did when he was imprisoned in Egypt.” Sara put down her pen and looked at her mother. To tell the truth, she was pleased to take a break from her work.

“Yosef,” her mother continued, “certainly had plenty of problems of his own. Nevertheless, he paid attention to other prisoners as well. One day, Yosef noticed that the royal butler and baker were looking sad. Yosef was probably not in a great mood himself since he was taken from his family and thrown into prison. Still, he listened patiently to their dreams, and he offered them some advice. This was typical of Yosef. He was a person who cared about others even if he had his own worries.”

Adapted from Aish

### **Discuss:**

- What lesson can we learn from this story?
- How can we try and cheer people up if we see that they are feeling sad?
- How would we know if someone was feeling sad?

## Children's Service: Years 3- 6

- Please check the activities written in the age group above as some of them may be suitable for your service too.
- Tip: The information in the parsha summary above can be used as the basis of a quiz. Make sure if you do decide to have a quiz that it's inclusive and fair. Think through carefully before your service to decide if a quiz is a suitable activity for the dynamics of your group.

### **Parsha Plays:**

There are several good possibilities for drama in this week's parsha. Split the children into groups and give each group a section of the parsha.

- Ask them each to present a television or radio news show. They should imagine they are reporting live from various events in the parsha and they can break up their programme with imaginary adverts from biblical times. You could make the game into a competition for the winning news show. See below for sections from the parsha.

Yosef is Yaakov's favourite son. Yaakov makes Yosef a special coat of many colours. Yosef's brothers are jealous of him because of this and they find it difficult to have a good relationship with him.

Yosef dreams that all of his brothers were tying up corn into bundles. Yosef's sheaf was standing in the middle and all the sheaves of his brothers bowed down to his sheaf.

Yosef has another dream that the sun, moon and eleven stars all bowed down to him. Yosef tells his dreams to his father and brothers. They are not happy with him as it seems that Yosef thinks he is greater than all of his family.

One day, while Yosef's brothers are looking after the sheep, Yaakov sends Yosef to find out how they are. Meanwhile, Yosef's brothers plan to kill him but one brother, Reuven, says they should throw him in a pit. (Reuven secretly planned to come back later and save Yosef.) When Yosef arrives the brothers take off his special coat and throw him in a pit. They dip his coat in blood and plan to take it to their father.

Just at that moment a group of Ishmaelite's, riding on camels, pass by. They are on their way to Egypt to sell spices there. The brothers sell Yosef to them as a slave.

When Yaakov sees the coat he thinks Yosef has been killed by an animal and he is very sad.

When the Ishmaelite spice merchants arrive in Egypt they sell Yosef to Potiphar, an officer to King Pharaoh.

Potiphar eventually makes Yosef in charge of his house. Potiphar's wife makes trouble for Yosef and Potiphar is angry with him. He has Yosef thrown into prison.

In prison Yosef meets two of Pharaoh's officers, his butler and baker. They both have dreams which Yosef interprets.

The butler dreams that he was pressing grapes that were growing from a vine with three branches and that the juice was going into Pharaoh's cup. Yosef tells him that this means that in three days he would be released from jail and would be back in the royal palace performing his job.

The baker dreams that he is carrying three baskets of bread on his head and that birds were pecking the bread in the top basket. Yosef tells him that this means he would not get his job back again.

## Game

Show the children the pictures of the everyday objects (see below) that have been enlarged. See if the children can work out what they are. Perhaps put them into teams and have a competition.

When the children have finished working out what the objects are, lead into a discussion about the difficulty of understanding something unless we have been given the complete picture.

In the parsha this week, we are told that Yosef would bring his father Jacob unfavourable reports about his brothers' apparent misbehaviour. Our Sages teach us that the brothers were really innocent and Joseph had misinterpreted what he saw. His brothers resented him for the things he told their father. Even though Joseph had only the best of intentions, he was wrong -- he should have judged his brothers more favourably.

