Okay, so here is the second of the mysteries that I think underlie the Rashbam's theory, and that is, what are the Midyanim doing here? The Midyanim, the Midianites. So let's take a careful look at the verse that describes the actual sale of Joseph and we'll talk about the puzzlingly irrelevant role of the Midianites. So let's just get the text up on the screen. Okay, the irrelevant Midyanim. So let's take a look at 26 to 28 here in Bereishit Lamed-Zayin - Genesis 37.

So; Vayomer Yehuda el echov - so Yehuda has this idea - remember the original idea is let's just kill Joseph, put his corpse in the pit, then Reuven decides he wants to save him, doesn't tell his brothers he wants to save him, but wants Joseph in the pit alive, so he says, let's just put Joseph in the pit alive.

Reuven's idea which he doesn't tell his brothers, he's going to circle back later and pick up Joseph. So this is sort of Plan 2. Now Plan 3 is Yehuda's plan. Yehuda is not aware that Reuven plans on saving him, Yehuda thinks the plan is to leave Yosef in the pit to die, so Yehuda says let's not do that; Mah betza ki naharog et achinu vechisinu et damo - what do we gain, what profit do we gain, out of killing our brother and letting him die in this pit and covering up his blood? I have a better idea, here are these Ishmaelites, I see these Ishmaelite caravan coming; Lechu venimkerenu laYishmaelim - let's go sell him to these Ishmaelites; Veyadeinu al tehi bo - that way our hand won't be upon him. Ki achinu besareinu hu - after all he really is our brother. Vayishme'u echov - and his brothers listened to him, how could we do this to our brother, let's not kill him, we'll just sort of sell him into slavery and be better off - better for Joseph.

Okay, so now here is the mystery. Vaya'avru anashim Midyanim socharim - so then these Midianites merchants come and then; Vayimshechu vaya'alu et Yosef min habor - the brothers come, they pull up Joseph from the pit; Vayimkeru et Yosef laYishmaelim - and they sell Joseph to the Yishmaelim, to the Ishmaelites; V'esrim kasef - for 20 pieces of silver. Vayavi'u et Yosef Mitzrayma - and then the Ishmaelites bring Yosef to Egypt.

I have read the verse actually according to Rashi, not according to the Rashbam. But the problem the Rashbam notes with this reading is that, what are these guys doing here? I mean who cares? Why do I care that Midianite merchant men were passing by? What are they doing? The brothers see the Ishmaelites, they're going to sell him to the Ishmaelites, they in fact do sell him to the Ishmaelites; Vayimkeru et Yosef laYishmaelim - they sell him to the Ishmaelites. So if they sell him to the Ishmaelites, who cares that there were these Midianites passing nearby at the same time? Why mention this? This is like the most dreaded moment, the [nadir 2:36] of brotherly relations in Sefer Bereishit, and you're bothering me with irrelevant trivia about Midianites traders, why do I care? The brothers came and they thought they were going to sell him to the Ishmaelites, and they did sell him to the Ishmaelites, why am I hearing about these guys? Who cares about the Midianites? That is mystery number 2.

Okay, and finally now, let's get to the last mystery. The last mystery I'm going to call is, Where is Reuven? It's the Where is Reuven mystery during all of this. Okay, so let's look at the Reuven mystery together. Okay so here we are, we're actually just going to read through some of the sale of Joseph together, and we're going to ask one very simple question as we read this through. The question is where is Reuven? We're going to keep our eye on Reuven, Reuven of course is the oldest of the brothers

involved in the sale of Joseph.

Okay so here are the brothers. Vayomru ish el achiv - we're up here in verse 19 - so one brother says to another brother; Hinei ba'al hachalomot halazeh bah - here comes the dreamer, come, we're going to kill him, we're going to put his body in one of the pits, we're going to say that a terrible beast devoured him; Venireh mah yiheyu chalomotav - and let's see what's going to be with his dreams. Now, where is Reuven? Well we see, Reuven is right here, take a look at verse 21. Vayishma Reuven vayatzileihu miyadam - so Reuven hears this and he saves them from their hands. Vayomer loh nakenu nafesh - and he tells the other brothers we're not going to kill any soul here, we're not going to kill him. So very clearly Reuven is right here with the brothers.

So now we're going to keep on asking where is Reuven? So; Vayomer aleihem Reuven - so Reuven is talking to them, he says; Al tishpechu dam - let's not kill him; Hashlichu oto el habor hazeh asher bamidbar v'yad al tishlechu bo - let's just put him in this pit in the desert, we're not going to actually stretch out our hand to kill him. Lema'an hatzil oto miyadam - he wanted to save him; Lehashivo el aviv

- to bring him back to his father. Okay? So Reuven at this point up until verse 22 very clearly with the brothers.

Now; Vayehi k'asher bah Yosef el echov vayafshitu et Yosef et kutanto, et ketonet hapasim asher alav - so now Joseph came to his brothers, and they stripped him of his coat and; Vayikachuhu vayashlichu oto haborah - and they took him and they threw him in the pit, and the pit was empty and there was no water in it. Okay, so now I ask you, where is Reuven? Well Reuven is probably still with the brothers, we don't hear Reuven left, right? He's with the brothers. Last thing Reuven said is let's not kill him, let's put him in this pit, and then Joseph came and they did what Reuven said, they put him in the pit. So Reuven is with the brothers.

Vayeishvu le'echol lechem - they then sit down to eat bread, and they pick up their eyes and they see the Yishmaelim come - now I ask you again, where is Reuven? Reuven is presumably with the brothers, having this picnic, watching, they see the Ishmaelites coming. At that point Yehuda speaks up; Vayomer Yehuda - this is verse 26 over here and this is the verse which we just finished reading - let's not kill our brother and cover up his blood, let's sell him to the Ishmaelites, let our hand not be upon him. The other brothers - presumably including Reuven, they're all together, is listening to him. Again, where is Reuven? Well we never heard that he left, he's with them all, he's sitting down, he's eating bread with Yehuda, Yehuda is talking.

Then, they go and they pull Joseph out of the pit and they sell him to the Ishmaelites, again, where is Reuven? He's with the brothers, right? This is what Reuven said, let's not kill him, let's put in the pit, and then Yehuda is there and Reuven is seeing all this, right?

So now verse 29, the next verse, comes as a real shocker. Vayoshov Reuven el habor - and then Reuven returned to the pit; V'hinei ein Yosef ba'bor - and Yosef isn't in the pit. Vayikra et begadav - and he tears his clothes and he comes back; Vayoshov el echov - and he goes back to his brothers and he says; Hayeled einenu - the child isn't here, what are we going to do? What's going on? Why is Reuven so

surprised? He was there with them the whole time. I mean he saw them, he saw what happened, he said let's put him in the pit, and he saw we're going to sell him, he was there, he heard Yehuda, he never left, so what does it mean and Reuven returned to the pit? Did Reuven ever leave? Why did Reuven to the pit? And if he was there the whole time, which presumably he was, he saw all this going on, how come he's so surprised? And; Vayoshov el echov - and how come he's returning to his brothers? He never left his brothers. So the whereabouts of Reuven are very, very strange.

Now other commentators picked up on this. Rashi for example, says, well it must be that Reuven left to his father and went to do Kibud Av V'Eim - to honor his father, and left in the middle. But of course the problem is that the text never says that Reuven left in the middle. So if was important enough to say that Reuven returned to the pit, you know and all of that, why are you leaving out an important point in the story? Which is, why don't you take a couple of words and just say, tell me at some point, that Reuven left? The story just doesn't seem to hang together, it's like this non sequitur. I'm reading and I'm reading and I'm reading, and I'm assuming that Reuven is with the brothers, Reuven is with the brothers, he always was with them, all of a sudden I get this idea that Reuven is not clued in, he doesn't know what happened, what, he left at some point?

So this is mystery number 3, where is Reuven during all of this?

Okay so here are our three mysteries. Why do the brothers seem to pull their punches when they express regret for the sale of Joseph? What are the Midyanim doing in the story? They seem to be completely irrelevant, they sold him to the Ishmaelites, who cares about these other people, the Midianites, who were completely irrelevant? And of course, the where is Reuven? This kind of shell game, where did he go, he never left? These seemingly innocuous questions lead up to a fascinating theory that the Rashbam articulates, that seems to change everything when it comes to the story of the sale of Joseph.

You actually have enough information now amongst yourself - if you just ponder these mysteries - to try to piece together the theory. Look at the verses carefully, read the verses very, very carefully, don't listen to any red herrings of how I may have tricked you in reading the verses, just read them very carefully, pay attention to their words and see if the Rashbam theory emerges to you.

When we come back next time, I will discuss it with you, see you then.

Okay, so if you ever walk the streets of Manhattan you've seen this game, this shell game that's sometimes played on the sidewalk called a Three-card Monte. It kind of goes like this. It's only three cards and it's really easy, all you have to do is identify the red card. The fellow doing the trick shows you the three cards and then lays them out on the table, very simply, you see all the cards, and you're looking at this, and obviously the rightmost card over there - well no, that's the black card. The red card is in the middle. What did he do? How did that happen?

Anyway, so that's Three-card Monte, this really incredible sleight of hand trick, where you've just got to keep your eye on the cards and then all of a sudden the card you're looking at just seems to disappear and then another card takes its place. I want to suggest to you that the Torah is playing almost a mental version of this game with us, this kind of almost sleight of hand trick, in the Joseph story - at least according to the Rashbam. The Rashbam, I'm going to suggest, to you makes a very convincing case for a very fascinating way of looking at the sale of Joseph, where you really, really have to keep your eye on the cards.

Let's take a look at his theory. I suggested to you the three questions that underlie his theory. So again, those questions were, number 1, how come the brothers pull their punches when they discuss their guilt amongst themselves? How come they only talk about themselves being guilty of not listening to his cries? Why don't they just admit to themselves at least, that they sold him? They have nothing to hide - as we talked about before. Number 2, remember, what are the Midianites doing in the story? They just seem to be interjected in there for no good reason. Then number 3, again, this question of where did Reuven go? Which kind of seems almost like a shell game, a Three-card Monte game of itself. You know, you're keeping your eye on Reuven, you're keeping your eye on Reuven, all of a sudden he's not there.

By the way, I don't if I mentioned to you - in case I didn't - Rashi's theory. Rashi is of course the grandfather of the Rashbam. Rashi has a different theory. Rashi says that Reuven evidently went away, he went back to be Mechabed his father - to take care of his father, that's where he went. Then he returned to the brothers. The problem of course that the Rashbam is going to have with this theory, is that the text never tells us that Reuven left, so it just seems to be this kind of black hole and I guess we can assume that Reuven left, but why doesn't the text tell us that if it really happened? Again, the text sort of sets it up in an almost non sequitur kind of way, Reuven is with them, Reuven is with them, never mentions that he leaves, and then all of a sudden Reuven is coming back. So why doesn't the text let us know that he left? So this is the Rashbam's problem with Rashi's theory.

But these are the questions that underlie the Rashbam's assertion that he's going to make here. By the way, the Rashbam does not himself mention all of these questions, he mentions some of them, but I guess I'm suggesting to you that these questions underlie the Rashbam's theory. But one of the points that the Rashbam does make is actually a fourth point. A fourth point that I think is going to be a key to this all, and that's what I want to discuss with you now. Once you see how the Rashbam interprets this, all the other pieces are going to fall into place and kind of this really, very interesting, new perspective on the story is going to unfold. That fourth question is this, where were the brothers when they sat down to

eat?

If you go back to the text, the text tells us that the brothers sat down to eat bread immediately after they cast Yosef into the pit. Vayehi k'asher bah Yosef el echov vayafshitu et Yosef et kutanto, et ketonet hapasim asher alav - if you read over here verse 23, so this is the verse in which the brothers strip Joseph, and then; Vayikachuhu vayashlichu oto haborah - then they take him and they throw him in this pit, a pit that's empty that doesn't have any water in it. Then; Vayeishvu le'echol lechem. We talked about these verses before, but the Rashbam wants us to focus on these words over here, the seemingly innocuous fact that immediately after casting Joseph in the pit the brothers sit down amongst themselves and kind of have this picnic. They're sitting down and eating bread. Why do we have to hear about that picnic? What's the whole point of it? It's an interesting question, we'll come back to that sitting down and eating bread, we'll hear an echo later on in the story.

But for now the Rashbam wants us to ask exactly where were the brothers eating? It's actually kind of a geographical question, where were they eating? It's like, who cares where they were eating? But actually it does make a difference. Let's kind of get ourselves a desert landscape here, and I'm going to graph this out for you. Normally the way we think of it is, well the brothers just sat down and they put Joseph in a pit, and then they figured all right he's in the pit, let's have lunch, or something like that. So the brothers are right next to the pit and they're sitting down and eating. So the Rashbam says that's probably not what happened. The brothers wouldn't have wanted to sit down and eat lunch - I mean Joseph is screaming in that pit, it's just not a nice thing, it's unpleasant. They would have been out of earshot, probably out of sight of the pit, when they sat down to eat. So here's what the Rashbam says.

If we call up our little desert scene over here, so let's imagine we've got the pit over here, here's our pit, and the brothers put Joseph in the pit. Now normally we think of - okay, so the brothers are sat down right over here and this is the spot - X marks the spot - where the brothers are eating, and we never really think about the fact that Joseph is screaming and wants to get out, and it just wouldn't be very appetizing. But the Rashbam says that that's not very likely that they ate bread over here. The Rashbam says what probably happened is that the brothers are like over the next hill or something, the brothers are like way out over here, and they're picnicking over here, they're eating and they're kind of thinking about what they've done and they're sort of wondering about it and figuring out what to do next.

Once you say that, once you say that they're over the next ridge, actually everything changes. The whole story takes on a different complexion.

In the next video I'm going to come back and describe to you how it is that that plays out in the Rashbam's theory. But just kind of for fun, I want you to try to anticipate this. See if you can read through Chapter 37 again and taking this perspective that the brothers were here, not here, try to see how that changes everything in the story. How does the story read differently now? What other possibilities emerge? So see what you think, come back and let's talk about it.

Hi, Rabbi Fohrman back with you, let's read through the story one more time, this time with the Rashbam's assumption that where the brothers sat was not in the immediate vicinity of the pit, that it was over the next hilltop. So let's hear what the story looks like. I'm going to actually sort of create this diagram for you, using actually Google Earth, to try to visualize what it might look like with you. Okay so; Vayehi k'asher bah Yosef el echov vayafshitu et Yosef et kutanto, et ketonet hapasim asher alav - over here in verse 23, the brothers strip Joseph of his coat, they take him in verse 24, they throw him in the pit, and then they sit down to eat bread. Like we talked about before, this, according to the Rashbam is over the next hilltop. Over the next hilltop, kind of far away, not within earshot and probably not within line of sight of the actual pit.

So at that point the brothers are sitting off and they're eating bread; Vayisu eineihem vayiru - and they pick up their eyes and that's when they see the Ishmaelite caravan coming from afar. These are long- range traders and they're bringing stuff; Lehorid Mitzrayma - to go take down to Egypt to trade. Now at that point Yehuda says to his brothers - he hatches this plan; Mah betza ki naharog et achinu vechisinu et damo - what do we really gain out of killing our brother in the pit, by leaving him in the pit to die?

Why don't we just sell him to these Yishmaelim? Veyadeinu al tehi bo - and that way our hand won't be upon him; Ki achinu besareinu hu, - because he is, after all, our brother. Vayishme'u echov - and the brothers listened to him and they thought this was a good idea.

Okay, now here's where we get the shell game. I talked to you before about Three-card Monte, so watch carefully and make sure that you have your eye on the correct card. Okay? Look carefully at verse 28, actually read verse 28 and ask yourself who was it that sold Joseph? Vaya'avru anashim Midyanim socharim - and then Midianite traders came and what happens next? Vayimshechu vaya'alu et Yosef min habor - and they drew and lifted up Joseph out of the pit. Now who is the they? Notice that Vayimshechu is a verb that's constructed so that this letter over here, the Yud, means they. But like any pronoun, the question is, who is the they?

Well who were we talking about right before the they? We were talking about Midianite traders. If you just read the verse carefully the Rashbam says, it doesn't seem like the brothers sold him at all. It seems like these guys sold him, these Midianite traders. Listen carefully to the verse. Vaya'avru anashim Midyanim socharim - Midianites traders came; Vayimshechu and THEY, the Midianite traders, lifted Joseph out; Vaya'alu - and THEY, the Midianite traders, lifted Joseph up out of the pit. Vayimkeru - and THEY, the Midianite traders, they sold him to the Ishmaelites.

In other words, the brothers saw the Ishmaelites from their vantage point, but what the brothers never saw was the Midianite short-term traders who were much, much closer. They didn't see them because they were blocked by the next hill.

Let me switch to a three-dimensional model here to try to dramatize what the Rashbam is really saying here. Okay, so let's orient ourselves with a bird's eye view over here. Here are some topography taken from Google Earth, this is the area more or less where Joseph was sold, off near Dotan in Midbar Yehuda. You'll be able to see the Dead Sea in the background in a minute. I've created four little spots

here which are going to mark what we're going to be looking at. We've got Joseph's pit over here in red, we've got the place where the brothers are eating, with a knife and a fork to symbolize that, we've got our local Midianite traders over here in green, and we've got the approaching Ishmaelite caravan over there. Don't mind the horse, those are really supposed to be camels, but you got the idea. Now over here just looks like four little kind of random places over here; 1, 2, 3, 4, that we've got, but that's only because we're looking at a bird's eye view. If we actually zoom down and begin to look at the three- dimensional topography, you'll begin to see what it is the Rashbam is saying come alive. So let's do that.

So here we see the scene in three dimensions. Over here in the background you'll see the Dead Sea, and this is kind of the hilly area around the Dead Sea, and if you look over here, this red spot over here, here's our Joseph's pit. Now over the next ridge, right over here, is where the brothers are dining. So that's where they're eating bread and they have no way of seeing back over here what's going on in Joseph's pit. So here are the brothers and they're eating bread, and they pick up their eyes and they see, and they look out in the distance, and what do they see? Way out over here they see this approaching Ishmaelite caravan. Now these guys are going to Egypt, they're long-term traders, they've got their stuff, they've got their goods. Since these folks are so far away and they're going by camelback, the brothers who are eating their bread right over here, thinking they've got plenty of time until these guys way out over here in the Ishmaelite caravan finally get to them.

However, there's something the brothers don't see. The brothers don't see what's happening right over the next ridge. Here's Joseph's pit and right over here are these local Midianite traders that are completely out of the line of sight of Joseph's brothers and they're much closer. Now the Midianite traders actually have the same idea that the brothers have, they figure there's this guy struggling in a pit, they'll go pick him up and they've got themselves a slave, and it turns out that the Midianites pull him out of the pit and do what the brothers had themselves thought to do, and they preempt the brothers.

Meanwhile, the brothers right over here are unaware of what happened back at the pit and the fact that the Midianites have gotten to Joseph first. They think they've got days - these people are still three days off in the distance by the time they make it over here. So they're leisurely eating while meanwhile Joseph is actually being pulled out of the pit by the Midianites and the brothers have absolutely no idea that that's been happening.

So if you go back to the text here, we'll just see this inside in the text. Vaya'avru anashim Midyanim socharim - so here these short-term, much closer traders, that the brothers can't see, the Midianites, they're the ones who go; Vayimshechu vaya'alu - remember the Yud over here just means they, it's just a pronoun, it could be anybody. Seemingly, the Rashbam argues, the most likely antecedent to the pronoun is right over here, it's the Midianites. The Midianites are the ones who pull Joseph out of the pit, they're unseen by the brothers, that the brothers are eating this whole time; Vayimkeru - and meanwhile, right under the brothers' noses these Midianites they have sold Joseph to who? To the same Ishmaelites - they go and they travel out, they preempt the brothers, they eventually meet the Ishmaelites. Before the Ishmaelites themselves ever make it to the pit, Joseph has already been sold to them for 20 pieces of silver and the Ishmaelites bring Joseph down to Egypt.

Pretty neat theory, huh? It's a really fascinating, different kind of way of looking at the text, but really a very compelling way, I think, as well. But actually the Rashbam's theory is not over yet, there's one other crucial piece here which we have to come back and talk about and that is, getting back to our question, where was Reuven during all of this? Where was Reuven during all of this? That's the next crucial piece of the Rashbam's theory, so let's come back and take a look.

Hi there, it's Rabbi David Fohrman here, I'm intending this video to be just a little bit of an advanced kind of addition to the material which I've created here, talking about the Rashbam's theory, essentially the kind of astounding claim that the brothers were not actually directly responsible for the sale of Joseph. That is, they were not the ones who actually sold him from the pit, and they were actually clueless as to what happened to him. This is the Rashbam's approach, the Rashbam of course is the grandson of Rashi, but it's not Rashi's approach. I want to take just a moment to kind of flesh out some of the other views here that you find in the Medieval Commentators, particularly the view of Rashi and Ramban about this, which is different than the Rashbam. Just to show how these three views kind of interact and deal with the different data. Personally, I kind of like the Rashbam's view but ultimately that choice is kind of up to you.

So basically all three of these Medieval Commentators are struggling with the question of who was it, and exactly how is it that the sale of Joseph has taken place? There's basically three data points that they have to deal with. Data point number 1 is these guys over here, the Midyanim, and we talked about these, who are these people, the Midyanim who then pass by, these traders? Then there are the Yishmaelim over here; Vayimkeru et Yosef laYishmaelim - these are the people to whom Joseph is sold after these Midyanim pass by. Then there's also one last sort of data point here, and that's if we go all the way down and we look at the point in which Joseph is actually sold into Egypt after the Ishmaelites make their way to Egypt, you get this; V'hamedanim machru oto el Mitzrayim - and the Medanim then sold him to Mitzrayim.

Now you'll notice that over here that's translated as Midianites, but in Hebrew you'll notice that it's actually Medanim as opposed to Midyanim which was earlier. So one interesting question is, are the Medanim down here in verse 36, the ones who sell him into Egypt? Are those the same people as we have in verse 28 when it says; Vaya'avru anashim Midyanim socharim - the Midianites? So the question is are we dealing with three different groups of people; Midianites, Ishmaelites and Medanites? Or are we dealing with two groups of people, and Midianites/Medanites and Yishmaelim?

So according to the Rashbam's the Midianites don't seem to be the same people as the Medanites later on, there seems to be three groups of people. There are the Midianites (a); these are the people that the brothers didn't see that are outside of the line of sight of the brothers. These are the people that actually go and, as the Rashbam's says; Vayimshechu vaya'alu et Yosef min habor - these are the ones that pull Joseph out of the pit. They then, the Midianites, sell him to the Ishmaelites. The Ishmaelites seem to be these long-range traders who take him all the way down to Egypt. But then it seems like at some point the Ishmaelites must have sold him to someone else, these Medanim, these short-term traders, out in Egypt and the Medanim are the ones who sell him to Egypt. This seems to be the Rashbam's theory. It's not actually Rashi's theory.

So Rashi says the following about this. So here's Rashi, you'll see it at the bottom of the screen, Rashi over here is going to translate Vayimshechu - remember that is the pronoun over here with unclear antecedent, who is it over here who pulls Joseph out of the pit? Who is it that sells him? So Rashi of course says; Vayimshechu benei Yaakov - the children of Yaakov were the ones who pulled him out,

they were the ones who pulled Yosef out of the pit; Vayimkeru'hu laYishmaelim - and they were the ones that sold him to the Yishmaelim. Then the Yishmaelim later on sold him to - what Rashi says is the Midianites or the Medanim, later on, who sell him down to Egypt as that last verse in Chapter 37 suggests. So according to Rashi, it's the brothers of Jacob who pull him out, sell him to the Ishmaelites and then the Ishmaelites sell him to the Midianites.

Finally we have the Ramban who has a different theory altogether. The Ramban argues, strangely enough, that actually the Yishmaelim over here are the same people as the Midianites over here. They're actually the same. The way the Ramban understands it is that from afar they looked like Ishmaelites, however, when they got closer they actually saw that it was actually a Midianites caravan, people who had actually bought or rented camels from Ishmaelites that kind of looked like Ishmaelites from far, but when you got closer they were actually Midianites. So it says; Lechu venimkerenu laYishmaelim - come lets sell him to the Yishmaelim, but then as it got closer; Vaya'avru anashim Midyanim - it turned out that they were Midianites. But the Ramban then has to say - and this is kind of a little bit of what we call a [Dochei 4:46], you have to kind of push at the corners to make this work. Vayimkeru et Yosef laYishmaelim - that the brothers sold Yosef to the Yishmaelim. The problem is of course it wasn't the Yishmaelim, we're just calling them the Yishmaelim because they looked like Yishmaelim. So according to the Ramban, the Midianites and the Yishmaelim are being used interchangeably.

But this the Ramban over here; K'asher kirvu lahem matzu ki hayu ba'alei sechora - as they got closer they saw that; Asher lahem hanechot vehatzri - that the people who actually were carrying all this incense; Anashim Midyanim socharim - they were in fact Midianites; Shesachru hagemalim meiha'Yishmaelim - that had actually rented camels from Yishmaelim. Therefore they're sort of used interchangeably.

So these are the other ways of looking at it; the Ramban and Rashi. But I think the Rashbam's approach - at least seems to me - is particularly elegant and it allows this word over here to modify the logical antecedent, which is over here. The idea is that despite the brothers' expectations that they were going to sell him to the Yishmaelim, actually there's a shell game going on, they never actually sold him to the Yishmaelim, somebody preempted them, it was the Midianites who pulled Joseph out of the pit, and they were the ones who sold him to the Yishmaelim.

Now let's get back to our question, where was Reuven? Well the last time we saw Reuven was right over here in verse 21 actually, let's go back and read it. As this was in the initial plot when the brothers first saw Joseph coming they had originally planned they were going to kill him, they would going to put his body in one of these pits in the desert and then Reuven says no, we can't allow that to happen; Vayishma Reuven vayatzileihu miyadam, vayomer loh nakenu nafesh. This is really the last time we've seen Reuven.

Reuven at that point said no, we're not going to actually kill him. Vayomer aleihem Reuven - Reuven instead said; Al tishpechu dam hashlichu oto el habor hazeh asher bamidbar v'yad al tishlechu bo - let's not kill him, let's just put him in this pit and let our hand not be upon him. The reason he had said that was; Lema'an hatzil oto miyadam lehashivo el aviv - he wants Joseph in the pit alive because he's planning on coming back at night and picking up Joseph out of the pit and bringing him back to his father. So this is his plan. He doesn't tell the brothers that, what he tells the brothers is, oh let's not actively kill him, let's just put him in this pit and he'll die. It's better, we're not guilty of actually physically killing him. But Reuven's plan is of course that he's going to save him.

So this over here in verse 22 is the last time we meet Reuven in our story, and if we look at that we realize that Reuven knows something, Reuven is thinking something, which the brothers themselves are unaware of. What Reuven is thinking is, Reuven's plan is, I'm going to save Joseph. Now if you put yourself in Reuven's shoes, thinking, I am going to save Joseph, let's go back to the Rashbam's theory and figure, what is Reuven thinking when Reuven is picnicking with the brothers and all of a sudden Yehuda has this idea, hey let's sell him to the Ishmaelites?

So I don't know about you, but if I'm Reuven and I'm over here where the brothers are eating bread, he sees off in the distance these Ishmaelite traders and they've got a few days until they finally get here, but all of a sudden Yehuda has this plan which is, let's not kill him, let's sell him to them. Well then now, if I'm Reuven, I've got to go into action, I've got to do something, because my whole plan is that I want to save Yosef, I want to come back to him at night. But if I come back to him at night he's not going to be there, because Yehuda is going to have already sold him off to these Ishmaelite traders by that time. So what happens?

Let's go back to the text and see. Over here in verse 26, this is the part where Yehuda comes with his great idea, let's sell him to these Ishmaelite traders and then meanwhile, unbeknownst to the brothers the Midianites come and take Joseph out of the pit first. But remember, none of the brothers, including Reuven, know that. So if you're Reuven you're going to think, well I need to act, I got to do something. In fact, indeed, that's exactly what happens according to the Rashbam, in verse 29. The next thing that happens; Vayoshov Reuven el habor - Reuven Bentches early, he says Birkhat Hamazon before the brothers, and he goes and he leaves the brothers' picnic and he goes and returns back to the pit because his now his only chance is he's got to get Joseph out of the pit before Judah finally gets a chance to make a deal with these Ishmaelite traders who are still pretty far out in the distance but they're approaching.

So; Vayoshov Reuven el habor - so Reuven goes back to the pit and then he sees something; V'hinei ein

Yosef ba'bor. Reuven is not the last guy on the scene, as we had originally imagined, Reuven is actually the first person on the scene, he's the first person to realize the truth; V'hinei ein Yosef ba'bor - Joseph was not in the pit, he's gone. Vayikra et begadav - and he goes and he tears his clothes. His plan to save Joseph has failed. And at that point; Vayoshov el echov - he returns to the picnic where the brothers are still leisurely eating their bread with their eyes still on the Ishmaelite caravan; Vayomar - and he says; Hayeled einenu v'ani onoh ani bah - the child is not here. Reuven is not reporting something to the brothers after the brothers actually sold Joseph, something the brothers knew about and was like, where have you been. No, Reuven is actually the first person to bring this news to the brothers. He's gone, he's not here anymore, Joseph has actually gone.

At that point, what do the brothers do? The brothers who did not sell Joseph, according to the Rashbam's, at that point; Vayikchu et ketonet Yosef - they don't know what happened to him but they're looking for an alibi, they've got to explain this to Father somehow. They take Joseph's coat, they slaughter a goat, they put the blood on the coat, they give it to their father and they say; Haker nah - recognize please is it your son's coat or not?

If you come back now - by the way - to the questions which we asked in the beginning, and we've now we've talked about this question over here, what happened to Reuven, so the Rashbam's theory solves that. We've talked about what the Midianites are doing in this story, the Rashbam's theory solves that.

And the Rashbam's theory also solves this; how come the brothers pull their punches later on when they discuss their guilt amongst themselves? How come they talk to themselves as only being guilty for having listened to his cries and not responding? Why don't they come clean about what they actually did, which is that they sold him? The answer is, that in fact they did not sell him, it was others that sold him. They really don't know what happened to him. The most that they're guilty really is, that they heard his cries but did not respond. That's really their guilt, that's all they confess to amongst themselves because that's really all they did. They heard Joseph crying in the pit, they didn't respond. They did contemplate selling him, but that by the time they got back to the pit they had no idea what happened; he disappeared and it was a mystery.

So the Rashbam's theory really addresses all three of these issues in a fascinating new way of seeing what happened in the Joseph story. It's really as if the sale of Joseph becomes sort of the greatest crime that never happened, that remains a mystery at some level - at least to the perpetrators - even after it happened.

That's pretty much it for the Rashbam's theory. But it's a fascinating theory; a very, very different way of looking at things, and I want to explore with you in our next video what are the implications of that theory. If you remember back we saw all of these literary connections between the story of the sale of Joseph and the story of the Akeidah on the one hand and the expulsion of Yishmael on the other hand. I want to begin to put all of this together with say, the Rashbam's theory, what begins to emerge? What are the implications of all of this for how we understand the events we know as the sale of Joseph? Let's come back and discuss it.

Okay hi, it's Rabbi David Fohrman back with you. I want to just take stock of where we're at with the Rashbam's theory and just kind of summarize how it differs from Rashi's approach. Rashi's approach of course is that the brothers are the ones who sell Joseph directly to the Ishmaelites, and the Rashbam disagrees with that. But that's not the only ramification of the difference between their approaches, there are some other important points as well. So in Rashi's approach again, the brothers directly sell Yosef into slavery. In the Rashbam's approach the brothers are not directly guilty of selling Yosef, they're guilty, as we talked about before, of only listening to Joseph's cries and not responding. That's in fact what they themselves say.

But in addition to that, in Rashi's approach, when the brothers present their father with the bloody coat, they're actually lying - right? They're really telling a very bald-faced untruth, they're lying to their father when they say they don't know what happened, because of course they know very well what happened, they're the ones who sell Joseph off into slavery. But they say, here's his bloody coat, instead implying that he was killed instead of sold as a slave.

You know, the Rashbam's approach something actually much more kind of intriguing is happening, which is that when the brothers actually approach their father with the bloody coat they haven't maybe quite told the truth - [maybe 1:21] this isn't true, they haven't really told their father the truth. But they've actually only told a white lie because it's actually true that we don't know what happened to him, here's his coat. That's basically what they're saying; Zot matzanu haker nah - here's what we found, recognize please his coat.

Now it is true that they are creating an alibi for themselves, they're pretending that something happened that it didn't happen, they're pretending that he was killed, but for all they know he sort of was killed, it's just there's no evidence one way or the other. One minute he was in the pit and then when they came back an hour and a half later and he wasn't there. So it's true that the brothers actually don't know what happened to him more or less, like they're saying to their father. Even though they're sort of throwing their father off the trail and they're suggesting that Joseph might have been killed, but in essence what they're saying is kind of true. Nobody knows what happened to him in the story, really the father doesn't know and just as much as the father doesn't know the brothers don't know.

So if you kind of add it up we talked before about these Akeidah parallels on the one hand - the story of the Binding of the Isaac - and the story of the expulsion of Yishmael and the parallels there in the story of the sale of Yosef. There's an interesting kind of symmetry that emerges, specifically according to the Rashbam, when you look at the father's perspective on the sale of Joseph and the brothers' perspective.

So here's how it kind of lines up. If we look at the father's perspective, what was he trying to do? He was trying to create sort of an Akeidah-like test of the child that he thinks is his firstborn. He thinks that Yosef is his firstborn and he's not quite sure what's the deal with these dreams, the riddle of the bowing moon. I want to test you, are you really a faithful firstborn and will you go check on the brothers and not bring back bad reports but just see as to their welfare, see perhaps if you can make Shalom - make peace - with them? So it's an Akeidah-like test, are you going to put yourself in possible danger to be a faithful

firstborn for me? Of course, perhaps, it's not so dangerous, he thinks he's sending him to Shechem and he's going to turn around, doesn't realize that the angel is going to see him and he's going to go all the way back to Dotan.

So the father is trying to create this Akeidah-like test to the child he thinks is his firstborn, but that test spins out of control, the father never knows how it ends. Because there's that angel there that redirects Joseph and says, go to Dotan. So Joseph disappears; that wasn't part of the plan, and of course, little does the father know that what he originally contemplated, that is what Yaakov contemplated, actually ends up happening. Which is - remember what Yaakov was contemplating was, go check on the brothers, in fact Joseph does go all the way down to the brothers, he encounters his brothers all the way in Dotan, but Yaakov is unaware of that. So what he had originally anticipated, send Joseph to check on the brothers, actually happens, it's just that Yaakov is unaware that it happens, he just doesn't know it.

Something very similar to that is happening over here with the brothers. If you look on the other side you can just line this up in a color-coded kind of way. The brothers are not trying to create an Akeidah- like test to the firstborn, they're trying to do the opposite, they're creating an Ishmael-like expulsion of a brother. They're saying, not only are you not a firstborn, you're not a brother. Remember the two coats and the no coats? The father is giving him two coats, the second coat you're my firstborn, the brothers are stripping him of both coats, you're not even a brother. So they're sort of expelling him from the family.

Just like the Akeidah spins out of control, over here on this side, the story which the brothers are doing also spins out of control, they also never know how it ends. Joseph disappears, that wasn't part of their plan, they were planning on selling him. But ironically enough, little do the brothers know what they originally contemplated ends up happening also. Because what they were thinking of doing was, we were going to sell him to the Ishmaelites, and in fact Joseph is sold to the Ishmaelites just like they thought. Just, they're unaware of it.

So in fact both the father and the brothers end up contemplating things which in fact take place in the end; Joseph meets up with the brothers just like father had dispatched him, Joseph is sold to the Ishmaelites just like the brothers contemplated it. But neither the brothers and the father are in the loop anymore. Both of them are entirely clueless as to what's happening to Joseph. This is the beginning, I think, of the interesting kind of connections between the Akeidah story and the expulsion of Ishmael story. These are some of the ramifications of the Rashbam's perspective on the story, I want to come back with you and examine some of the other ramifications as well.

Hi there, Rabbi Fohrman back with you, what I want to discuss now is kind of the ramifications of this approach. We suggested that according to the Rashbam, surprisingly there are kind of two main ramifications here - in orange on the one hand and blue on the other. Number 1 the brothers don't seem to be directly guilty of selling Joseph. It's true that they create the conditions for the sale of Joseph, and it's true that they plot the sale of Joseph, but in the end they don't actually do it, it's somebody else that does it and they're actually clueless as to what has happened. They may be guilty of listening to his cries and not responding perhaps, but they didn't actually sell him. Second of all, they didn't actually tell a bald-faced lie to their father. The lie that they say is actually technically more of a white lie; they in fact

don't know what happened to him. So when they present the bloody coat to their father it's true they put the blood on the coat, but the essence of what they're saying, which is that we have no idea what happened to him, actually is kind of true.

So the question I want to ask you now is what do we make of all of this? Here's what I think is an interesting question, if the brothers in fact didn't really sell him and they only told what amounts to a white lie to their father, what do we make of that? Does that mean that we shouldn't see them as culpable of what happened? I mean they didn't actually sell him, they didn't really lie to their father about what happened, does that mean they're sort of scot-free, that from the Torah's perspective there's no guilt in what they did, that it was okay? Does the Torah hold them accountable for this at all? So how would you see it according to the Rashbam? What are we to make of what the Torah thinks about it? Is there any indication from the text itself as to what the answer to this question is? How culpable are the brothers for what happened? Or is it okay? What's sort of G-d's perspective on this?

This gets back to one of the questions we asked earlier when we talked about - at the very beginning - what were they thinking? What was Yaakov thinking? What was Yosef thinking? What were the brothers thinking? Finally, what was G-d thinking? Do we have any indication as to what was G-d thinking? Certainly, according to the Rashbam, this question is even a stronger question, what was G-d thinking, is this okay, is there no guilt to it attached at all? Are the brothers sort of being paranoid when they say to themselves that we're guilty of listening to cries and not responding? Is it something which they imagine but not in fact true? So how is it that we understand that? What do you think about that?

Okay so I think we get a sort of fascinating clue to this, and I want to flesh that out to you. Again, in order to see this you have to play the intertextuality game or the sort of, where have we heard these ideas before game. So I'm going to ask you what other story does this sequence remind you of? There's a certain sequence of events that takes place in the story of the sale of Joseph - and we've talked about the Akeidah parallels in this, we've talked about the expulsion of Yishmael parallels in this. But seemingly there's another story which we're also hearing echoes of and there's certain events which are going to take place in sequence, one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, and not only are the events similar but the sequence of events are similar between this story and the other story. So I want to point out a couple facets of the story of the sale of Joseph and think about them and listen for their echoes elsewhere in Sefer Bereishit - elsewhere in the Book of Genesis. Where else do you see all these things happening?

So let's go to some pieces of text from the larger story of the sale of Yosef. So I want to direct you here to

Bereishit Mem-Beit - Genesis 42, and this section of text takes place much later on in the story. It takes place when the brothers actually meet up with Yosef, but they don't know that it's Yosef. They're talking to him and Yosef is very harsh with them and accuses them of being spies and basically says that you have to go back and bring back this other brother that you've been talking about. The brothers suggested that they have another brother that they've left behind in the land of Canaan. Yosef, disguised here as an Egyptian official says, I think you're spies, if you want to prove you're not spies, come back with this other brother that you say that you have. And, Yosef makes things more difficult by saying, I'm going to put one of you in prison, I'm going to imprison one of you until the others come back with this phantom brother that you're talking about.

Now at that point the brothers are concerned and they start talking to themselves. Now they're talking in Hebrew unaware that Yosef can understand Hebrew, they think he's just a regular Egyptian fellow who doesn't understand Hebrew. This is what they say amongst themselves - and we talked about this a little bit before when we were looking at the Rashbam's theory, but I want to look at this now again from another angle. So here's what they say; Vayomru ish el achiv - they say; Aval asheimim anachnu - we are guilty; Al achinu asher ra'inu - for what we've done to our brother. Asher ra'inu tzarat nafsho behitchaneno eleinu v'loh shamanu. Al kein ba'ah eleinu hatzara hazos - we are guilty for having seen the pain of our brother's soul when he was pleading to us and we didn't listen to him and that's why this terrible thing has happened to us.

At that point Reuven responds and Reuven says; Haloh amarti aleichem Leimor al techetu bayeled - he says, didn't I tell you guys; Al techetu bayeled - that we shouldn't sin against this child; V'loh shamatem - and you didn't listen; V'gam damo hinei nidrash - and now look, his blood is being sought after.

Someone, or heaven, is seeking to sort of avenge his blood in these terrible events that is happening to us now, that - and then one of us is going to be imprisoned.

So this is what the brothers say to themselves when these bad things start happening to them in Egypt, they suspect that they're guilty.

Okay, so if we look at this text and we take a look at this section over here, the brothers considered themselves guilty of having listened to this child, this brother of theirs, cry out to them from the pit - so there's this brother in the ground and his voice is crying out to them and they don't listen. So where else do we have a story like that? Someone is - there's a brother's voice that's calling out from the ground for help, and then the other brothers stand by and they don't really respond to that voice? What other story in Genesis does that remind you of?

Now just to further this analogy a little bit more, let's go back to the text of Bereishit Lamed-Zayin, the actual story of the sale of Yosef and just read it through again with Rashbam's perspective. Let's read this as the Rashbam would see it. So; Vaya'avru anashim Midyanim socharim vayimshechu vaya'alu et Yosef min habor - so these Midianites come - remember they're coming unbeknownst to the brothers, the brothers are unaware of this. They're off picnicking, they're eating their bread, and over the next hill these Midianites who they hadn't seen go and they do what the brothers have been contemplating and

they preempt the brothers, they pull Yosef out of the pit. And they are the ones; Vayimkeru et Yosef laYishmaelim - they are the ones who sell Yosef to the Yishmaelim before the brothers can even get there. Vayavi'u et Yosef Mitzrayma - and then the Yishmaelim come and they bring Yosef down to Egypt.

Now remember as the Rashbam saw it; Vayoshov Reuven el habor - now Reuven is the first person back, Reuven leaves early from the meal because he wants to go and save Yosef because there's this new plan that Yehuda has had, which is let's sell him to the Ishmaelites, so he has to get to Yosef before the other brothers do. So he goes back early and he's the first person to discover the truth. V'hinei ein Yosef ba'bor

- Yosef isn't there. Vayikra et begadav - and he tears his clothes. So Reuven is distraught by this because remember, Reuven is the one who wanted to save him.