When people give each other the benefit of the doubt, everyone gets along much better. Whenever we see our friend do something that looks like it might not be right, we make a decision -- will we give him the benefit of the doubt or pronounce him guilty on the spot? The Torah teaches us to judge each other favourably. Maybe there is a good reason why our friend did what he did, or perhaps we didn't see the whole picture.

Q. Imagine you saw someone you knew running out of a camera shop with a brand new camera in his hand and looking over his shoulder nervously. What would you think if you chose not to judge him favourably?

A. You might assume that this person has stolen the camera and was looking behind him to make sure he wasn't being followed.

Q. In the situation above -- what would you think if you chose to judge favourably what you saw happening?

A. You might think that perhaps the person had just bought a camera and was in such a hurry to catch a bus that he couldn't wait for a bag. He was rushing toward the bus stop, and glancing behind him to make sure the bus wasn't coming.

Q. Can you think of other examples of situations that could be interpreted either way or how we could give someone the benefit of the doubt?

Q. What do we gain when we give people the benefit of the doubt?

A. We gain a lot. First of all, we will feel much better about the people around us. Thinking that people are acting badly makes us have negative feelings about the world we live in. Thinking that people have good reasons for seemingly negative behaviour improves our general outlook and helps us feel warmer towards others. Since people often tend to respond to us with similar feelings that we have toward them, this attitude could lead to much more peaceful relationships with the people in our lives. It also saves us many times from judging people incorrectly

Q. Our Sages teach us that we "shouldn't judge somebody else until we've stood in his shoes." What does this statement teach us?

A. Even though people look more or less the same, each of us is really a "world unto himself." Our background, how we were brought up and our natural dispositions and character traits all make up who we are. It's only reasonable to assume that all this would lead two people to interpret and react to the same situation in two entirely different ways. For instance, a comment that wouldn't bother one person at all, someone else might find very insulting. If we keep in mind that we really don't know how other people are seeing things and what they are struggling with, it makes it much easier not to "judge" them guilty and instead to give them the benefit of the doubt.

Q. Is the concept of judging someone favourably teaching us that we should be non-judgmental and never judge another person's actions?

A. When we judge someone favourably, we look at an action that appears to be improper and try to think of reasons why this person might have been justified in doing what he did, or why we might not have seen things clearly. This is not the same as being non-judgmental which implies that there is no such thing as an improper action. In fact, the Torah clearly teaches that there are such things as improper actions which should be judged as such. However, we should try our utmost to give others the benefit of the doubt before we conclude that they acted improperly.

## Story and discussion points:

### Too Busy?

Sara's room looked very much like the carnival her class was planning for Chanukah. Papers, streamers, balloons, tickets, prizes, and boxes were scattered all around. Sara's friends were going to come over soon to help organize the carnival. Sara sat in her room staring at her book of plans. "What are we going to do?" she thought. "We don't have enough room in the school hall to set up all the stalls." She tried to plan it all again on a fresh piece of paper.

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“Yosef,” her mother continued, “certainly had plenty of problems of his own. Nevertheless, he paid attention to other prisoners as well. One day, Yosef noticed that the royal butler and baker were looking sad. Yosef was probably not in a great mood himself since he was taken from his family and thrown into prison. Still, he listened patiently to their dreams, and he offered them some advice. This was typical of Yosef. He was a person who cared about others even if he had his own worries.”

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### **Discuss:**

- What lesson can we learn from this story?
- How can we try and cheer people up if we see that they are feeling sad?
- How would we know if someone was feeling sad?

Pictures of Everyday objects  
(Answers below.)

1.



2.