But now look at the response of the brothers, what is the brothers' response at this point? Vayoshov el echov - he returns to the brothers; Vayomar hayeled einenu v'ani onoh ani bah - so Reuven comes back to the brothers and says, my goodness guys, he's not there, Yosef isn't in the pit anymore. Now at that point the brothers have a choice, you would expect perhaps for them to be surprised, anxious, but according to the Rashbam, remember this is the first time which they're finding out, they're surprised by what has happened, in the Rashbam's reading. Look at their response. Vayikchu et ketonet Yosef vayishchatu se'ir izim vayitbelu et haketonet badom - they actually don't respond to Reuven whatsoever, there is just no response, it's simply an attempt at an alibi. They take Joseph's coat, they Shecht a goat and they put the blood on the coat; one way or the other we got rid of Yosef. Their only concern is to find some way of explaining this to father and they put the blood on the coat.

So to go back to the elements that we're looking for in this other story, let's add one more here, and that is going to be this one over here, which is that in the Yosef story the brothers really they don't know what happened with their brother. Certainly according to the Rashbam's reading they're completely unaware of what's happened to him, but they really don't care, they're content to leave it that way. Their only concern is really to find an alibi for what happened and defend themselves in the face of their father. So what other story do you have this element as well?

Finally, if we're going to call this Element 1 and this Element 2 and this Element 3, there's a fourth element here and for that, let's go back to the text of Genesis 42 - Bereishit Mem-Beit, which we were talking about before. Fast-forwarding later on, we're talking about that episode when the brothers have met Yosef, they don't know it's Yosef and they're speaking among themselves in Hebrew. So one of the things they say amongst themselves is Reuven is talking and he says; V'gam damo hinei nidrash - that his blood is going to be avenged by heaven, maybe G-d is taking revenge against us because his blood is calling out to G-d. So where else do we have that kind of language where there's a concern that heaven might avenge somehow the blood of the brother that was in distress?

So what other story has all four of these elements in that exact same sequence? What other story does all this remind you of? Do you have any ideas? Can you guess what I'm thinking of here? So come back and I'll spill the beans and tell you what's on my mind.

Okay so I asked you what other story does all of this remind you of besides the story of the sale of Joseph? The story which I have in mind from earlier in Sefer Bereishit - actually I think it's the only story like this in all of Chamishei Chumshei Torah, in all of the Five Books of Moses - and that is the story of Cain and Abel. Right? If you think about that fateful image of the; Kol demei achicha tzo'akim eilay min ha'adamah - the guilt of Cain as expressed by G-d. After G-d says to Cain; Ei Hevel achicha - where is Abel? Remember of course Cain has killed Abel and after Cain kills Abel, G-d says to him so where is Abel? Cain says, I don't know, am I my brother's keeper? At that point G-d comes and says; Meh asitah - what have you done? Kol demei achicha tzo'akim eilay min ha'adamah - the voice of your brother's blood calls out to Me from the ground. That's kind of what I had in mind, and you can see it down here when you have that same sort of kind of image amongst the brothers themselves when they discussed their own guilt. Asher ra'inu tzarat nafsho behitchaneno eleinu v'loh shamanu - this idea of we heard his voice calling from the ground. Remember, Joseph was in the pit, we heard his voice calling from the ground, we didn't listen, we weren't responsive.

So what I'm arguing is that Joseph's voice calling out [to/from 1:28] the ground for help kind of echoes this language, this poetic language, when G-d says to Cain that the voice of Abel's blood, of Hevel's blood, is calling out from the ground. Of course, in the sale of Joseph the brothers stand by and don't respond, and of course in the Cain and Abel story, Cain stands by and doesn't respond. He says; Hashomer achi onochi - am I my brother's keeper? Of course, the brothers don't know what happened to Yosef and they're content to leave it that way, and frankly, Cain says he doesn't know what happened to his brother Abel - right? Here's Cain talking to G-d, G-d says where is Hevel? Basically Cain's answer is; Loh yadati - I do not know. The truth is, he doesn't know, remember, nobody has ever died before; Cain hit him with a rock or something and then he wasn't moving and Cain doesn't know what happened. He says, I don't know where he is, I don't know what happened. But his point just isn't I don't know what happened, it's also; Hashomer achi onochi - it's not my responsibility. Frankly, Cain is apathetic; Hashomer achi onochi - it's not my business, I'm not my brother's keeper.

Again, as mentioned before, according to the Rashbam, in the Joseph story the brothers' guilt really isn't in the fact that they sold him, they didn't sell him. If they're not guilty for selling him what are they guilty of? Perhaps it's the same thing that Cain is really guilt of in the story of Cain and Abel. It wasn't so much killing Abel, he is angry at him, he hit him, nobody had ever died before, he didn't know what he was doing. It's his response after that; Hashomer achi onochi - I don't know what happened to him but I don't care, am I my brother's keeper? That's really - whereas you're reading the story as a reader you sense that condemnation of the text of Cain. Perhaps it's the same sort of thing in the story here. The brothers aren't really technically - certainly according to the Rashbam - guilty of selling him, this action over here, the sale to the Yishmaelim took place through the Midyanim, not through the brothers. But what the brothers do, is when Reuven comes back and says; Hayeled einenu - he's not there; instead of, oh my gosh, what happened to him? It's that, okay let's find an alibi, let's kill a goat and put the blood on the coat.

So in our story of the sale of Yosef, the brothers don't know what happened to Yosef and they're content to leave it that way, just like Cain says, he doesn't know what happened to Abel and he's okay leaving it

that way too. The nature of the guilt perhaps in both stories is the same.

Finally, remember how the brothers worry heaven might avenge the blood of Yosef? What Reuven says to the brothers when they're in Egypt; V'gam damo hinei nidrash - his blood is being sought after by heaven. Of course that's the echo from the Cain story also, this fear - not just a fear actually, but a reality that heaven will avenge Abel's blood. V'atah orrur atah min ha'adamah asher patztah et pi'ha lakachat et demei achicha miyadecha - and now cursed are you from the ground that opened up its gaping maw to take your brother's blood from your hands, is what G-d tells Cain. It sort of echoes over here later on in the fear of the brothers, expressed by Reuven; V'gam damo hinei nidrash - his blood is calling out and is sought after by heaven.

So in all of these kind of four ways, the sale of Yosef really does seem to be echoing the story of Cain and Abel. Maybe all this is really suggesting an answer to our question, which is, according to the Rashbam if the brothers didn't really sell Yosef and if they only told a white lie to their father, so what did they really do already? Does it mean that they're aren't to be seen as culpable for what happened? Well maybe they aren't culpable for selling him, maybe the Midianites did that, and maybe they didn't really lie to their father more or less because they really don't know what happened to him? But maybe that's really the point, they don't know, but how much do they care? What they're really doing is they're turning their back on Yosef as a brother. The brothers don't know what happened to Yosef but they're content to leave it that way. Cain doesn't know what happened to Abel but he's okay leaving it that way. That's G- d criticism of Cain in the Cain and Abel story, and it's actually Reuven's criticism of the brothers' behavior in the sale of Yosef story, that we listened to his voice but we didn't respond. Ultimately that's really about what it means to be a brother.

Going back to the coats, remember, when Joseph is stripped of the coats and they talk about two coats; Vayafshitu et Yosef et kutanto, et ketonet hapasim asher alav - and we talked about the doubled coat. Rashi pointing out that the second coat was one that was added for him more than all the other brothers, seemingly a reference to him being firstborn. But remember how many coats is he stripped of? He's stripped by the brothers of both coats. Not only are you not the firstborn, they seem to be saying, you're not even our brother. Again, going back to Rashi; Vayomer ha'ish - what that phantom man said to Yosef as Yosef said, I'm looking for my brothers, I'm looking for my brothers. The phantom man said; Nasu mizeh - they've already left that already. As Rashi explains that Medrashic explanation; Hisi'u atzman min ha'achvah - they've left behind brotherhood, they're not in that mode anymore, they're not treating you as a brother. Maybe this really is where their culpability lies; Nasu mizeh - they've left behind brotherhood.

Indeed, along these lines there's one more fascinating connection between our story of Joseph on the one hand and the story of Cain on the other, and it involves this precise idea, the idea of brotherhood. I want to talk about that when we come back.

Okay, so just in case you aren't absolutely convinced by this series of parallels between the story of the sale of Yosef on the one hand, and Cain and Abel on the other hand, I just want to share with you one other kind of really neat thing that I found, which I think is a really fascinating correlation suggesting that there seems to be something really going on here in the connection between these two stories. That is the theme of a brother. Or more particularly, not just brother, but my brother, your brother, our brother. The theme of one brother's connection to another brother.

That is the following, if you look at the Cain and Abel story itself, the story of the ultimate crime between brothers, fratricide, the killing of one brother by another brother, you find that the actual word brother, or his brother, or my brother, those words appear a lot in the story, more than absolutely necessary. Let's just kind of read through, I will give you a sense of what I'm talking about. Veha'Adam yadah et Chava ishto vatahar vateiled et Cain vatomer kaniti ish et Hashem - so this the birth of Cain.

Eve gives birth to Cain, and says; Kaniti ish et Hashem - I've acquired a man with G-d. Vatosef laledet et achiv et Havel - and then she gives birth to his brother, to Abel. Now notice that even here the brother there is kind of superfluous, if she had just said; Vatosef laledet et Hevel - you would have figured out that Hevel is his brother, if it just said; And she gave birth to another child, to Hevel. But it goes out of its way to point out that the child that she's giving birth to is the brother of Cain, Hevel.

As we continue, verse 8 over here; Vayomer Cain el Hevel achiv - this is when Cain is jealous of Abel; So Cain says to Hevel his brother - as if we don't remember that they're brothers. Vayehi biheyosom basadeh vayakam Cain el Hevel achiv vayahargeihu - it's almost like every time Hevel is mentioned the Torah goes out of its way to remind us that it's Hevel his brother, Hevel his brother. Next verse, G-d speaking to Cain after Cain kills Hevel, not just where is Hevel, where is Hevel your brother; Ei Hevel achicha? Then of course Cain's famous words; Hashomer achi onochi - am I my brother's keeper?

If you actually keep track of all the occurrences of brother or my brother or his brother in this text you find an interesting thing. Let's just kind of count them up here. So here are all the occurrences of brothers in the text, count them up, there are seven of them. Seven tends to be a significant number in Biblical text, you'll often find stories when you find seven occurrences of something in the story it tends to indicate that that's a central theme within the story. And that in fact is the central theme of Cain and Abel - what does it mean to be a brother? What does it mean to care about a brother?

Again, as I suggested before as you're reading the Cain and Abel story the fact that Cain kills Abel while upsetting doesn't really condemn Cain as a villain. Cain was upset, he hit him, nobody had ever died before, it actually could have been an accident. As a matter of fact, if you look later on in the story where G-d dispenses punishments to Cain, one of the punishments is actually exile. Nah v'nad tiheye ba'aretz - you're going to be a wanderer in the land, you'll never be able to settle down, you'll always go from place to place. If you think about murder later on in the Torah, in the Book of Deuteronomy, in Sefer Devarim, think about the connection between exile and murder. Is there ever a connection between exile and murder? As it happens, there is. For someone who kills accidentally, sort of manslaughter, the punishment is actually exile.

Then do you remember the mark of Cain? The mark of Cain actually isn't a curse but the mark that G-d gives Cain if you look in the text, is actually there to protect Cain. Cain is worried that everyone who sees him will kill him and the mark is there to protect him from anyone who would kill him. Think about again in Sefer Devarim, think about the inadvertent murderer, the inadvertent murderer also has something to protect him from those who would kill him, from those who would avenge the blood that he spilled - and that is the Arei Miklat, that is the Cities of Refuge that the inadvertent murderer can go to seek refuge from those who would kill him.

So the consequences that befall Cain sort of foreshadowed those of an inadvertent murderer. So if his crime doesn't shine through in the act of murder, where does it really shine through? Where it shines through is in his apathy. As I said before, when G-d says to him; Ei Hevel achicha - where is Hevel your brother? Loh yadati - I don't know; Hashomer achi onochi - am I my brother's keeper? The wrong answer. The story is about - again - is these sort of seven occurrences of brother. He's your brother.

Don't you care what happened to him?

So now let's turn from the story of Cain and Abel and take a look at the story of Joseph and his brothers. The truth is the story of Joseph and his brothers can really be divided into two sections. The first section is really when Joseph torments his brothers, it begins when Joseph starts telling his father bad things about his brothers up here and it ends - that section at least of Joseph tormenting his brothers - when Joseph, over here, the beginning of verse 10, does a final act that causes tension, when he tells his father and his brothers about a second dream. Now if you take this section over here from verse 2 over to verse 10 you'll find that again the word brother appears with great frequency. It's almost like any chance that the Torah has it will call Joseph and his brothers, brothers in reference to one another. Count them up, seven occurrences.

Then take a look at the second half of Chapter 37, the part where the brothers torment Joseph, here too his brothers, their brother, his brothers, over and over and over again. If you take a look at this all the way from verse 19 where the brothers first plot what they're going to do with this dream who is coming towards them, till the end after Joseph is in the pit, and he's been sold by the Ishmaelites; brothers, brothers, brothers, how many occurrences? Seven of them.

Seven brothers in the Cain and Abel story, seven brothers when Joseph torments the brothers, seven brothers when the brothers torment him. It's all about what it means to be a brother.

Before we leave the topic of Cain and Abel there's one last set of connections I want to bring to your attention in the story, we'll get back to that with you in our next video.

Okay, so this last little piece I want to show you about these possible connections between the Cain and Abel story and the Yosef and his brothers story, has to do with the blessing that Yaakov gives at the very end of his life, right over here in Genesis 49 - Bereishit Mem-Tet. That he gives to Shimon and to Levi. One of the intriguing questions which you're left with at the end of Sefer Bereishit, at the end of the Joseph story, is did Yaakov ever learn the truth? One day his child Yosef just vanishes, re-appears in Egypt later on, did he ever find out what really happened about the sale of Yosef, about the brothers' role in that sale? So there are some intriguing hints from here and Rashi actually has some comments that give some clues.

If you look at this blessing, one little piece that's interesting is right over here. He says to Shimon and Levi - and again it's a double-edged kind of blessing, it's a blessing that seems in some ways almost like a curse. Indeed the idea of cursing is mentioned right over here. So; Shimon and Levi Achim - Shimon and Levi you brothers. First of all even this idea of brothers, if you think about what we talked about in our last video, that was the main theme. What does it mean to be a brother? Here it is. Yaakov is talking about Shimon and Levi you brothers; Klei chamas mecheiroseihem - weapons of violence are your kinship, is what you were brothers to. Besodom al tavoi nafshi - let my soul not come into council with you. Bikhalam al teichad kevoidi ki b'apam hargu ish - because in anger you killed a man. Seemingly a reference there to the rape of Dinah, to the subsequent war which Shimon and Levi waged against the inhabitants of Shechem.

U'birtzonam ikru shor - and then there's an ambiguous phrase over here - and willfully you uprooted oxen. Now what does that mean, willfully you uprooted oxen? Could refer to again that same event, the armed onslaught against the city of Shechem. But Rashi has another idea. Rashi says Shor interestingly - Rashi points out; U'birtzonam ikru shor; Ratzu l'akor et Yosef - they tried to uproot Yosef; Shenikra shor

- later on Yosef is called an ox. Interestingly, later on in the blessings Yaakov uses this same language over here, Shin, Vav, Reish as a reference to Yosef. You'll see it in Yosef's blessing. So Rashi makes the connection between this Shin, Vav, Reish in the blessing of Yosef, and this Shin, Vav, Reish in the blessing of Shimon and Levi, and suggests that Yaakov was referring obliquely to their role in the sale of Yosef. That Yaakov was aware of the sale of Yosef and was aware, perhaps, of the role of Shimon and Levi in that sale.

Remember, Shimon and Levi are the second and third oldest brother. The oldest brother, Reuven, as we know, was on Yosef's side, he was trying to save Yosef. So it's really the second and third oldest brother who are the oldest brothers that will be seen as culpable for the sale.

So look carefully as to what Yaakov says about them. First of all, look at this word; Klei chamas mecheiroseihem - such a strange word, don't you think? Weapons of violence are your kinship you brothers, it's what you are brothers to. But the words Mecheiroseihem in Hebrew, what does that sound like to you? Mem, Chaf, Reish - what does that remind you? That root actually is the same root for sale. When the brothers sell Yosef; Vayimkeru - there's that root. It almost sounds like Yaakov is referring obliquely to the sale of Yosef right over here; Weapons of violence you used in this sale of a brother; Mecheiroseihem - in your sale of a brother.

Now, look at this phrase over here; Orrur apam ki az - in a blessing you have the opposite of blessing, Orrur is the Hebrew word for curse - cursed be your anger for it is very brazen. What will I do?

Achalkem b'Yaakov, v'afitzem b'Yisrael - I will split up Shimon and Levi, I will scatter you, I will disperse you.

Okay, so now think of these two elements over here. Element number 1, curse. Element number 2, dispersal, splitting up, scattering. What other story do we have cursing - that specific language of Orrur, cursing? Where else in Genesis do we have a person cursed with the language of Orrur? Where else in Genesis do we have somebody who is cursed with exile, with dispersal, with scattering? The answer is, you guessed it, the story of Cain and Abel. See that language Orrur, well here it is; V'atah orrur atah min ha'adamah - and now cursed are you from the land that opened up your maw to take the blood of your brother. This is the first person in the Book of Genesis ever to be cursed with this kind of language.

What about exile? Ki ta'avod et ha'adamah loh tosef tet kochah loch nah v'nad tiheye ba'aretz - you're going to be a wanderer throughout the land. Cain will be scattered, Shimon and Levi will be scattered.

So if we fill out our connections between the sale of Yosef, and Cain and Abel they are really quite significant. It's not just these four over here, but it's actually five and six as well. Yaakov's blessing to Shimon and Levi includes exile and dispersal, Shimon and Levi's anger is cursed - Orrur - by their father, and of course, exile befalls Cain. Just like Cain, Shimon and Levi experience a curse, just as Cain experiences a curse at the hand of his father - his Father in Heaven - so too, Shimon and Levi's anger is cursed by their father.

This then seems to be the archetypal story, the fundamental obligation of a brother towards another brother, something terrible happens to your brother, you are your brother's keeper, you can't be okay in not knowing what happened. It seems to be that the Torah suggests by means of these parallels that the brothers are guilty of something like that - certainly the brothers themselves see it that way; Asheimim anachnu - they say about themselves - we're guilty. We're guilty for what? We may not have sold him, we may not have known what became of him, but we're guilty; Asher ra'inu tzarat nafsho behitchaneno eleinu v'loh shamanu - we heard his voice calling from the ground, we didn't respond; Al kein ba'ah eleinu hatzara hazos - that's why these things are happening to us now.

So we've gone through the Rashbam's approach to the sale of Yosef and his argument, essentially that the sale of Joseph was the greatest crime never committed. The brothers actually never sold him. But I want to pull back the zoom lens now and sort of ask why does that actually sort of make a difference to us here and now? How does that sort of affect our lives? When we think of biblical texts that way, it's here where we don't really have the evidence, that it's speculation, that the question of why, as to what it means, is more of a personal question, a subjective question. So implication number 1, do you have to actually do something to be responsible for it?

In the Yom Kippur service that Ashkenazim say, for example, there are sections of there that ascribe some of the terrible suffering that occurred later on in Jewish history, specifically with 10 Martyrs that were killed by the Romans, much, much later in Jewish history than Biblical times. They ascribe that actually to, in some way, a heavenly Din, a judgment as it were, for the sale of Joseph. According to the Rashbam, does that even make sense? The brothers didn't do it, they were guiltless, but the question is were they really guiltless?

There's a fascinating statement that the Sages make in the Gemara to the effect that; Groma b'nizakein chayav b'dinei shamayim u'pator b'dinei adam - which is that there are different levels of responsibility. When I cause something directly, let's say, someone causes some kind of damage, so if they do it directly, they're Chayav b'dinei adam - which means that a human court can actually require the perpetrator to pay for the damage that he committed. But, the Gemara says, if the damage that you caused was a Groma, if it was indirect, if I didn't do it but I created the conditions that allowed someone else to do it, then; Pator b'dinei adam - then a human court actually doesn't have the ability to make the perpetrator pay anything for the crime. Then it says; Chayav b'dinei shamayim - but although you're not liable in the earthly courts, you're liable in the heavenly court. What does it mean you're liable in the heavenly court? So people often think, well it means I have some sort of moral responsibility to you. But that's actually not what the words mean. That's not what Chayav B'dinei Shamayim means, that you're liable in the heavenly court. It means from G-d's perspective, you actually have to repay the money even though a court cannot impose this upon you.

In the Rashbam's picture the brothers did exactly that, they created the conditions in the end that allowed for Joseph to be sold. They didn't actually sell him, the Midianites did that, the Ishmaelites did that, but the question is does that really lessen their responsibility? Maybe in earthly courts but not in the heavenly court. From G-d's perspective you're still responsible and to me that's a chilling thing. Here the brothers are, where they come back to their father, what they said was really kind of like a white lie. We don't know what happened to him. It's really true, they don't know what happened to him. Yes it's true they make this alibi, they put the blood on the coat, they don't know what happened to him, and yet at some deep level they're responsible for whatever happened to him. They created the conditions for this, they indirectly set in motion a chain of events. Earthly courts may not hold them liable, but G-d would.

Here's one other personal reflection I want to leave you with about the Rashbam's way of looking at things that in the end the brothers never sold Yosef. Therefore one of the questions I think that the text leaves you with is not about what happened, but about what might have happened had Yosef not in fact

been found by the Midianite traders who sold him off to the Ishmaelites?

Look how many different plans there were. What was Plan A that the brothers had? Plan A was let's kill Yosef and throw his corpse into one of these pits. That's what they were saying as they saw Yosef come to them, so that was Plan A. Plan A actually never came to be in actuality. Reuven stopped Plan A, he said, we're not going to kill anybody, instead let's take him and let's throw him in the pit alive and the implication is let him just die in the pit. Reuven of course, as the text tells us, was trying to save him, but even as far as what the brothers thought Reuven was saying, it was a less extreme plan than Plan A. Plan A was let's kill him outright, Plan B is well no, let's not really do that, let's just throw him in the pit and let him expire there. Already the plan is evolving, it's becoming less severe. Then they take Yosef and they throw him in the pit and he's alive and then they're kind of thinking about it over lunch and at that point Yehuda comes up with a Plan C. The Plan C is, you know we really shouldn't let him die at all, why don't we just sell him? Get rid of the problem that way. Why don't we sell him to that band of traders over there?

But if you think about it, what is happening to create Plans A, Plan B and Plan C? Aside from the people who are creating those plans, time is creating those plans. Time is elapsing, and as time elapses you get to think about it more, you get to ruminate about it more, your initial impulse to just get rid of him gets less and less severe.

The great question is, what would have happened had the Midianite traders not gotten there before the brothers? If the brothers really did have the time, thought about it more over lunch, the Ishmaelite traders are off in the distance, they'll eventfully get here, would there have been a Plan D? What would have a Plan D been like? Would a Plan D have been that when they finally got to the pit and the Ishmaelite traders are there and the brothers are there, would they in fact have gone through with selling him? Or just as Plan A got replaced by Plan B and just as Plan B got replaced by Plan C, would Plan C have gotten replaced by Plan D? Would it have been, we'll haul Yosef out of the pit and give him a tongue- lashing and tell him, this is ridiculous what happened here, and we'd have to make sure nothing like this ever happens again? Would that have been the case and maybe there never would have been a sale of Joseph at all? But there was. Because the brothers ran out of time. But time can sometimes be your friend, especially when you're about to do something impetuous.

So what do we take out of that? What I take out of that is that you've got to be really, really careful when you're angry not to do something irrevocable. Because plans change when you're angry. The Gemara famously talks about a certain kind of Get, a bill of divorce, which would be written for a Kohein. It had to be tied up in all sorts of arcane and difficult ways, it took a long time to prepare, and the whole point of it was it needed to be very cumbersome, because a Kohein in particular, according to Torah law, can't remarry his wife once he divorces her. Other men could. A Kohein can't do anything impetuous. The Sages, in creating a special Get for the Kohein tried to engineer time into the document, give him time, because there will be a Plan B, there will be a Plan C, there will be a Plan D. The idea behind the time is that document is going to become superfluous, he'll change his mind, he won't go through with it.

The brothers also might have changed their mind, might have not gone through with it. But you don't always get the luxury of time. Sometimes life gives it to you and sometimes life doesn't give it to you. Because the Midianite traders come and they're out of your control, and at that point you're left with the bitter consequences of your decision, you just have to live with what happened; Yosef is gone, you put him in the pit, and something that the brothers can never get away from. That to me is the really chilling lesson of the Rashbam, time can heal a lot of wounds, but you don't always get time. So you've got to be really careful about what actions you're going to take in the heat of the moment, what wounds you will create, you don't always get to take them back.

Okay so we're up to our next story in the extended story saga really of Yosef and his brothers, and the next story is a rather fascinating but curiously strange story of Yehuda and Tamar. So let's take a look at the transition between these stories and introduce ourselves a little to it. Then I want to ask you what it is that you think we need to wonder about? What are the questions that kind of hit the reader in the face when you look at the story?

So let's read. This is the end of Chapter 37, the end of the sale of Yosef, which I don't think we've actually read yet in the text, let's take a look at this. So the brothers they send; Vayeshalchu et ketonet hapasim - I'm reading here in verse 32 - so they send the special coat back to their father, it's the alibi covered in blood. Vayavi'u el avihem - they bring it to their father. Vayomru zot matzanu, - we found this; Haker nah haketonet bincha hi im loh - recognize please is it your son's coat or not? Vayakira - so he recognizes it; Vayomer - and he says; Ketonet beni - it is my son's coat; Chaya ra'ah ochalatu - so a terrible beast has devoured him; tarof taraf Yosef - Yosef has been torn apart alive. Vayikre'ah Yaakov simlotav - so Yaakov tears his clothes in mourning; Vayasem sak bemosnov - and he wears sackcloth; Vayitabel al beno yamim rabim - and he mourns for his son for many, many days. Vayakumu kol banav v'kol benotav lenachamo - and at that point all of his sons, all of his daughters get up to try to comfort him. But; Vayema'ein lehitnachem - but he would not be comforted, he withheld himself from being comforted. Vayomar - because he said; Ki eired el beni avel she'olah - I will go down to my grave mourning my son. Vayevk oto aviv - and his father cried for him.

Meanwhile; V'hamedanim machru oto el Mitzrayim l'Potiphar seris Paraoh sar hatabachim - meanwhile Josef was being taken down to Egypt and Josef was sold to a man by the name of Potiphar.

Okay, so that's the end of Chapter 37, let's go to Chapter 38 the beginning of the story of Yehuda and Tamar. So; Vayehi ba'eit hahi vayeired Yehuda mei'eis echov vayeit ad ish adulami ushemo Chira - so it happened at around that time that Yehuda went down from among his brothers and he came to some fellow from Adulam by the name of Chira. Anyway; Vayar sham Yehuda bat ish canaani - Yehuda saw a Canaanite woman there; Ushemo Shuah - her father's name was Shuah; Vayikacheha vayavo eileha - and he married her and he had children from her. Vatahar vateiled ben vayikra et shemo Er. Vatahar od vateiled ben vatikra et shemo Onan. Vatosef od vateiled ben vatikra et shemo Shelah - it turns out that she has three children, remember these three children, they are Er, Onan and Shelah. So; Vayikach Yehuda isha l'Er bechoro ushemah Tamar - so it turns out Yehuda finds a wife for Er and this woman's name is Tamar and she of course is the woman after whom the story is colloquially named when we call it the Yehuda and Tamar story, this is Tamar, and Yehuda of course is her father-in-law.

Anyway, so as we progress it turns out that Er died while he was young. Er of course is the oldest of Yehuda's children; Vayehi Er bechor Yehuda rah b'einei Hashem - Er, the oldest child of Yehuda was evil in the eyes of G-d, so G-d got rid of him; Vayemiteihu Hashem - G-d caused him to die young.

Now at this point something happens which you need a little bit of background for. So the background that we need here is the law of Yibum. The law of Yibum was given much later on in the Torah in Sefer Devarim - in Deuteronomy, and I have it right here up on the screen, the original verses. Basically what

this law mandates is the following. Ki yeishvu achim yachdov u'meit achad meihem u'ben ein lo - this law takes effect when there are two [or 3:58] more brothers and one of the brothers marries and has no child from that marriage, and then that brother dies. Should this happen; Loh tihiyeh eishes hameit hachutzah l'ish zar - it's a Mitzvah for the woman not to marry some other man, but instead to marry Yevama - the brother of the deceased. It's a Mitzvah for him to marry the widow, his brother's widow, and to have children with her.

Vehaya habechor asher teiled yakum al shem achiv hameit - and the reason for this, the rationale, is that the child - the first child that they have - will carry on the name of the deceased brother. V'loh yimocheh shemo m'Yisrael - and the brother who died his name will not be lost in Israel. There will be a child that will carry his name. In some sense, the child that's born is going to be the spiritual legacy of the deceased brother. It will be the biological child of course of the brother of the deceased but in a spiritual sense the child is seen as a child of the deceased. It's almost like in a certain kind of way surrogate fatherhood.

Now this law takes effect of course once the Torah was given at Sinai. Right now we've been looking at a story of Yehuda and Tamar in the Book of Genesis before the Torah was given at Sinai. Nevertheless there's a fascinating comment of the Ramban here. The Ramban says that the idea behind Yibum predated the giving of the Torah. People knew about this idea, and there were customs having to do with Yibum even before the Torah was given. This was just something that you would do. What the Torah did was it took this custom and it regulated it. Actually, according to the Ramban, it constricted the custom. The Ramban says that before the giving of the Torah at Sinai the law of Yibum was actually more expansive than it was after the Torah was given. Before the Torah was given at Sinai if a brother would die, anybody from the family could marry the widow and could bear a child that would bear the name, so to speak, of the deceased. After Sinai the law became constricted and it was limited to just the husband's brother.

The Ramban goes a little bit further and really makes a case for almost an idea of the reincarnation of the soul, that the child that was born somehow is a reincarnation of the soul of the deceased brother. But

whether or not you go that far, even if you don't go that far, the idea is that in some way, shape or form,

this child that's born carries on the name of the deceased brother, and this was something that was practiced before the Torah was given at Sinai.

Okay, now with that background, let's come back to our story of Yehuda and Tamar. Okay so let's look at the story of Yehuda and Tamar visually for a moment. We have no idea what these people look like, so I'm just going to represent them by different color silhouettes. So let's let this first silhouette over here be Yehuda. So Yehuda gets married, he's got three children. Child number 1, Er. Child number 2, Onan. Child number 3, Shelah. So we've got these three brothers. Now Er gets married, congratulations Er, Er marries Tamar. Now Er and Tamar do not have any children, no children. Then, very unfortunately, Er dies, no more Er, goodbye Er. So now Tamar is alone and here we would have a sort of Yibum kind of situation, the stage is set for Yibum. Because there's a man and woman and they do not have any children, no children, and there are surviving brothers Onan and there's Shelah. So at this point if you follow the story, Yehuda then instructs Onan to go and perform Yibum with Tamar, to go marry

Tamar. Why? Again, for the express purpose of having this child that is going to carry on the name of deceased Er. So it would be Onan's biological child, but spiritually this child that's going to be born would carry on the legacy of Er.

Okay, so now what happens in the story? What happens in the story is that Onan actually does take Tamar as wife, but in the words of the text; Vayeida Onan ki loh lo yihiyeh hazarah - Onan knows that the child is not going to be his. That even though it's going to be his biological child, that he's being asked to be a surrogate father and that it's not really going to be his. In some spiritual sense the child that is going to be born is going to belong to his brother and not to him, and he's not okay with that. Onan therefore when he is intimate with Tamar makes sure that he does not impregnate her, G-d does not like this, and Onan dies, G-d gets rid of Onan too.

So now we have two brothers down, 1 and 2, both of these brothers are dead, and now there is one brother to go. Shelah. So Tamar is waiting for Shelah and is hoping for this; is hoping that Shelah is going to marry her and that Shelah is going to perform Yibum and that the child that would be born to Tamar and Shelah, again, would be this child over here, that is going to carry on the name of her dead husband Er. But Yehuda does not like this plan. Yehuda has already seen two children die - remember Yehuda does not know what we know, Yehuda does not know that Er died because G-d thought Er was evil, doesn't know that Onan died because G-d didn't like what Onan did. All Yehuda knows is that this woman is bad luck; I have two of my children dead after having been in contact with her, and he is reticent about giving Shelah to her.

Now at that point - we'll get into the details of the story later - but Tamar figures out that at some point she's not going to get Shelah. At that point she takes matters into her own hands and something bizarre happens. Tamar actually goes and dresses up and poses as a harlot and sits by the crossroads and actually seduces Yehuda who, not knowing who she is, is intimate with her. All, in her mind, for the purpose of performing Yibum. If she can't have one of the brothers of the deceased, she'll have somebody else from the family that will carry on the name of her dead husband Er, and that would be Yehuda. Tamar indeed becomes pregnant from the union, Yehuda doesn't know he is the father, and then all sorts of interesting things happen in the story, which we'll get to in a little bit, when we look at the story in more closely.

But this is the beginning background of what's happening in the story. Just when we look at that beginning background I want to just ask you, what sort of questions come to mind as you look at this story? So I want you to just think about the story, mull that over, maybe read over the text - if you want it's right there in Chapter 38 - and just ask yourself, what are the big questions in the story? What are the questions that bother you? What main - if you had to pick one big question out of the hat, the biggest question in the story that really troubles you, what would that be?

Okay, you think about that, and let's come back and talk about it.

Okay so before we come back to our actual story here, the story of Yehuda and Tamar, which I have represented visually for you with these silhouettes, if we're on a hunt for questions in the story, I want to just pull back the zoom lens for a moment with you. Give you a little introduction as to the kinds of questions that I'm looking for with you in the story.

Today I want to talk to you a little bit about kind of the kind of questions that we're looking for and I want to make two distinctions with you. The first is a distinction between what I call big questions and little questions, and the second, a distinction between what I call internal versus external questions. Let me tell you a little bit what I mean by that. Let's start with big questions and little questions. There was this book written a little while back by Thomas Kuhn about the history of science and particular, how scientific revolutions unfold, called, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions. In the book he talks about the Copernican Revolution and he talks about Einstein's revolution; the Theory of Relativity.

Copernican's revolution was about the sun being at the center of the universe instead of the earth. He says, how do these revolutions actually unfold? What made scientists change their minds? Scientists are a sort of stubborn lot and they don't change their mind that easily, what did it? Was it like there was this one, huge, big question that came along and said, boy, I can't deal with that.

For example, Galileo - right? So Galileo comes and Galileo makes himself a telescope - here's our really crummy-rendition of Galileo's telescope. Galileo is looking at the stars and Galileo sees that there's actually these moons that are orbiting Jupiter and this is like a big problem, the big question for this idea that the earth is at the center of the universe and everything revolves around it. Because there were supposed to be this crystalline spheres, these solid spheres that the stars and the planets were in, and how could there be these moons orbiting something that it was encased in this solid glass kind of sphere?

But this question alone didn't destroy the geocentric universe - the view that the earth was the center of the universe. It took - what Kuhn says - is an accumulation of small questions, a whole bunch of little problems with the theory; little problem 1, little problem 2, little problem 3, and for each one of these problems you can answer with an ad hoc kind of way. You could come up with, oh well maybe there's this, maybe there's that, and that's what scientists did for a while. But after a while when there's like five, 10, of these ad hoc solutions, somehow it just doesn't seem to be reasonable any more. The community of scientists comes together and says, it doesn't seem to make sense that there's all these different kinds of answers to all these small questions, maybe there's a paradigm shift, maybe there's a whole different way of viewing it? If we just shift our assumptions we can make one shift of assumptions in a kind of big way, and all these little questions go away. Ultimately, Kuhn argues, the little questions are more powerful.

I agree that in some sense little questions are more powerful, but I think when you look at a story it's helpful to begin sometimes with asking, are there any big questions in the story? Even if those big questions might not completely lead us in the direction of an answer, they are still helpful to kind of get out on the table.

I want to tell you a story about big questions actually. So back when I was in Yeshiva, I was in Talmud class and every once in a while I would ask this - what I would think is a big question - that completely

destroys the theory that the lecturer had put forward. Every once in a while he would just sort of - I would go to my teacher about this and he would just sort of stroke his beard and say in Yiddish, the phrase; Shtark nisht fun a kasha - which basically, roughly translated in English is, you don't die from a question. I was very upset about this. I would say, how could he walk away and say you don't die from a question? I had this huge question, you're telling me I don't die from a question, like what does that even mean? I understood ultimately later in life when I became more mature what he was really saying is, you know, you give me a bunch of little questions, that can destroy my theory, but just one, big question, okay, you don't die from a question.

That having been said there are certain questions which if you don't die from, they should at least keep you up at night and those are the big questions. I would define a big question as the kind of question which if you don't have a solution to you really can't say you have a theory, a way of understanding the story, that works. It's not like I don't understand why the verse added an extra word, I don't understand why the phrase is this turn of phrase instead of another turn of phrase. It's a question which gets in the way of your understanding of the whole story. It's one of those big, thematic questions. I think when we look at the story of [Adam and Eve 4:47] we want to ask ourselves before we get to the small questions, what are some of the big questions in the story? Are there any big questions in the story? I think there are.

Let me get to the second distinction I was talking to you about, what I call internal questions versus external questions and let me look at the Book of Jonah with you as a way of kind of fleshing out what it is that I'm talking about. You all know the story of Jonah and the whale, right? Jonah gets swallowed in the whale - this is where the Pinocchio story gets it from. Imagine you're teaching the story of Jonah and some student raises their hand and says, I don't understand, how could Jonah survive in the fish for three days? I don't really get that. How would you answer that question? Well it's not so easy, an answer to that question, as a matter of fact I would argue there is no answer to that question.

Basically what's bothering him? What's bothering your student is the idea of miracles. This guy is a twenty-first century guy, the whole idea of miracles is a problem for him. But that's not really a question about the Book of Jonah, that has very little to do about the Book of Jonah, it's actually an external question. It's a question about miracles, not about the book. An internal question is a question which requires you to enter into the world of the book, to accept its preconceptions. The book believes in miracles, accept that idea, are there any other questions that bother you?

Of course there are some big, internal questions in the Book of Jonah. Verse 1 in the Book of Jonah says, one upon a time the word of G-d came to Jonah and said go to Nineveh. Verse 2 in the Book of Jonah says, Jonah ran away from G-d and he went to Tarshish. Well why did he run away? I mean, why would you go into the prophecy business and decide to become a prophet if you're just going to run away when G-d tells you to go? There's a missing motivation - a motivation doesn't seem to be there, why is he running away? That is an internal question, it's a question the book wants you to ask. That question is really kind of a window into the meaning of the text. If you open up that window it's going to tell you something about what's going on in the book. Which is why, I think, internal questions are more

interesting than external questions. They're more interesting because if you open the window, if you grapple with the internal questions and you find some answers, they're actually going to tell you something about the story.

Okay, hi everybody, Rabbi Fohrman back with you. In the last video that I asked you to look at, we talked about big questions and little questions, internal questions and external questions. Now I want to ask you what do you think the great, big question - that is the great, internal, big question - so that's why we have this box over here highlighted because we're looking for a big question and we're looking for a big, internal question. What do you think the big internal question in the story of Yehuda and Tamar in Chapter 38 is? What really bothers you about this story? Not just like little questions, like how come the verse has an extra word in it, or how come the past tense in this verse is used instead of the future tense? These kinds of questions are important, but these are comparatively little questions, they don't destroy your whole understanding of the story. What big question should keep you awake at night as you consider the story of Yehuda and Tamar?

A lot of the times when people talk to me about the story of Yehuda and Tamar, the question that is on their minds is how could Yehuda have done it? How could Yehuda have succumbed to the advances of this woman posing as a harlot? Right, that's a very troubling question we might imagine. Here's Yehuda a man that we revere as one of the 12 Tribes, a founding father, as it were, of the Jewish People, or if not quite a founding father like Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, pretty close, we look up to the 12 Tribes at some level as role models. So how could Yehuda have done such a thing? This is a question that many are troubled with. Indeed I suspect it might be one of the reasons why people sometimes avoid teaching this story, sometimes kind of skip over Chapter 38, it seems like a difficult thing to confront in schools. How do we confront the behavior of Yehuda in this story?

But getting back to our matrix over here I want to suggest to you that that is not the big, internal question that should be bothering you in this story. It might be a big question, but I'm not convinced that that is an internal question, I think that may well be an external question. The reason why I say that is because as you read through the text there isn't really an indication that the text is crying out for you to be bothered by that question. This is what happened, he was seduced by a harlot, okay, so sue him. I mean, that's what happened to him. We may be bothered by this, it may cause some kind of crisis for us in looking at Yehuda's behavior, but it's not like the text as you're reading it seems to be crying out for you to figure out how he could have done this. It just doesn't seem to be the focus of the story.

An internal question, as we defined it, is a question that when you take the text on its own terms, even without any preconceived notions in which we the reader bring to the text, such as Judah was a very righteous person, how could he have done it? That's a preconceived notion, that's an external question. But an internal question is no, let's take the text in its own terms, what question is the text forcing me to ask? I'm just reading the text as a text, I'm just coming into the text world and just buying all the assumptions that the text wants me to buy, even so, the text on its own terms is forcing me to ask this question. What question like that should be bothering us in the story of Yehuda and Tamar?

Okay so the question I want to suggest should be bothering us in this story, the internal question which we should be asking, the big, internal question, is, what in blazes is this story doing here? What is it doing here at all? To make clear what I mean by that, let's just pull back the zoom lens and take sort of a global view of the second half of Sefer Bereishit, the second half of the Book of Genesis. What's the main

story that we're focusing on in the second half of the book of Genesis - all the way from Chapter 37 through Chapter 50, what is the story we're looking at? Of course the story is the story of Joseph. It begins in Chapter 37 with the sale of Yosef, it continues in Chapters 39 all the way through 50, through the very end of the chapter, with the whole long story of Yosef in Egypt, it's a very, vivid story. We get all sorts of portrayals, all sorts of detail, a kind of detail which we almost never get in the rest of the Five Books of Moses. The story is treated in great, great detail for, what, a good 14 chapters or so. It's all about Yosef and the focus is Yosef and the sale of Yosef and what happens to Yosef in Egypt, and his interactions with the brothers and all of that.