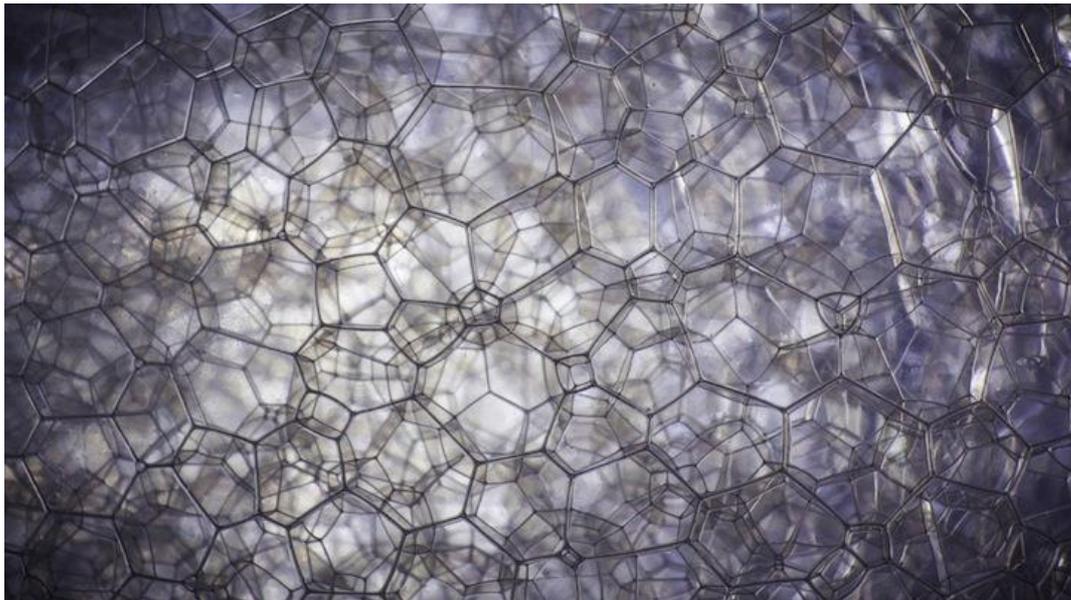
3.



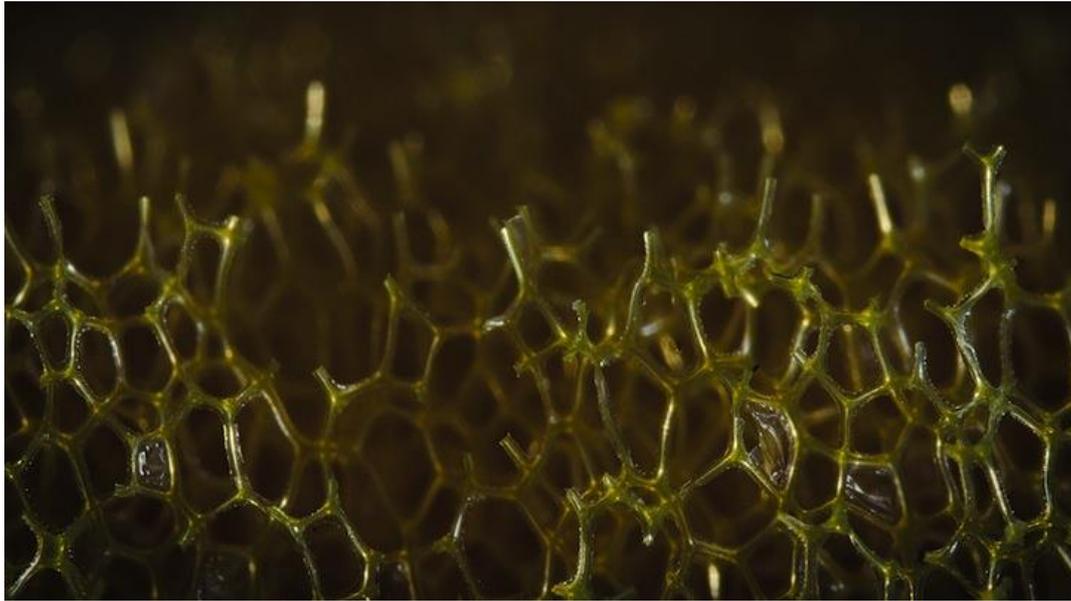
4.



5.



6.



7.



Answers:

1 – Tea Bag

2 – A grain of sugar

3 – Book pages

4 – Ball point pen

5 – Soap bubbles

6 – Kitchen sponge

7 - Lipstick