Then, all of a sudden, right in the middle of the story, right smack at the good part of the story, right when Yosef is sold and everything is falling apart and you're wondering what happens next, we get this digression. Chapter 38, a story of Yehuda and Tamar that has nothing to do with anything. It has to do with a relative of the main character Yosef, it has nothing to do with Yosef, we've forgotten about Yosef. It's a very interesting story, but it has nothing to do with all of this. It has nothing to do with Yosef in Egypt, it has nothing to do with Yosef with his brothers, it's an entirely self-contained story which just seems to be plopped right down here in the middle of the text. Why is it here? Is it that the Biblical author, G-d, thinks that we're a little bit too bored and we need a little bit of a break from the story of Yosef, so maybe put in this story over here, which has some exciting, diversionary themes? Is it that, well if you - just in case you were wondering about Yehuda's family let's tell you about his family now? I mean, why is this story here?

By the way, as we'll see in a moment, this really is the very question that Rashi addresses - Grandfather of Medieval Commentators - at the very beginning of the story of Yehuda and Tamar. This is the great, internal question of our story. What is this story doing here?

By the way, like any great, internal question, the way you find the answer is by looking at the little questions in the story, by looking at the details in the story and often the little questions will lead you on a trail to answer the big questions. So that's what we're going to do here, we're going to try to look at Chapter 38 carefully with an eye towards answering what is this story doing here? Is this really a digression?

Before we do that though, I just want to ask you, almost for fun, is this the only chapter-long digression which [we imagine 6:20] in the Book of Genesis? Is there any other point in Genesis where we have a very long story, kind of like this, where you have a story devoted to one particular person and then smack in the middle you have a digression which just doesn't seem to belong? Anything else like that in the Book of Genesis? Can you think of an analogy to this? So I can think of one and I want to share that with you in our next video, so let's come back and talk about that. Then we're going to look more carefully at Chapter 38 and try to figure out what in blazes is this story doing here?

Before we begin here, just a little disclaimer. Looking at these two texts with sort of opposite, reverse glasses on, as we've begun to do, is a very difficult task because what happens over here as one Divine communication between G-d - or an angelic voice - and Jacob, happens over here as two different pieces of Divine communication between the angel and Abraham. Remember these are two events that are actually separated in time. First the angel comes out of the clouds and says Abraham, Abraham, and he says, Hineini. He says, don't stretch out your hand against the child and keep him safe. Then that event is over. And then Abraham goes and he doesn't touch him and he goes and he sacrifices the ram, and then the angel of G-d calls out to Abraham a second time after that. So the question is how would it work that this one event over here is going to get split into two events and somehow backwards and reverse? So you see the complication?

In other words, if the end of the story mirrors the first part of it, so as we continue this sort of reverse order with the beginning mirroring the end, what would that even mean? Would it be this end over here or would it be this end over here, the end of first communication? Or is each one separate? So this is kind of unclear and I can't pretend to have figured it out. But if we just go through it empirically we can kind of see the structure that sort of seems to emerge.

So remember like this is what we've seen so far, that seemingly the last event over here, in Genesis 46, is going to mirror the first event here. So for argument's sake I'm going to break Genesis 46 into four sort of events, or four sort of ideas - there are four ideas here. Onochi ha-Kel Elokei avicha - after this introduction, I am the G-d of your fathers, so event number 1 is going to be; Al tirah mei'redah Mitzrayma - don't fear going down to Egypt - this is going to be event number 1. Let's call this event number 2; Ki l'goy gadol asimcha sham - I will make you into a great nation there. So we'll call that event number 2. Let's call what happens next idea number 3; Onochi eired imcha Mitzrayma v'onochi a'alcha gam aloh - I am going to go down with you to Egypt and I will go back up with you. That's going to be idea number 3. Then idea number 4 is the idea we've just been talking about; V'Yosef yashit yado al einecha - that Joseph is going to spread his hand upon your eye.

So we've seen that idea number 4 seems to mirror itself in idea number 1 over here. And now what I want to do is come take a look with you at idea number 1; Al tirah mei'redah Mitzrayma - don't fear going down to Egypt. So if we take that idea and we sort of color code it, I think it actually plays off - let's see if we can identify the opposite, if we take this idea here; Al tirah - do not be afraid, what would you see the opposite of do not be afraid? Well the opposite of don't be afraid is going to be being afraid. So do we have a sort of being afraid over here? Well let's read; Vayomer - so the angel says; Al tishlach yadecha el hana'ar - Abraham don't stretch out your hand against the child, don't do anything to him; Ki atah yadati - because now I know, oh look; Ki yarei Elokim atah - that you are a fearer of G-d, you do fear G-d. You are afraid. So the opposite of don't be afraid is you do fear, you fear G-d in this case.

Now what else? Is there anything about this phrase here - we've been talking about this as phrase number 1, after this introduction, I am the G-d of your father, don't be afraid - what about going down to Egypt? Is going down to Egypt the opposite of the rest of this phrase over here, this last phrase; Ki atah yadati - I know; Ki yarei Elokim atah - that you fear G-d? Now; V'loh chasachta et bincha et

yechidcha mimeni - and you have not withheld your only son from me. So if we just kind of play that out, we might say, well why is Jacob going down to Egypt? Well he's going down to Egypt to re-unite with his son. So what would you say the opposite of uniting with your son? The opposite of uniting with your son would be parting with your son. Well let's look at this. Don't fear going down to Egypt to unite with your son, over here, do fear - you do fear, and then the very next idea is; V'loh chasachta et bincha et yechidcha mimeni - Abraham you didn't withhold your son, in other words, you were willing to part with your son and give your son for Me. You didn't withhold your son, you were willing to part with your son. Over here Jacob is going down to re-unite with son, over here Abraham is doing the opposite, he is parting with his son.

Okay so now the truth is, these parallels continue and they're a little technical, so I just want to pull back from this kind of technical textual work with you which kind of requires a lot of concentration, to sort of

- you can ease back in your seats for a minute, let's sort of ruminate about what the meaning of all this might be. What does all this mean? First of all the general question why are we hearing echoes of the Akeidah over here in Genesis Chapter 46? What does this have to do with the Akeidah? If in the beginning we heard about an Akeidah story in Genesis Chapter 37, the story of the sale of Yosef, so we had some theories about that, maybe Yaakov was testing Yosef, it was kind of like an Akeidah test.

Maybe it's an Akeidah test gone awry that G-d hijacks, and we came up with some ideas. But what are we hearing about this at the end of the Joseph story?

I mean it does seem to kind of confirm that it wasn't our imagination that we were hearing Akeidah parallels in the Joseph story because lo and behold we're hearing more Akeidah parallels at the end of the Joseph story, so it kind of confirms our suspicion that we weren't crazy, that something is going on here. But what is going on here? What's the meaning of this? Why all of a sudden nine, 10 chapters after Chapter 37 the sale of Yosef, am I all of a sudden hearing - coming back in major chords - all of these Akeidah parallels? And, how come they're backwards and reverse? They're in reverse chronological order, the ideas are backwards, everything is backwards. As we'll see - if we continue going through this you'll see the rest of the speech there's more backwards Akeidah parallels. I mean it's wild, why are we seeing this? What do you think the meaning of this backwards Akeidah is? That is going to be exactly what we're going to pick up our next video discussing.

Why are we hearing such strong echoes of the Akeidah - the Binding of Isaac, in Genesis Chapter 46 when Yaakov is going out to meet his son in Egypt? That question, I think, really divides into questions. Question number 1 is why now? What is happening over here in Chapter 46 that seems to bear these echoes of the Akeidah, why should these things be connected? So if at some point we're going to hear these other echoes of the Akeidah in the Joseph story, why now? And another way of phrasing the question, really kind of both leads you to the same place, is what does it mean? What is the Torah trying to teach us by layering in these parallels to the Akeidah? Is it just a playful literary device for no reason? Probably not, there is a meaning to these kinds of things, what does it mean?

Let's begin with the why now part of the question, why now? What's happening now? What's happening now is that Jacob is going to meet his son. What would that have to do with the Akeidah story? So a clue here again is just to go back to these parallels, what are these parallels about? They're really - again, towards the end of the Akeidah story, that's what they're about, even if you think about this little diagram over here, these words, Jacob, Jacob, followed by here I am, these are the words which over here in the Akeidah story were spoken by the angel at the end of the story, when the angel stays Abraham's hand. Then right after these parallels over here, when you actually get this Divine communication between G-d and Jacob, so what we've begun to see is that all of this over here is mirroring what happens at the end of the story of the Akeidah when the angel finally starts talking to Avraham and says don't do it and I'm going to bless you. So the copious - I would say maybe the bulk of the parallels in Genesis 46 are really towards the end of the Akeidah, and maybe that's a clue to what's going on here.

Maybe the real question we should be asking is when does it end? If the story of the sale of Joseph is an Akeidah story when does that story end?

So when does the Akeidah story implicit in the sale of Joseph end? In other words, if we accept this premise that somehow maybe there's this test going on, Jacob is testing his son in some way, shape or form, along the lines, say, that G-d is testing Abraham to see whether Abraham is worthy in some way, in this case to see whether Yosef is maybe worthy of being his Bechor - of being his firstborn, whatever that means. But if that's true, if we accept that premise that it is an Akeidah story, an interesting question is when does that end? So the traditional Akeidah story - in other words, the actual Akeidah - the actual Akeidah - the Binding of Isaac, ended of course when Isaac was saved from death, that's what happens at the end of the story. The angel comes out in the pieces which we've been seeing, and says Abraham don't do it, and then Abraham gets blessed and that over here is the end of the Akeidah. So the end of the Akeidah happens when Isaac's life was saved.

So that would mean that if we believe that the sale of Yosef is an Akeidah story, that Yaakov is dispatching him on this test, there's this potential for doom, Yosef is going to die, in the end he doesn't really die. So we might say when does that story end? The story ends when - when what? When would that Akeidah story end in the sale of Joseph? Well we know of course that in the end it looks like Joseph is going to die, he almost dies, he almost gets killed in the pit but in the end Yosef is saved, Yosef remains alive.

But you see that possibility that the Akeidah story sort of ends here, is a little bit tricky. The reason why it's tricky is because of this. You see, when is it that Abraham's original Akeidah test is over? One way of saying it's over is it's over when Yitzchak is saved. But another way of saying it's over is that it's over when Avraham finds out that Yitzchak is not going to die. You see it doesn't really make much of a difference in the context of the Akeidah which way you say it because both of these events are simultaneous. We, the reader, find out that Yitzchak is saved just around the same point in the text that Avraham finds out that Yitzchak is saved. Right there when the angel comes out of the clouds that's when we the reader realize that oh Yitzchak isn't going to die, and that's when Avraham actually living the story realizes oh Yitzchak is not going to die, here's the angel, he says don't do it. So these events are simultaneous.

But if we project that actually into the Yosef story those events aren't simultaneous anymore. In other words, if we buy the idea that we're dealing with sort of an Akeidah test sort of engineered by Jacob, and Yosef is sent down and maybe he's going to die, so when is that test over? Is it over when we the reader find out that Yosef is actually saved? Well when does that happen? That happens at the end of Genesis 37

- at the end of Bereishit Lamed-Zayin, when of course we find out that Reuven said, oh let's not kill him, and Yehuda sold him to the Ishmaelites. If we go back to the original Akeidah parallels over here in the sale of Yosef, so it ends right over here when Yosef is actually saved, and in fact we've got these Akeidah parallels - over here shaded - which seems to indicate this is Yosef being saved. V'yad al tishlechu bo. That's the language of the angel, don't stretch out your hand against him. Vayisu eineihem vayiru v'hinei orchat Yishmaelim ba'ah m'Gilad - with the Ishmaelites come it's like the ram, there's an alternative to slaughter. So all of this makes a lot of sense, and this is one way of seeing the end of the Akeidah story, it ends right over here.

You see, but that's only from our perspective, that's just sort of from the reader's perspective. Or you might say in the story it's also the perspective of the brothers, the brothers realize that Yosef is going to live at this point. But who doesn't realize it? The person who doesn't realize it is dad, father, Yaakov doesn't realize it. When is the story over from Yaakov's perspective? Yaakov thinks that Yosef dies that day, he gets a bloody coat back, when does he realize that oh in the end Yosef is alive? That his child makes it out alive just like Yitzchak made it out alive from this great test. Well that only happens in - oh yes - Genesis Chapter 46.

Right? That's exactly what's happening in Genesis 46, look at these events. Genesis 45. So the brothers come and they tell, Yosef is alive, and he sees this; Vatechi ruach Yaakov - and he lights up and he realizes; Od Yosef beni chai - my child is alive, let me go see him. This is the end of the Akeidah story, and all of a sudden you start hearing these Akeidah parallels. Oh, Yaakov is going to Be'er Sheva, oh he's offering these offerings to the G-d of Isaac, oh here Yaakov, Yaakov, and he's saying Hineini. It's - because the Akeidah is over, this is the end of the Akeidah from Yaakov's perspective.

So what's happening, according to this chart really, is really something very elegant, which is, that the sort of Akeidah test is over. We hear that the Akeidah test is over by this flourish of Akeidah parallels when on the one hand Yosef is actually saved, when we the reader and the brothers realize that Yosef is

going to be saved. But the test is also over from a different perspective when father finds out that Yosef is saved, and that happens over here in Bereishis Mem-Vav - in Genesis 46, and perhaps that accounts for all these parallels here.

But we would be remiss in saying that we've really solved all the problems here. Perhaps we've gotten some insight into why now. That problem maybe. But what does it all mean? I think we've just begun to scratch the surface there. What does it all mean that we're hearing echoes of the Akeidah? Here we've got to really relate to the fact that they're not regular echoes, there are backwards, they're reverse echoes. Why am I hearing backwards and reverse echoes? What would it mean - what do you think the significance, the larger meaning of echoes that are not straightforward but are backwards and reverse? I think when we ponder that, and we look carefully at the text of Chapter 46, what it is that G-d is really saying to Yaakov, we'll understand why it is that we're hearing about the Akeidah now and why it is that we're hearing about it backwards. Give it some thought, join me in the next video, let's talk about it.

Okay, so let's see if we can develop some sort of credible theory for what this all means. Why is it that we're hearing this backwards and reverse Akeidah story over here in Chapter 46? We talked about why now, why this might be an appropriate time for kind of the conclusion of the story, but this backwards, reverse story, what's going on here? So I think the answer will take us back again to a careful look at the text. If we just continue to chart the sort of reverse parallels I think they'll lead us kind of in the direction of an answer.

Let's just see where we were up to. We had talked about all of these parallels over here, which is kind of the prelude to G-d coming out of the clouds, as it were, and speaking to Jacob after he finds out that Joseph is alive. That reminded us of the events that took place before the angel, so to speak, comes out of the clouds and speaks to Abraham and says, don't touch the child. Then we began to look at the actual content of what it is that G-d says to Jacob in this vision, and we showed how there are four different parts to it, and we talked about part number 1 and part number 4. We saw that part number 1 seems to echo the end of the first speech that the angel makes over here, this is the echo of 1. Then part 4 over here seems to be echoed over here in the beginning. So all this we did before.

Okay so the parts which we haven't yet talked about in this speech that G-d makes to Jacob over here in Chapter 46, is the part that I've bounded here with this orange rectangle, and that would be what we had earlier called the second piece of the speech and the third piece of the speech. So where are we going to find - or will we find any echoes of this second section of the speech and the third section of the speech, do we find any echoes of the Akeidah there? So we pretty much talked about the whole speech involving the first angel to Abraham, we saw that - that's where we saw our parallels 1 [to/and 2:02] 4. So we might actually look to the second speech to see the parallels to 2 and 3 over here. In fact, believe it or not, that actually is where these parallels show up.

Right over here, I'll use another orange triangle to show you where they are, and you don't quite have the same reverse pattern over here in terms of order, but you do kind of have the reverse, I think, at least in terms of the themes, or in terms of the significance. So let's kind of take a look at it. I'm just going to shade the parts that I'm talking about to make it a little bit easier.

So let's take this part of the Akeidah, the second angel, remember comes out of the clouds and says, I swear by the name of the G-d that because you've done this thing and you haven't held back your son, your only son. So then we have over here in verse 17 that I will bless you; Ki barech avarechecha - I will surely bless you; V'harbah arbeh et zaracha kekochvei hashomayim v'kachol asher al sefat hayam - I will greatly increase your children like the stars of the heavens and like the sand of the seas. So does that remind us of anything over here, the idea of having lots and lots of children? The answer is yes, it absolutely does, it reminds us of this piece over here, number 2. So let's just color-code that. In the Akeidah Avraham was promised that he would have progeny as numerous as the stars, and over here; Ki l'goy gadol asimcha sham - for in fact I will make you into a great nation there, sounds like the same thing. Jacob is going to be made into a great nation and over here, Abraham, the grandfather, he's going to have lots of children, so it sounds like the same idea.

So it sounds sort of like this breaks our pattern because it sounds like this is not the reverse of the idea, it's actually the same idea. But if you look very carefully it's actually - something subtle is going on. Let's read these words very carefully over here in Genesis 46, what's the promise that G-d makes to Jacob? Ki l'goy gadol - I will make you into a great nation, but where? Asimcha sham - I will make you into a great nation over there in Egypt. You see there's no mention of that over here. As a matter of fact, if you're just reading through the Akeidah it doesn't sort of sound like that's going to happen in Egypt, it's just - I'll make you into a great nation and you'll go and you'll conquer the land, the idea right over here. So it sounds like it's going to be great. I'll make you into a great nation, you won't have to worry about your enemies, I'll conquer your enemies for you, you'll be there in the land. But all of a sudden over here, we learn that no, no, no, where is it that Jacob, Abraham's progeny, is going to become a great nation? L'goy gadol asimcha sham - that's going to happen in Egypt. We of course know that that's going to happen actually in a condition of slavery.

So Jacob is also told he'll become a great nation but it's going to happen in Egypt. So an interesting contrast. Not quite a reverse but a contrast. It's not quite as happy as we have over here.

Finally, if we take one last look at the last element which we haven't talked about yet, which is going to be element 3 over here; Onochi eired imcha Mitzrayma v'onochi a'alcha gam aloh - G-d says I will go down with you into Egypt, and I will go back up with you out of Egypt. Of course there's no mention of the intervening slavery. As we talked about before, Jacob is on this need-to-know basis, he's not actually told about that. But there's this sort of dark, implicit idea that you're going to die there, it's going to be a while until you finally come out, G-d will eventually take you out. Of course, the reader of Exodus, the next book in the Torah, knows that what takes place in between is many, many years of painful servitude. So is there an echo of this in the Akeidah?

The answer is of course yes, there is that backwards echo. If we clear some of the ink off the screen you see it right over here. In the Akeidah Abraham was told that his children would actually vanquish their enemies and conquer their land, well what's the opposite of vanquishing your enemies and conquering their land? It's actually being subjugated by your enemies in their land. Being conquered by them not in your land but in their land. In fact, that's what happens over here. Jacob hears something that sounds like not so bad, don't worry Jacob I'll go down with you to Egypt, I'll come back up with you, but what's in fact happening there - what is implied, is that in the interim there's going to be slavery. You're going to be subjugated by your enemies, the opposite.

In other words, it's not just that there are backwards and reverse parallels, the meaning of what's happening over here is backwards and reverse, all around. It's almost as if what we have here is a backwards Akeidah story. Literally an unraveling of the Akeidah story. You see the reverse order and the reverse significance when you add it up what's [unclear 6:12] about putting things in backwards, chronological order, and the reverse significance of each of event is kind of leading you to a general overall conclusion. I want to argue, that those great, exciting promises of the Akeidah; land and children, everything is going to be great, you're going to have all these children, they're all going to go into land, they are disintegrating. Now they're not disintegrating in the sense that they're not going to come true,

they will still come true but they're going to be delayed by centuries. It's not going to happen immediately. It's going to take a long time to happen and before that, there's going to be this sort of disastrous period. It's beginning with Jacob doing down to Egypt and of course, Jacob doesn't get out Egypt so fast, there's slavery, hundreds of years of slavery that beset his progeny in Egypt.

So it's like this Akeidah story that began in Chapter 37 and is ending over here in Chapter 46, ends up being a disaster. It sort of begins with a disaster, which is the sale of Joseph, it's a test of Joseph perhaps gone awry, hijacked by G-d, almost for G-d's own purposes. Coming to a fruition really again for G-d's own purposes, to bring us ultimately into Egypt and bring us into slavery. The beginnings of that are the sale of Joseph.

What I want to do with you next is to sort of zoom out the zoom lens and to try to look at this story over here which we were just focusing on, the sale of Joseph and its aftermath Chapter 37 and Chapter 46, to zoom out a little bit more and to see this in the broad context of what's happening in Genesis. I have been talking about these two promises of the Akeidah; the promises of land and children, the forefathers are going to have this increased progeny and they're going to come into the land. I want to trace sort of a little bit of the timeline of pieces of Abraham's life and of Jacob's life to try to understand how it is that these promises of land and children are developing, and the significance really of the sale of

Joseph - again, as part of that larger picture. So let's come back and begin to take a look at that larger

picture in our next video.

Hi everybody, Rabbi David Fohrman back with you. Okay, to pull back the zoom lens to really start to appreciate the significance of this sort of backwards Akeidah event; the sale of Joseph and its ramifications in Jewish History, in Biblical history, I want to just again remind you of something I think I may have mentioned it to you before. But this idea of what I call the folly of reading with the end in mind. One of the problems with the way we read Biblical text is a lot of times we know the story too well. We know the story too well, you imagine to yourself that it sort of has to end the way that you know that it ends, but just because it happened to end the way that we know that it actually ended in history, doesn't mean that it was inevitable for it to end that way. It could have happened differently. I think there's no greater example of this than the prophecy that Abraham gets in Genesis Chapter 15 - in Bereishis Tet-Vav, what's known as the Bris Bein Ha'besarim - the covenant between the pieces. We talked a little bit about this before, but I just want to refresh your memory because I think it really sets up how to understand the sale of Joseph within the larger context of what's happening in Sefer Bereishit.

That is the following; we all know - we all think we know that Egyptian slavery was prophesized to Abraham. In Chapter 15 Abraham is told that his children are going to be slaves and they're going to be slaves for 400 years, and we all know this is going to happen. But again, as I mentioned to you before, that promise in actuality developed into Egyptian slavery but it didn't necessarily have to be Egyptian slavery. In other words, you can't read with the end in mind. The ultimate way that this prophecy happened to come to fruition was from the Jews spending actually 210 years - not 400 years - in Egyptian slavery, but you'll never find the word Egypt mentioned once over here.

Vayomer l'Avram yodo'ah teidah - you should surely know; Ki ger yiheye zaracha b'eretz loh lahem - your progeny are going to be sojourners in a land not their own. And a land not their own could be anywhere. V'avodum - and they will be slaves; V'inui otam arbah me'ot shanah - and they'll be enslaved for 400 years. Didn't even end up being 400 years. V'gam et hagoy asher ya'avodu dan onochi - even this nation that subjugates them I will judge them and then they'll come out; B'rechush gadol - with a great amount of wealth. Don't worry Abraham it won't happen to you, you'll be buried in a ripe old age.

Then this mysterious prophecy; V'dor revi'i yashuvu heinah - the fourth generation will return here.

There's so many elements of ambiguity of exactly what this will mean. The fourth generation - what does that mean exactly? You're going to come out with a great amount of wealth. Well it's true the Jews came out of Egypt with a great amount of wealth, G-d saw to it [and that 2:44]. But again, there's so many things that are fluid, where is it going to be? Exactly when is it going to be? Is it going to be four generations from now? Or will it be later? Four hundred years? Again, as it happens, the Medieval Commentators struggle to figure out the 400 years, you have to start it from before the Jews came down to Egypt, from earlier times.

I mentioned to you before Rabbi Soloveitchik's theory that Jacob in fact thought that this whole prophecy, this promise of slavery, was actually coming true through to him. He was in his father-in-law Lavan's house, he was in a position which looked a lot like slavery. He looked like he was being oppressed. He made sure to come out B'rechush Gadol - with a lot of wealth. He thinks of himself as the fourth generation who is going to return. And, as we talked about before, it's possible that he wasn't

wrong, it wasn't necessarily that he was wrong, maybe it could have been true? I mean interestingly enough, as I think I mentioned to you before, he ends up being in, so to speak, slavery in his father-in- law's house for 21 years, the Jews end up being in slavery for 210 years. It's an interesting kind of correspondence 21 and 210, it almost seems as if what Jacob lives out as a personal person, as a microcosm, later on the Jews enact on a the macro level. It's just a macro version of what he experienced in his own life. Maybe it could have been that this would have been the fulfillment of Abraham's prophecy. History didn't end up working out that way but perhaps history could have worked that way, maybe something changed.

This, I think, it begins to give us the platform to understand the deep significance of Mechirat Yosef - the sale of Joseph, because that's when it changed. That's when - we know at that point that it's not going to be this little microcosmic thing that's going to be the fulfillment of Abraham's promise, but the Jews in Chapter 46 are on their way down to Egypt, there's going to be a macro version of this, there's going to be the 210 years of slavery.

By the way, what's particularly intriguing about this theory that maybe Jacob was right, is you could sort of even test it. Maybe Jacob wasn't so wrong when he thought that Abraham's prophecy could be fulfilled through him, that his experience in his father-in-law's household might have been the fulfillment of that prophecy. Because there's this very intriguing set of parallels actually between Jacob's experience in his father-in-law's house and the Jews' experience in Egypt. I'll just kind of quickly list some of them, it's really kind of remarkable.

Here's what happens when Jacob is in the house of Lavan. So if you remember here he is, he's on the lam, he's running away from his brother, so he comes to just stay for a little while, but he ends up staying there for a long time. He just thinks that he's coming for Yamim Achadim - just a few days, he tells his mother, but he ends up being there for, again, 21 years. Next thing, there's this sort of deceptive descent into slavery, Lavan isn't really so honest with him. He says; Hachi achi atah va'avadetani chinam - so you're my brother, you should work for nothing? Who said anything about work? Before he knows it, Jacob is working, he's in his house, and then Lavan keeps on switching around the deal, and before he knows it he's in this dependent position and can't really get out of it, and he's there for 21 years. This very difficult, sort of backbreaking work.

If you look at the persona of Lavan himself, he starts out as a father figure, but ends up kind of being a slave driver - he's literally a father figure. At the end Yaakov takes great wealth from Lavan on the way out. Remember there's this whole story, there's Divine intervention, where there are these goats and he's going to have the spotted and the speckled goats and he ends up getting a tremendous amount of wealth due to Divine intervention. When he leaves, he leaves sort of deceptively, he leaves in the middle of the night and Lavan when he finds out, he chases after Yaakov. Not only does he chase after Yaakov, he eventually catches up to Yaakov. And of course the grand total of the time in Lavan's house, 21years.

Now if you take each one of these color-coded elements you can actually match them up with events that happen over here, the Jews in the house of Egypt. Every one of these things, the brown, the orange,

the lavender, the - it all happens and just watch. Remember Yaakov comes to stay for a bit ends up settling for a long time, that's exactly how the Jews ended up [coming to 6:48] Egypt, they tell Pharaoh we're just coming for a little while, until the famine breaks, well they end up staying there for 210 years. There's the same sort of deceptive descent into slavery, the same kind of backbreaking work. The Jews first they get subjected to taxation, the taxation eventually evolves into slavery, same kind of thing that you had with Jacob. Remember how Lavan started out as a father figure and ended up being a slave driver? Well Pharaoh, the original Pharaoh at least, what was his relationship to Joseph like? Very much like a father figure. He actually gives Joseph a new name, he actually gives him a wife, he loves him, he takes care of him, he's exactly like a father figure. What kind of person gives you a new name? What kind of person gives you a wife? It's like your father. But Pharaoh - or the next Pharaoh - ends up being a slave driver.

Do you remember how Yaakov takes great wealth from Lavan on the way out due to Divine intervention? Exactly the same thing that happens with the Jews, the Jews take great wealth from Egypt on the way out, G-d goes and gives the Chen Ha'am Hazeh - gives grace to the people in the eyes of their Egyptian neighbors. The Jews go into the Egyptian households and say, hi, can we have some stuff? Can we borrow some things? The neighbors just give them all this great wealth and the Jews walk out with great wealth from Egypt. Remember how Lavan chased after Yaakov? Pharaoh once the Jews leave chases after the Jews. Same language by the way; Vayirdof, exactly the same verb. When Lavan catches up to them same language as Pharaoh catching up; Vayasigem - same language as Vayaseg. Time in Lavan's house 21 years, time in Pharaoh's house 210 years.

So it really looks like Jacob wasn't really wrong, maybe it could have been that this was the fulfillment of the promise. Indeed when the promise is actually fulfilled in history as we know it, the exact same events happen. It seems like he wasn't really so off the mark. So again if we read without the end in mind, the possibility exists that this could have been the real deal.

That, I think, again, is the necessary platform for understanding the development of the promises of land and children throughout the Book of Bereishit, and for in particular understanding the cataclysmic effect of the sale of Yosef. This sort of backwards Akeidah, what I'm calling sort of unraveling or temporary delay - delay by a factor of centuries - in the realization of the promises, the blessings of the Akeidah.

That the Jews will get their own land, will come into the land of Canaan, will inherit it, will conquer their enemies and will be a great nation. We're going to come back and explore exactly how [this is so 9:13] in the next video.

Hi there, Rabbi Fohrman here. So if we look at these promises of land and children - these are like the two dual promises that the forefathers; Abraham, Isaac and Jacob all receive from G-d. Their children are going to inherit the land on the one hand and they're going to have a multitude of children. Together these come together as this is like nation building, right? A nation is built out of land on the one hand but you have to have people to inhabit the land, lots of children, lots of progeny on the other, coming together politically and when that happens you have a nation.

So there's this promise of land and children that Abraham gets and he gets this over and over again throughout his life. It happens in the beginning of Lech Lecha, just about the first time we meet Abraham we hear this promise that he's going to go and his name is going to be very great and he'll have lots of children. Then shortly thereafter he's promised that he's going to get the land and he's going to have the land forever. Then there's a fourth and climactic time that he gets these promises and that actually is in the aftermath of the Akeidah. And we've seen that's when the angel comes out of the clouds and says, because you've done this and you haven't withheld your son, I'm going to greatly increase your progeny, they'll be like the stars of the heaven, like the sand of the sea and your children are going to come in and they're going to conquer the land. Everything sounds wonderful.

So let's just watch how these promises develop. Let's just read some text together. So Abraham dies and he has one child that's going to carry the things on, and if you're Isaac - you're Yitzchak, what do you think your job is? What's your mission? Your mission is kind of make this promise come true. My father was told that he's going to have land, he's going to have children, here I am, I'm in Israel, but then all of a sudden there's a famine. Vayehi ro'ov ba'aretz milvad haro'ov harishon asher hayah b'yemei Avraham - there is this famine and Yitzchak goes to Avimelech; Melech Plishtim Gerarah - he goes to the land of the Philistines which is on the just the outskirts of the land of Israel. G-d actually appears to him and says, no, don't go actually down to Egypt where there's a lot more food; Shechon ba'aretz asher omar eilecha - just stay over here; Gur ba'aretz hazot - stay here, sojourn here in this land, and I will be with you and I will bless you. Why? Because; Ki lecha ulezaracha eten et kol ha'aratzot ha-Kel - because I'm going to give this land to you and to your progeny, and I'm going to fulfill this promise that I've made to Abraham your father.

If you look at this text carefully, if you are Yitzchak, you think, well I'm going to be the one through which these Abraham-idic promises are going to come true. I'm supposed to have lots of children, I'm supposed to stay in this land, because this is going to be our land. But there's actually something very subtle over here, which is this language over here. You see in Hebrew there are different verbs for to be somewhere. On the one hand you could say; Gur ba'aretz hazot - which literally means sojourn. Literally Ger can mean stranger, be a stranger in the land, it doesn't actually mean it's yours yet. In a subtle kind of way G-d is hinting, I'm not necessarily saying that this is going to be yours, I'm just saying stay here. It's not necessarily happening yet that you're taking possession of the land. The word for taking possession is more Vayeishev, Leishev - to settle in the land, and you don't get that word here in G-d's promises. But there is this idea that you're going to start having lots of children; V'hirbeiti et zaracha kekochvei hashomayim - you're going to have children like the sands of the seas, we've heard this language before, like the stars of the heavens.

So Yitzchak does what it is that G-d asks. Vayeishev Yitzchak b'Gerar - although not quite, if you look at it. Because G-d had said, stay in this land - using the language of Ger, Gur - sojourn in the land, over here look at the language; Vayeishev - he's dwelling in Gerar. He dwells there and what happens is, is that he amasses a lot of wealth and the Plishtim - the Philistines, look at him as just a sojourner in the area, someone who doesn't really have a right to be in the area. Yet he's settling in the land and they become very jealous of him. Vayigdal ha'ish vayeilech haloch v'gadel ad ki gadal me'od - he became very rich, and when he was very rich he started getting into these fights with the Philistines about all of these wells and the Philistines got into these wars with him, where Isaac was digging these wells, he was desperately trying to take possession of the land, and the Philistines dug up all the wells.

So finally Yitzchak manages to dig a well and not have the Philistines fight over it. So over here in verse

22. Vayachpor be'er acheret v'loh ravu aleha - they didn't dispute it; Vayikra shema Rechovot - and finally he called it - the name of the well - Rechovot; Vayomer ki atah hirchiv Hashem lanu uparinu ba'aretz - finally, he says, G-d has given us some space and allowed us to have our progeny here and to be fruitful in the land. You see by the way, what he thinks. He thinks finally it's happening, finally it's coming true, finally I'm beginning to do what I'm supposed to do, which is actually build a nation here in this land.

Well interestingly, sort of chillingly, look where he goes; Vaya'al misham Be'er Shovah - and then he goes from there to Be'er Sheva, and then G-d appears to him in a vision in the middle of the night.

Hmm, we've heard this before, haven't we? We just actually finished talking about a vision in the middle of the night. A vision in the middle of the night that takes place in Be'er Sheva. The one we were talking about happens years later to Yitzchak's child Yaakov, but years before that when Yitzchak himself was on the run he too had a vision in Be'er Sheva, and actually it's a very similar vision to what his son will have.

G-d comes to him in this dream at night and says; Onochi Elokei Avraham avicha - I am the G-d of your fathers - you remember by the way how Jacob heard, I am the G-d of your father Isaac, well Isaac now a generation earlier, hears I am the G-d of your father Abraham. Al tirah - do not fear - fascinating, that's exactly the same thing that Jacob heard a generation later; Do not fear. Do not fear, G-d tells to Yitzchak now; Ki itcha onochi - because I will be with you; U'beirachticha v'hirbeiti et zaracha ba'avur Avraham avdi - don't worry, everything will be fine, you'll have lots of children. Sounds great, right?

Just like a generation later, everything sounds great with what G-d tells to Yaakov.

Except just like then how a generation later it wasn't just what G-d said but what G-d didn't say, so too here, it's not just what G-d says, but what G-d didn't say. There - remember a generation later when G- d is talking to Jacob, there's no explicit reference to Egyptian slavery, but it's there between the lines.

Don't worry Jacob if you go down to Egypt I'll go down with you, I'll come back with you, you'll die there, everything will be good. The unspoken idea you're going to be there for 210 years. Here too there's this little piece of things which G-d is not saying. The significance of this is in what G-d is not saying, not what G-d is saying. What is G-d saying? Remember there's always the promise of land and children - what is G-d talking about? G-d is talking about children, He's not talking about land. What was it that Isaac was focused on? Isaac was focused upon land. Remember he was building these wells, he

was clearing these wells, I'll finally have this well, they haven't disputed me; Atah hirchiv Hashem lanu - finally it's by the grace of G-d we have this well. G-d is saying, sort of without saying - G-d is saying implicitly, hey look, you're going to have lots of children, you'll eventually get the land but not now.

Remember? I told you sojourn in the land, don't settle in the land, sojourn there, you're not there for good yet.

Okay, so here we are in Genesis Chapter 26 and look what happens next. Isaac calls the place Shivah, that's how it gets its name Be'er Sheva, and then the next thing we hear about here is that Eisav - remember Isaac has two children Eisav and Yaakov - so Eisav is 40 years old and he takes a wife, Yehudit Bat Be'eri. Interestingly, Yehudit the daughter of Be'eri. Be'eri a play off of the word well. Yehudit the daughter Be'eri haChiti v'et Basmat bat Eilon haChiti. Vatiheyena morat ruach l'Yitzchak ul'Rivkah - however, these wives were of bitterness of spirit to Isaac and to Rebecca, they didn't like them, they felt that these were not appropriate wives.

But the very next story interestingly enough, if we just fast-forward here to Genesis 27, the very next Perek - the very next chapter, Yitzchak is old and he's blessing his children, he has to figure out who to bless. Who is he going to pass on this blessing of Abraham to? Well what's the last thing G-d told him? The last thing G-d told him was, hmm don't focus so much on land, your main thing is children. Well if his main job is to have lots of children - I have two children here, I have Eisav on the one hand and I have Yaakov, and one of these is going to have to carry on the promise, you know, one of the things Eisav has going for him is that at least he got married. On the one hand he got married, but his wives - is this the kind of family that I want carrying on my name? It's a challenge and then we have the story of the deception of Yitzchak, where Yaakov with Rebecca conspire to deceive him and Yaakov walks away with the blessings of Abraham.

In the aftermath of that blessing the focus is still on children, Yitzchak tells Yaakov - he blesses him and says, whatever you do, don't you disappoint me, don't take a wife from the wives of Canaan, take a wife from the family. Go. Go to Lavan's household and find a wife. He sends him out to Lavan's household and it falls to Yaakov to somehow be the one who is going to carry this promise forward. If you're Yaakov you're thinking, okay what's my job? I'm leaving the land of Israel, I guess I'm not going to be so focused on land, but I'm supposed to go and start this nation, I'm supposed to have lots of children, and I want to be able to fulfill this promise. And that, I think, provides the setting for the dream that Yaakov has as he's leaving the land of Israel, running away from the hatred - from the bitterness of Eisav, who he just deceived and took the blessing that was actually intended for him.

So here Yaakov is, he's on his way out of the land of Israel, and all of a sudden he has a dream. And listen to the dream. In the dream G-d is at the top of a ladder and G-d says, the land that you are sleeping upon

- you're about to leave Israel but this land that you're sleeping upon; Lecha etnenah ul'zarechah - I will give it to you and to your progeny. Ve'haya zaracha - and here's the promise, the promise of children - Ve'haya zaracha k'aphar ha'aretz. But look carefully at that promise of children, you'll see that it's interlaced - kind of subtly - with the promise of land. Listen to this metaphor; Your children will be like the dust of the earth; Upharatzta yamah va'keidmah v'tzafona va'negbah - you'll go north, south, east and

west, and through you blessing will come into the world. You could be excused for thinking - I mean it's like this metaphor is a land metaphor that's talking about children. Your children are going to be like what? Like dust of the land.

Here indeed is the next promise; V'hinei onochi imoch - and don't worry I will be with you; Ushemarticha b'chol asher teilech - and I will watch you; Va'hashivoticha el ha'adamah hazot - and these are words that will echo on throughout history, so pay attention to them; Hashivoticha el ha'adamah hazot - I will return you to this land, here's the promise of land. You will eventually come back here and when you do, don't worry; Loh e'ezavcha - I will not leave you; Ad asher im asiti et asher dibarti loch - until I have done for you what it is that I promised you.

So if you're Yaakov and you get this promise what do you think? Well you think okay, what's my job? I'm going to have lots of children, they're going to be like dust of the land and then G-d is going to come and bring me back and I'll go into the land, and I'll settle the land, and I'll start to build this nation. Lo and behold what happens? He goes into Lavan's house spends 21 years there, feels like it's slavery, looks at himself and says, hey - as we talked about before - I think I'm the fourth generation. Abraham generation number 1, Yitzchak generation number 2, me, Yaakov, generation number 3, Yosef my Bechor, my firstborn child from Rachel, the woman I was always supposed to marry, generation number 4, time to leave, time to go back to the land. This was the promise of Abraham, that after four generations you're going to go back to the land. I need to go and fulfill my promise. I'm going to go into the land, I'm going to have these children, I'm going to bring my children into the land, and it all happens together.

It all looks like it's going to happen together because again, look at this language; Ve'haya zaracha k'aphar ha'aretz - these two promises are interwoven - seem to be interwoven, the promise of land and children it will all happen together. I'm going to go back into the land, G-d promised He wouldn't leave me, and look 21 years later, He didn't leave me and He brought me back. You could imagine the euphoria of Yaakov leaving the house of Lavan and thinking I'm going back into the land and I am going to be the one to fulfill this promise.

So now keeping all this in mind, take a look at Yaakov introducing the idea of leaving Lavan's house to Rachel and Leah his wives, after the birth of Yosef. So he tells them that G-d appeared to me and G-d says; Onochi ha-Kel Beit E-l - I am the G-d of Beit E-l. Where is Beit E-l? Beit E-l was actually the place that he had that dream when he was leaving the land of Israel, where G-d said, don't worry, I will take care of you; Va'hashivoticha - and I will bring you back. Again Va'hashivoticha - I will bring you back. I'm just going to write out that word over here and I want you to pay attention to it, and in particular, its root. Hashivoticha - I will return you, the root word over here is Shav. Shav can mean a few different things depending on context. It can mean return, it can mean settle or sit. It probably can mean a couple of other things too, but let's start with this.

So; Onochi ha-Kel Beit E-l asher mashachta sham matzeiva asher nadarta li sham neder - and He says remember you made a promise to Me there, you promised that you would tithe your possessions if I did

what I said to you. So; Atah kum - I am G-d and I say to you, I am the G-d who appeared to you before, that it's time to go. Tzei min ha'aretz hazot - time to leave this land of exile, Lavan's land, it's time to return; Shuv - here is this word; V'shuv el eretz moladetecha - to the land of your birthplace, to the land of Israel. You know if you're Yaakov what does this language imply to you? It sounds like the dream is coming true. This was G-d's promise; Va'hashivoticha el ha'adamah hazot - I will return you and now

G-d is coming to him and saying, go, return, it's happening now, go return to the land. The implied message seemingly, go into the land and he thinks he'll take possession of the land, it's going to be yours, bring all your children back, everything is going to be great. The dream is coming true, you're coming back to the land, you're going to establish the nation of Abraham there.

Of course on the way out, Jacob meets up with Eisav, he's scared seeing Eisav for the first time, the brother that he deceived, he thinks Eisav might destroy him, he goes and appeals to G-d. But listen how he appeals to G-d. Vayomer Yaakov - and Yaakov says; The G-d of my fathers, the G-d that told me; Shuv l'artzecha ulemoladetecha - You are the one who told me to leave, You told me that the promises are coming true, go back to the land, I will do good for you. Please take care of me, please don't allow Eisav to destroy me. You promised I would have lots of children, You promised that I would go back to the land. Land and children together one more time.

As it happens, Yaakov is not destroyed by Eisav, he succeeds, he survives the encounter, he comes back and he's coming back into the land of Israel. At that point G-d seems to confirm everything that he's thinking. G-d says to him, I am G-d, be fruitful and multiply; Prei u'reveih - there's the promise of children and he says; V'et ha'aretz asher natati l'Avraham ul'Yitzchak lecha etnenah - I'm giving you the land, I'm giving it to your progeny, go into the land. Land and children together. It's always land and children together. It looks like again the dream is alive, the dream is really happening.

In many ways, the circle really is complete here. Where is Yaakov? Over here in Genesis 32, on his way out from Lavan's household, after he's encountered Eisav, Yaakov finds himself in Beit E-l one more time. Beit E-l was that place where he had heard that word the first time; Shev, Hashivoticha - I am going to be with you, I am going to return you. Now, G-d has done it, He's returned him to the land, G-d has done everything He's promised. All that now has to happen is Yaakov to fulfill his part of the bargain he's got to have - bring his children in, he's got to take possession of the land, he's got to build this nation.

Once we understand this, by the way, we understand a very fascinating comment of Rashi. Take a look at this verse over here. This is the first verse of the Joseph story. The Joseph story takes place right after all of this, right after Yaakov leaves the house of his father-in-law Lavan, right after he survives the encounter with Eisav, right after he shows up in Beit E-l on his way into the land and offered these offerings to G-d, praising Him for letting him come into the land and bring his children in and fulfill these promises. Look at this word, very first word of the Joseph story; Vayeishev Yaakov - it all goes back to G-d's promise. G-d had said, I will return you - and as I mentioned to you before - the word can mean return but the word Shav - Shin, Beit is the root - can also mean settle. In fact, that's exactly what Yaakov is doing here. It's like the fulfillment of this Hashivoticha promise, not only have you returned

me, but now I am settling in the land, this is what I'm supposed to do, I am taking possession of the land.

Yitzchak wasn't able to do it, he was just a Ger, he just sojourned - and that by the way is the meaning of

- look at the contrast over here. Vayeishev Yaakov b'eretz megurei aviv - Yaakov is finally settling in the land that his fathers had only succeeded in sojourning. They were Geirim, they were mere sojourners.

Not Yaakov, Yaakov is settling there, and he's going to be the one - he thinks he's going to make this promise happen. The four generations are complete, I've gone through the slavery, I've gone through the promise of that your children will be slaves in another land, and you're going to come back after four generations - he thinks it's happening.

Now read Rashi; Vayeishev Yaakov - Yaakov settled. What does that mean? Bikesh Yaakov leishev b'shalva - Yaakov at that point wanted to live in tranquility, he thought his life was over. He thought he did what he was supposed to do, he went through a lot, he deceived his brother, he paid for it, he was in this kind of slavery, in this Egypt-like land, in the land of Lavan. He finally comes home, he survived another encounter with his brother, he's supposed to be the one to finally fulfill this promise to go in the land and settle there and finally he can live in tranquility. What happened? It wasn't to be. Why? Kofatz alav rogzo shel Yosef - the strife involving Joseph and his brothers caught up with him, jumped on him, and all of a sudden the promise started to disintegrate. Yes, Yaakov was still going to get land and children but at the end of it all land and children will not come together. You'll become great nation but you'll become a great nation in Egypt. The 21 years in the house of Lavan in the end will not be enough, there's going to be 210 years in the house of Egypt.

Interesting, when was it that Yaakov had to spend 21 years in the house of Lavan? What propelled Yaakov to go into slavery in the Lavan story? The event immediately preceding that, was he deceived his father over the child his father thought was his firstborn. Remember that was the struggle; Yitzchak had thought that Eisav was the firstborn, that Eisav was the child that was supposed to get the blessing.

Yaakov had other ideas, he was a murky firstborn, Yaakov had bought the firstborn from him, who really has the firstborn? Well Isaac has one idea, the father, but Yaakov has another idea, he ends up deceiving him. Interesting, he deceives him with what? Yaakov dresses up with coats made of the skins of animals, the coats of Eisav and kills a goat and gives it to his father. Deceptions involving a Bechor, involving a firstborn, involving goats and coats, where a father thinks that one person is the firstborn, but the child thinks someone else is the firstborn. What does this remind you of? It reminds you a lot of the story of Joseph and his brothers.

Rashi; Kofatz alav rogzo shel Yosef - it's happening again. When in Yaakov's generation his own children deceived him, taking a goat and slaughtering it and putting blood on the coat and bringing it to his father and said, do you recognize this? When Yaakov had his idea about who his Bechor was, Yosef, but it was a murky Bechor, and the brothers had ideas of somebody else being the Bechor, of Reuven the first child of Leah being the Bechor, and they deceived their father. You were doing nothing but the same thing that Yaakov himself had done to Yitzchak. And Yaakov in the wake of that, was propelled into 21 years of slavery, and now the brothers and their children will be propelled into 210 years of slavery, in a macrocosmic re-enactment of Yaakov's life in the house of Lavan.

In the words of the Medrash that Rashi quotes, when Yaakov was Vayeishev - Yaakov settled in the land, G-d says, you want to settle in the land and be tranquility? Tzadikkim mevakshim leishev b'shalva - righteous people want to live in tranquility, you don't get to live in tranquility in your life. Omar Hakadosh Baruch Hu - the Master of the Universe said; Loh dayan l'tzadikkim mah shemetukan lahem l'olam habo, elah shemevakshim leishev b'shalva b'olam hazeh - you want to live in tranquility not just in the next world but in this world too? Life isn't always so easy and life is not so easy for Yaakov here.

When we come back I want to trace for you the continuing story of this word, of this root, Hashivoticha; this elusive promise that G-d makes; I will return you to the land, I will take care of you, you will go back to the land. Yes, He did, He did return him, but it wasn't the end of the story. If you keep on reading our story and you keep on watching out for this root, you'll find some very, very interesting and surprising things. I'll see you in the next video.

Okay, Rabbi Fohrman back with you, and in our last video we've been sort of tracing the evolution of this word right over here - this word which is the opening word, interestingly, in the Joseph story, and which has its source, I want to argue, in the promise that G-d makes to Yaakov much earlier back at Beit E-l. And says; Va'hashivoticha el ha'adamah hazot - don't you worry about a thing Yaakov, I will return you to this land. So here Yaakov is, we talked about it before, he's settling in this land that his parents had only succeeded in sojourning earlier - both his grandfather and his father - and now keep your eye on this word over here, permutations of Vayeishev, later on in the Joseph story. Next time we have that word in the Joseph story, chillingly enough, is right when Yaakov sends Yosef to check on his brothers.

Remember we had talked about the interesting possible meanings of this phrase. He says, go check on your brothers; V'hashiveini davar - and bring me back word. Earlier, we had talked about the possibility that there's a double entendre right over here with this word Davar - bring me back word, that if you trace the Davars earlier we see these ideas that Yosef was unable to speak with his brothers in peace; V'loh yachlu dabro l'shalom. Dabro is a variation on the word Davar. It's almost as if Yaakov is saying, bring me back word, tell me what's the deal with you not being able to speak with your brothers in peace. Are you able to resolve that or not? The possibility that this was a kind of test.

But it's not just the word Davar which may be at play, whose meaning may relate to the other uses of Davar in the story. It's also this word over here because this is our favorite word, we've been looking at this, Hashiveini of course is a playoff of Hashivoticha, what it was that G-d had promised Yaakov. G-d had said; Va'hashivoticha el ha'adamah hazot - I will bring you back, and now; Hashiveini davar. So there's another interesting possible meaning here, which is that if you relate this Hashiveini to G-d's original promise using these words, it's kind of coincidental that Yaakov just sort of happens to use these words. It's almost as if there's an unintended meaning in Yaakov's words, that on the one hand the plain meaning of the text is that Yaakov is saying, oh go check on your brothers and bring me back word and see how they're doing. But there's another possibility. G-d had said; Hashivoticha - I will not leave you until I return you to this land - return you. Well what does Hashiveini mean? Hashiveini means return me. Literally return me word, but maybe another possibility is actually physical return me.

What would it mean to physically return Yaakov? Well take a look at this next permutation of this phrase in the Joseph story. Bereishis Mem-Zayin - Genesis 47, right after Genesis 46. In Genesis 46 Yaakov finds out Yosef is alive, he goes to visit Yosef and Yosef hugs his father and he's so happy and he says, here, come, I'll give you a place, you'll be able to settle in the land. And he settles his father in the land. By the way not just as Geirim, not as a Ger, no, no, not as a Ger, not as a sojourner, exactly the opposite, he gives them an Achuzah. Achuzah is the deepest kind of possession you can have - landholders, you'll become actual citizens of Egypt, you'll take possession of the land. Look at this word; Vayoshev Yosef - Yosef settled his father his father there. Or, remember this word Shav can always either mean settle or return, the double meaning is especially chilling, Yosef returned his father. Returned his father to Egypt. In that way he kind of fulfilled the mission didn't he? Ten chapters earlier Yosef had been sent on this mission; Hashiveini davar - return me, return me word. Well in the end he very literally does return him, he returns him to Egypt.

The promises of the Akeidah are disintegrating, are being delayed by centuries. Instead of going into the land of Israel, instead of having an Achuzah, a deep possession in the land of Israel, Yosef is giving them possession in the land of Egypt. Little does any of them know that they will all soon be slaves there for hundreds of years and that this will become the fulfillment of Abraham's promise; Ger yiheye zaracha b'eretz loh lahem - your children will be strangers in a land not their own. Yes, they'll start with an Achuzah, they'll start with landed property, but they will end up becoming strangers and the only place that you'll really get deep possession is in the land that you really belong.

But what's happening is that the Akeidah promises are disintegrating, they're falling apart due to the backwards Akeidah, so to speak. In the original Akeidah you've got the promise of land and children and it seems like those two things are going to come together. Yes, you'll take possession of the land, yes, you'll have all these children and maybe it could have been and maybe Yaakov's time in Lavan's house would have been the times of slavery and then it would have been the fourth generation, everyone would have gone back. But in actual history it was not to be, in actual history this Akeidah over here got reversed.

It starts with Yaakov sending Yosef out to check on his brothers in a test of loyalty, will you be my real Bechor? Can you follow my legacy? G-d had tested Avraham to see if Avraham could be G-d's legacy in the world and now Yaakov, the human father, tests Yosef to see if he can be his legacy. But G-d hijacks that Akeidah, and says, you know, you're going to play Akeidah? Every Akeidah comes with an angel, what are you going to do if the angel says go that a way? They went to Shechem they're no longer in Dotan, then what? And Yosef gets lost and he can't find his brothers and he goes to Shechem because the angel says they went that a way. What then? Then we have the real Akeidah, and G-d takes possession of that story, the story of strife between brothers, of brothers deceiving father over the identity of someone that father thinks is his Bechor, but really isn't his Bechor. A story of goats and coats, another replay of the Jacob and Esau story that led to Yaakov's exile in the house of Lavan. G-d takes the next generation's story of deception and turns it into real exile, an exile for 210 years, as the Akeidah story comes full circle, as the Akeidah story disintegrates into sort of manmade Akeidah that goes awry and becomes hijacked by G-d.

When we come back in our next video I want to go back to our original story - we've zoomed out to look at the entire corpus of most of Genesis now; the story of Avraham, the story of Yitzchak and the story of Yaakov, how this promise of land and children develops and comes to a tragic halt, a tragic digression into Egyptian slavery at the very end of Genesis - the very end of Bereishit. I want to pull in the zoom lens now and come back to the sale of Yosef, Chapter 37. We saw the Akeidah story in Chapter 37, but if you listen very, very closely, and you read 37 again, you'll see that it's not just the Akeidah that we hear echoes of, there's another famous story whose echoes we hear as the brothers sell Yosef. To really understand what's happening in the sale of Yosef we have to relate not just to the Akeidah but to that other story too. Let's come back and see what it is.

Okay, so I left you with a bit of a question. We've been talking to this point about the story of the sale of Yosef here in Chapter 37 and we found these copious parallels between the story of the sale of Yosef and the story of the Akeidah - the Binding of Isaac. In all these different ways, I've just color-coded it over here, and we talked about this before, we've got all these echoes of the Akeidah and we've been talking about the significance of it. But I left you with a challenge and that is, is this the only story which we hear echoed in the sale of Yosef? Is it just about the story of the Akeidah, or is there another sort of mystery story lurking here in the sale of Yosef as well? In other words echoes to another prominent story in the Book of Genesis - in Sefer Bereishis.

So what I want you to do is kind of forget about all these Akeidah echoes at the moment, sort of clear the slate, look at the story of Chapter 37 over here, the sale of Yosef, look at it fresh, kind of read it through and see, is there any other story in the Book of Genesis that you get reminded of as you start reading this? Again, you're going to be looking for actual words, specific words or phrases which kind of seem to remind you of another story. You'll be looking at ideas, images, you just keep on getting reminded of another story. So let's just do this piece by piece and see what it is that we find.

Let's just focus on a little bit of our story of the sale of Yosef, let's take a look at verses 14 and 15 and just in these two verses do you hear any echoes of another story? Okay, so let's kind of read this through together. This is Yaakov sending Yosef out on a journey to meet with his brothers, let's just read it carefully. Vayomer lo - and Yaakov said to Yosef; Lech nah - go please; Re'ei et shelom achecha v'et shelom hatzon - check on the peace of your brothers and on the peace of the sheep - literally the peace of, or more colloquially the welfare of your brothers and welfare of the sheep. V'hashiveini davar - and bring me back word. Vayishlacheihu mei'Emek Chevron vayavoh Shechemah - so he sends him from the valley of Chevron and Yosef comes to Shechem. In Hebrew this Heih at the end of a word over here, especially at the end of a place, means that you're going towards the place. He came to Shechem, he's going towards Shechem, so the word Shechem is Shin, Chaf, Mem, the Heih just gets added and it means he's going towards Shechem, he's coming into Shechem.

In any case; Vayimtza'eihu ish - so a person finds him, this guy finds him - we talked about earlier the Sages say - Chazal say - that this is the angel Gabriel - the Malach Gavriel. V'hinei to'eh basadeh - and it turns out that Yosef was lost, he was wandering in the fields. Vayishaleihu ha'ish leimor - and the man asked him and said; Mah tevakesh - what is it that you're seeking?

Okay, so two very simple verses here, 14 and 15, are there any echoes of another story in Bereishis here?

Okay, so first just a little piece of methodology here that I want to share with you, when you're looking for echoes, when you're looking at intertextual connections between various texts, occasionally there is some word or phrase or something which is so unusual that the phrase itself only appears one other time in Tanach. There's this phrase over here and this phrase over there, and that's the beginning of you might have a pretty good hunch that because there's this very, very unusual phrase over here and it appears over here, that there might be in fact a connection between these stories. If you find other connections it sort of supports that.

But that's not the only kind of way that intertextual connections work. Occasionally there can be a preponderance of very usual and ordinary and mundane phrases, each of which seems completely ordinary and appears everywhere in Tanach, but the confluence of all of them together is very, very unusual. To give you an analogy of this. If I were to take a quarter over here and I would flip it and you would say, okay, you think it's going to come up heads or you think it's going to come up tails? So let's say I say, well, I bet it's going to come up heads and let's say in fact the coin comes us heads, would you be impressed? Would you say there's something unusual about this? You would say no. I mean there's a 50/50 chance you predicted it right, big deal, you got lucky. But let's say we flipped the same coin again and before we flipped it, you asked me and I said, you know I think it's going to turn up heads again, and lo and behold it turns up heads again, at that point would you get suspicious? So you'll say no, not that suspicious, there's a 50 per cent chance that this would happen, there's a 50 per cent chance that this would happen. If you do the math, there's a 25 per cent chance that both of them will happen, not so unusual.

But let's say I flip the coin 10 times and I predicted before each of them that it's going to come up heads, it's going to come up heads, it's going to come heads, and in fact, each one of these times it came up heads. You know at some point you would have to say, well that's kind of unusual, the chance of this happening was 25 per cent, the chance of this happening was 12 and a half per cent, the chance of this happening is six per cent, the chance of the next time it happening is three per cent. At some point you have to think that the more likely explanation is not that I just happened to be getting this right, but that there's a weighted coin or maybe both sides are heads or something like that, but something is going on. Something is going on.

In other words, what I'm trying to show you here is that you can take a very ordinary event, which is a coin being flipped and turning into heads, but if that ordinary event happens a bunch of times, it's not so ordinary anymore. So, so too in intertextual connections you can have one word which is very ordinary, you can have another phrase which is very ordinary and you can have a third phrase which is very ordinary. Each one of those phrases themselves is very ordinary but the confluences of those phrases together is very unusual and those phrases appearing together happens maybe one other place in Tanach and then it's kind of like an indication that maybe there's a larger connection between these two texts that seem to have these confluences of phrases together.

Let me give you an idea of what I'm talking about over here in the sale of Yosef, because I think something like that is going on over here. So if we read this verse again, 14, so one of the very ordinary words which shows up over here is; Vayishlacheihu - he sent him. Now a lot of people get sent in Tanach, it happens a zillion times, so no big deal if there's another text elsewhere in Tanach that has the phrase he sent him, there's lots of texts that have that phrase. But then you have another phrase over here which is Shechem, the city of Shechem. Well the city of Shechem - Shechem - is mentioned a few times elsewhere, so no big deal if I find another text with the word Shechem in it. But what about a text that has sending right in the same proximity as Shechem? Well you know, a little bit less often. But then let's take something else, wandering, specifically this word for wandering, a fairly unusual word, To'eh. You have it a couple of times in Tanach, not so often.

But what if I showed you that there was another place in Tanach - there was another place not just in Tanach but in Genesis - where you had all three of these elements? You had Vayishlacheihu - element 1. You had Shechem - element number 2. And you had wandering with this particular word for wandering

- 3. In the same way that you have all of these things happening right here within the space of just a few words, in that other story in Genesis you also have these same elements happening together in a space of just a few words. Then you might say, well you know maybe something is going on. I don't know for sure but maybe there's a connection between these stories.

So let's look for it. Let's say in what other story besides the sale of Yosef do we have these words - and just to make it a little bit more fun, not only do we have these words, but we have the same sort of things happening? So in what other story do we have a parent sending out a child, where the word Shalach is used to describe that, and Shechem is a place involved in the story? And what other story, in addition to all of those elements, do we have the same Hebrew verb To'eh to describe the wandering that the child does, because it turns out that the child gets lost? So in what other story does a parent send out a child, Shechem is involved and after the child gets sent out the child gets lost and the same words are used to describe the sending, to describe the lost, and to describe the Shechem? What other story folks are we talking about? Let's come back next video and discuss it.

Okay, so last time we were together I asked you to think about what other story besides the sale of Yosef does a parent send a child away from him using this word Shalach? Is Shechem involved in the act of sending? And once the child is sent, the child gets lost and starts wandering and we have this particular word, the Hebrew word To'eh? So now you may or may not have come up with what it is that I'm thinking of, but you might have also been thinking, well, I don't know, I don't consider this so remarkable, that would be unremarkable to me. You might say, that's kind of interesting Fohrman if you can find that, but just because - I don't consider it very unusual that the word Shalach would be used, and parent sending a child from him, yeah okay, and then once the child gets sent the word gets To'eh, yeah I guess so, that would be - I suppose that's kind of remarkable. But are there any more connections between this other mystery story that you're talking about and the story that we're talking about, the sale of Joseph, that - I think that the author as it were is really trying to show me that these two stories are connected in that internet kind of way, that sort of web-like link between stories? That these stories are really linked in some deep way with each other. So are there any other connections you might say, is there anything else?

Well, as it happens there are other connections, so I'm going to point them out here and see if it makes the other story particularly obvious and sort of jump out at you. So if we add to this list later another relative of the child, not the parent that sent him, but another relative of the child will cast him down. Here there's the word Shalach. Now this is kind of interesting because see these words look the same - almost the same in English, they sound the same in Hebrew but they're not actually the same. The first time - see this word over here that's used to describe Yaakov sending Joseph, this word Shalach means send, so it ends with this letter Chet over here. When you spell this root with a Chet - Shin, Lamed, Chet - then in fact it means send. However, Shalach can turn into another word that sounds similar to it, Shalach, but it's spelled this way, and when it's spelled that way as a verb, Shin, Lamed, Chaf, so then this final Chaf over here is going to change its meaning not from send, to cast down.

So what happens is that in the story of the sale of Yosef this sending that happens in the beginning of the story when Yaakov sends Yosef, turns into Shalach when another relative - that is to say the brothers, when they take Yosef and they cast him in the pit. There's that word Shalach, but this time it's this word over here with a Chaf - Shin, Lamed, Chaf - cast down. They cast down Yosef into a pit. It turns out the other story that I'm thinking about also has this interesting transformation between Shalach with a Chet and Shalach with a Chaf. There too there is a parent that sends a child using the word send first, and then later on there's another relative that casts that child down. You know, pretty remarkable, we're already, I think, in the area where we would say if you could find these kinds of connections in another story, that doesn't seem so coincidental. That's sort of like a coin turning heads too many times to just be coincidence. But, wait, there's more. There's other connections between these stories.

So here's another connection. After the relative of the child casts him down, after the brothers in our case cast Yosef into the pit, they then go down and they sit - remember what happens, the brothers go and they sit a distance away, they sit down to eat bread. The Rashbam is going to point out - we're going to talk about this soon - they probably didn't sit down right next to the pit, it's not so nice to eat a picnic when you can hear your brother screaming from the pit to be rescued. So they sat down a little distance

away. It turns out that in this other story I'm thinking of, also the relative who cast the child down then goes and sits a distance away. Do you know what story I'm talking about yet? What other story in Genesis has all these hallmarks?

But there's still more. Remember how there was no water in this story. Where was there no water in this story? When the brothers throw Joseph in the pit it says; V'habor reik ein boh mayim - there was no water. It turns out that in this other story I'm thinking about there was also no water. Did you get the story yet? Let's keep on going, there's more connections. Remember how in our story there was bread but there was no water? What do you mean there was bread, there was no water? What do the brothers do after they cast Joseph into a pit that had no water in it they sat down and they ate bread, that's what happened in our story - in the story of the sale of Joseph. Well, it turns out that in this other story there's also bread. There might not be any water but there's bread.

Finally, you remember how Joseph he ends up in Egypt, Joseph goes down to Egypt? Turns out that in this other story I'm thinking of, the sent-away child also ends up in Egypt. Not only does he end up in Egypt, but what happens to Joseph in Egypt? Remember how Joseph goes to Egypt and then Pharaoh is eventually going to go and hear his dreams and be really excited and Pharaoh is going to give him a wife? So Joseph ends up marrying in Egypt. Well this other child also ends up marrying in Egypt.

So what other story has all of these elements? Not just one, not just two; 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 elements, all of these elements, any one of which you might just say, yeah, whatever, it's just a coincidence, but eight of them in a row in another story, with all these words connecting them? Doesn't sound so coincidental. What other story am I thinking about?

So let's come back in the next video and I promise I will reveal to you what story I am thinking of and we'll see if we kind of came up with the same thing? See you then.

Okay, the other story with all of these connections I believe is the story of the expulsion of Yishmael - the expulsion of Ishmael. I'm going to put the two texts up side by side on the screen to you and I want to show you the comparisons. Let's just go over the story of the expulsion of Ishmael so we know what we're talking about. Just to kind of re-familiarize ourselves with it. Here we have the two texts side by side, you have the sale of Yosef which we're pretty familiar with by now, but a few chapters before this, about 16 chapters before this, we had the story in Bereishit of the expulsion of Yishmael. Here's the basic background to the story.

So Avraham, the father of the Jewish people - Abraham over here in English - so he's promised by G-d that he's going to have a child that's going to carry on his legacy. Now the first child that he has is actually not the child that ends up being the father along with Abraham of the Jewish people, but it's actually Yishmael or Ishmael in English. Ishmael is fathered by a union between Avraham and Hagar. It turns out that Hagar is actually the maidservant of Avraham's wife which is Sarah, and Sarah at some point in the story is worried that she's not going to have children so she gives Hagar as a maidservant to Avraham, and the union of Avraham and Hagar produces Yishmael.

Now later on things don't really work out between Sarah, Hagar and Avraham, and Sarah demands that Avraham expel Hagar from the family. Hagar should be expelled from the family, he should divorce her and Yishmael is not going to end up inheriting along with her child Isaac. Because she ends up having a child, her child becomes Isaac - Yitzchak, and tensions develop between Yitzchak and Yishmael, Yishmael is mocking Yitzchak, it's not a good atmosphere. At some point the tensions become so great that Sarah thinks that Yishmael shouldn't be in the house anymore, that Hagar and Yishmael need to leave. Now Avraham does not like this idea, he thinks it's a bad idea. Avraham consults G-d, G-d comes down on the side of Sarah, and says yes it's true you have to listen to her, you have to send away Hagar.

Okay, so now let's pick up in the text and see what happens. So; Vayashkem Avraham baboker - so Avraham wakes up early in the morning; Vayikach lechem v'cheimat mayim - and he takes some provisions, he takes bread, he takes a canteen of water, and; Vayiten el Hagar sam al shichmah - and he gives them to Hagar and places these things on her shoulder; V'et hayeled - and also gives her the child Yishmael. Vayeshalcheha - and he sends her away; Vateilech vateisah bamidbar Be'er Shovah - and she goes and she wanders in the desert in Be'er Sheva.

So now if you're thinking about this, right over here in this verse you begin to hear some of these connections. At this point it could be coincidental, but you see some of these connections, for example, this word over here; Vayishlacheihu. Back over here in the story of the sale of Yosef remember Yaakov sends Yosef to check on his brothers; Vayishlacheihu mei'Emek Chevron. And that same word for sending over here is exactly what Avraham does, Avraham sends away Hagar. So Yaakov sends away Yosef, and Avraham sends away Hagar, and his child Yishmael.

Okay, and now just to chart the continuing connections, what happens to Yosef after father sends him away? This happens. He gets lost; V'hinei to'eh basadeh. Interesting, what happens to Yishmael and Hagar after they get sent away? Well they get lost; Vateilech vateisah bamidbar Be'er Shovah - they

wander in the desert. Yosef is wandering, Yishmael is wandering. Same verb used for wandering over here, this is the same Shoresh; Taf, Ayin, Heih. Taf, Ayin, Heih is the Shoresh over here. You don't see these exact same letters but the verb is coming from the same three-letter root.

Okay, now here we come to the part where you almost get thrown off the trail and this, I have to admit, very wicked of me was really a kind of trick question. I'm going to come clean now with you and admit my sins. So remember I asked you how the city Shechem appears in this other story too? That's true but it's not quite true. Yaakov sends Yosef to check on his brothers in Shechem, but remember how I told you how there was an extra Heih in this word, that even though the name of the place that Yosef is sent to is Shechem, but over here it's read as Shechemah, but the Heih - because the Heih means that he's going towards Shechem. Now here's the interesting thing to keep in mind. All of these vowels over here underneath the consonants - these over here in the Hebrew of course are the vowels - so these vowels don't actually appear in a Torah scroll. In a Torah scroll all you see is the letters themselves, so you would see Shechem as this without any of the vowels, and the vowels are implied and you have to figure them out on their own. Shin, Chaf, Mem, Heih. So the question is where else, in what other story, do we have a parent sending away a child - Shalach, Hinei to'eh basadeh - the child getting lost, and consonants happening at the same time with Shin, Chaf, Mem, Heih?

It turns out that before Shechem was a place, Shechem was a shoulder. When Avraham places the jug of water and the bread on Hagar's shoulder, look at this word; Shin, Chaf, Mem, Heih. Shin, Chaf, Mem, Heih. Now as it turns out, just in case you were wondering, Shin, Chaf, Mem, Heih is not that popular a confluence of consonants in the Torah. How many times do you think that word Shin, Chaf, Mem, Heih - whatever it means whether shoulder or Shechem - actually appears in the Torah? The answer is actually there are only three instances, three times this appears and two out of these three times in the Torah are right over here in the story of the sale of Joseph on the one hand and the story of the expulsion of Yishmael on the other.

Now if you take all of this together, and you say, how many times do you have Shalach, and Shechem, and To'eh - the confluence of all of this - how many times do you have that together in a short space? The only other time in all of Tanach - in all of the Bible; it includes all the thousands of pages of Prophets, Writings and the Torah and everything, Tanach together, the only other time you have it is right over here.

Remember it's not just the words that are the same, it's not just the fact that we have this word, this word and this word, that's mirrored by this word, this word and this word, but the kind of stuff that's happening is the same. We have a father sending out a son - we have a father sending out a son. After the son is sent out the son gets lost - the son gets lost. So it's the kinds of things that are happening in one story are happening in the other story too.

Now remember these are not the only connections, the connections that appear over here in 14 and 15 deepen once we go a little bit further in the story and we look at verses 24 and 25. So let's look at those verses. So keeping 24 and 25 in the background, let's keep this in our minds as we read the story of the

expulsion of Yishmael and see what mirrors this over here in the story of the expulsion of Yishmael. Of course in the story of Joseph, Yosef is taken and he's cast in the pit by his brothers and all of that. Let's read over here in the expulsion of Yishmael verse 15.

Vayichlu hamayim min ha'cheimet - so remember that Abraham had sent out Yishmael and had sent Yishmael and Hagar with a canteen of water and with bread. So what happens is; Vayichlu hamayim min ha'cheimet - the water ends up getting used up, so there's no more water. Vatashleich et hayeled tachat achad hasichim - and at this point she casts the child down underneath some bramble branches. At that point; Vateilech vateishev lah minegged - she then sits herself far away; Harchek k'metachavei keshet - about as far as you could shoot a bow; Ki amrah - because she said to herself; Al ereh b'mot hayaled - I don't want to see the death of the child. Vateishev minegged vatisah et kolah vateivk - and she goes and sits from afar and she lifts up her voice and she cries.

Okay, so now if you listen to that you get all these eerie parallels right over here in the story of the sale of Yosef. Just to mark them off and color-code them with you. Remember we were talking about the two words Shalach; Shalach with a Chet over here and Shalach with a Chaf. So what happens is one Shalach turns into another Shalach. First a parent - in this case Yaakov - sends Yosef away, kind of nicely, gently, with Shalach, but then that turns down to something not so nice where Shalach becomes to cast away when the brothers cast him with a Chaf over here - cast him into a pit. So Shalach with a Chet turns into Shalach with a Chaf. We have the same kind of thing happening over here. Originally Avraham sends Hagar away, then we have the harsher form of the word, Vatashleich, when Hagar in frustration, in anger and frustration at the situation, casts down the child underneath one of the bramble branches.

Sounds like not such a nice thing to do, but she's desperate, she's worried, she thinks her child is going to die, she just can't handle the situation.

At that point she sits far away. Sitting far away, well what does that remind us of? Well the brothers, they kind of sat far away, as again I've mentioned, we'll get to the Rashbam, points out that they wouldn't have eaten bread right there at the pit where Joseph is screaming for help, it doesn't sound so nice. It's really almost exactly the same thing as what is happening in the expulsion of Ishmael story, where the reason why Hagar sits far away is because she says; Al ereh b'mot hayaled - I don't want to see the death of a child. Remember the brothers at this point had been planning on leaving Joseph there to die, that kind of was the plan. Yehuda changes that and says, no, how could we possibly do this, once he sees the caravan of Ishmaelites he says let's sell him to the Ishmaelites. But at this point when they sit down at least the plan would be we're leaving Joseph in the pit and they don't want to be able to witness his end so they go and they busy themselves with eating bread kind of far away. It seems to be an echo of this story over here.

Now remember how there was no water in this story? Ein boh mayim. They took him and they cast him into a pit and the pit was empty, there was no water in it. So do we have no water in this story? We absolutely have no water in this story, right? Vayichlu hamayim min ha'cheimet - the water in the bottle was spent, there was no more water in the bottle. Ah, but remember, there was bread. Vayeishvu le'echol lechem - the brothers sit and they eat bread. Do we have bread in this story? We might not have any

water but we definitely have bread because remember Avraham had given both bread and water to Hagar, the water got used up so there's no more water, but there definitely is bread. So bread there is. So we have irrelevant bread - a lot of good the bread is going to do Yishmael if he's starving and can't have any water. The bread over here is also kind of trivial and irrelevant - certainly not going to help Yosef who is stuck in the pit.

Then if we continue with our parallels, oh isn't that interesting, who should show up? Vayisu eineihem vayiru - the brothers lift up their eyes - they're sitting there eating bread, Joseph is in this pit without any water and; V'hinei orchat Yishmaelim ba'ah m'Gilad - this caravan of who - what kind of traders? Oh look at that, they are Ishmaelites, oh very interesting. The story of the expulsion of Yishmael. Who should come to save Yosef from the pit? But of all people, Yishmael himself or the children of Yishmael as it were.

Finally, look where everyone ends up. Where are the Yishmaelim going? They're going down to Mitzrayim, they're going down to Egypt, Joseph is now being taken down to Egypt where, as we said before, Joseph is going to end up getting married. He's going to find his wife in Egypt. Well guess what happens. Vayeishev bamidbar Paran vatikach lo imo isha me'eretz Mitzrayim - so Hagar goes and takes Yishmael to Egypt where she finds him a wife.

I mean kind of remarkable, wouldn't you say? I mean all of these eight events which are happening over here in the story of the sale of Yosef, every last one of them getting mirrored in the story of the expulsion of Yishmael. So all in all it is not just the case that the story of the sale of Joseph mirrors the Akeidah, it does mirror the Akeidah - the Binding of Isaac, but it mirrors another story just as much as that, the story of expulsion of Yishmael. Now the question is why? What do we take out of that? What would you say the simplest possible explanation we would have of that? What meaning do we understand in these parallels? What is the Torah trying to get across to us? So let's come back and discuss that.

Hi, Rabbi Fohrman back with you. So the question is what does this all mean? We've been seeing these copious parallels, kind of hard to ignore, between the story of the sale of Yosef on the one hand and not just the Akeidah - the Binding of Isaac, but the expulsion of Yishmael. Two stories involving Avraham's children; the Akeidah - the Binding of Isaac on the one hand and the expulsion of Yishmael on the other hand. Just to put it all together, to kind of color-code it, and you'll see it, it's really very striking.

So the question is what does it all mean? So I have a theory and I want to share it with you and I kind of think that the simplest explanation here is what kind of story is the expulsion of Yishmael? What was happening over here? You get a hint of it right over here - if we go back to this Rashi that we talked about before, this issue of how many coats was Yosef stripped of? Remember that seemingly strange comment of Rashi on this point over here the repetition in the verse; Vayafshitu et Yosef et kutanto - on the one hand they stripped Joseph of his coat and then it says after that; Et ketonet hapasim asher alav - they stripped him of his special coat that he had. We have this idea mentioned twice, first they stripped him of his coat and then they stripped him of his special coat. Rashi makes the point, which we talked about before, that there were two coats that Yosef was stripped of.

We said why is Rashi bothered with these trivialities? We suggested it wasn't really trivialities, that Rashi kind of with a wink and a nod - or the Medrash over here, Bereishit Rabah, with a wink and a nod, is alluding to something. It's alluding, as we argued, to the double portion. Et Kutanto: Zeh chaluk - all of the brothers had a coat, but; Et ketonet hapasim asher alav - when it says a second time he was stripped of his special coat; Hu she'hosif lo aviv - this was his special coat that he had added upon the other coats that; Yoter al echov - that the other brothers had. So all the brothers had one coat, Joseph had two coats, we said, what does that remind us of? It reminds us, as we argued, of the double portion. Of course the double portion is the double portion of the Bechor - the firstborn child. What Rashi is suggesting is that Yaakov is treating Yosef as a Bechor in giving him this coat.

But if we go back to this point we'll find, I believe, that that's not the only thing Rashi is suggesting. Rashi is suggesting something else too. Not just that Yaakov in giving Yosef the special coat was a Bechor, but now, go to this question, again, how many coats was Yosef stripped of? He was stripped of two coats, this coat and that coat. Well what does that suggest that the brothers were doing? In other words, symbolically if you suggest that the special coat is the coat which intimates that Yosef is the Bechor, so now let me ask you, what's the not special coat, what's the regular coat? The regular coat is the coat that all brothers had. The regular coat is something that you have if you're just a brother. Well, how many coats was Yosef stripped of? Yosef was stripped of two coats. That means not only did the brothers take him of this coat, they also took off this, coat, they took off both coats.

We might argue that the symbolic significance of the brothers taking off not just the coat of the Bechor but every coat - the coat that all the brothers had - is what they were really saying to him is not only are you not the Bechor, you're not even a brother. What they're doing is they're actually expelling Yosef from the family. The expulsion of Yishmael. From their perspective this story is an expulsion story.

That's really what the story of the expulsion of Yishmael is about, it's about a child no longer being seen as the heir of the father. Ishmael is no longer the heir of Abraham; he's the biological child but he's no

longer part of the family in some larger social sense, and from the brothers' perspective perhaps, that's exactly what they're doing. They're taking both coats. They're saying, not only are you not the Bechor, you're not even part of the family from our perspective.

You can see it also from another interesting comment that Rashi says, really a very poignant comment that also comes from the Medrash. Remember that part where Yosef on his way down to Shechem so he meets that guy, that fellow, that mystery man, and that mystery man ends up - in the words of the Sages

- being an angel. That's this fellow over here. So let's just read this again. Vayimtza'eihu ish - so a man finds him; V'hinei to'eh basadeh - he's wandering in the field; Vayishaleihu ha'ish - so the man asks him; Mah tevakesh - what is it that you're seeking? What seekest thou - if we take the 1917 archaic translation from JPS. So Yosef says; Vayomer et achai onochi mevakesh - I'm seeking my brothers; Hagidah nah li eifo heim ro'im - where are they shepherding? If we see it in this kind of light, this is actually a kind of - a specially poignant thing. You know, I'm looking for my brothers. I'm looking for my brothers. Of course this is the theme, brothers. Are they his brothers?

Now listen to what the man says - this man/angel according to the Sages. Vayomer ha'ish - so the man says; Nasu mizeh - they're not here anymore; Shamati omrim nelchah Dotana - I heard them saying let's go to Dotan. Now there's something grammatically a little bit strange about this. What's strange about it is this word over here; Mizeh. You see if you want to say they already left here, the word in Hebrew for here is Poh. So if it said they left here already, if that's what they were going to say, it should have said; Nasu mipoh. It doesn't say that, it says; Nasu mizeh. Mizeh literally means from this. But you wouldn't say that about a place, they left from this, you would say they left from here, [you wouldn't say 5:51] they left from this. Notice by the way that even the usually good 1917 JPS translation fudges it over here; And the man said they are departed hence - they have departed hence. Hence is kind of like a fudge, I don't even know what that means in this context. But hence really means sort of from here, doesn't mean from this, it would have been very, very awkward to say that they left from this. So this is the grammatical issue over here.

Now the Sages pick up on that and make a Medrashic comment and suggest that there's sort of a double meaning to Mizeh. In the simple words it means what it has implied over here, which is it's as if he said Mipoh, which is just that the man said, well they left here already. But in another sense it means they left this - i.e. in other words they left a certain state of being. They left this. What did they leave? Well what did Yosef ask? Well if you go back to the angel's question, the angel said, what is it that you're seeking? Yosef had said I'm seeing my brothers. The man says they left that already, i.e. they are no longer your brothers.

This in fact is exactly how the Medrash understand this. Medrash again is the most ancient form of [unclear 7:06] commentary, Rashi here quotes it. Nasu mizeh - they left from here. What do you mean they left from this? Heisi'u atzman min ha'achva - they travelled away from brotherhood, they are no longer your brothers, you are seeking your brothers, they left that already.

So in other words, it's almost as if the angel Gabriel as on the one hand he's sending him off into this

fearsome Akeidah test, into what's going to be this disastrous situation, he's going to get put into the pit. On the other hand in the sort of double entendre meaning is, that there's a warning, there's a veiled warning that he's giving him, which is you're looking for your brothers, they've left that behind already, they don't see themselves that way. They don't see themselves as your brothers.

Interestingly by the way, I'm just going to quote the Ramban. I just have it here in Hebrew, in Rashi script, so I'm just going to read it through with you. The Ramban notes that Rashi afterwards says; V'ein mikrah yotzeh midei peshuto - that the Rabbis in the Medrash said that it means that they left this and that means they left behind brotherhood. But the simple meaning, the simple meaning of the Pshat is that they left here already. The Ramban says but you have to really understand carefully what's happening with Medrash - and this goes back to a point which I actually made in another course about ways to understand Medrash. That Medrash should not be confused with the Pshat - the simple meaning, of the text, Medrash is offering sort of an almost sub-conscious of the text. Meaning the same way that your total consciousness is a merger of your conscious and subconscious minds, it's almost as if the real meaning of text is this sort of simple meaning but the Sages are occasionally pointing you to things that are happening deeper, just underneath the surface of the text. That's how the Ramban kind of understands this. You have to understand this Medrashic comment as alluding to a secondary meaning in the verse.

Listen just - I'm just going to read through the Ramban with you, it's kind of fascinating how he puts it. Ein hakavonah l'raboteinu - you shouldn't understand that when the Sages say that the man was saying they left from this that they left from brotherhood. Sheyifaresh lo ha'ish - that means that the man actually said; Nasu mizeh min ha'achva - that they have left brotherhood behind. They're not explaining the Pshat. They're not explaining the simple meaning of the text. The simple meaning is that they left from here. He said they left from this. She'im kein - because if that had been the simple meaning of the text, if he really said that - in other words, what did he really say? He didn't say they left brotherhood behind, he said they left this behind and that in the simple meaning sort of just means they left this area behind. Because if - the Ramban continues - the man had actually gone and said they left brotherhood behind; Hayah nimnah lalechet - well of course Joseph wouldn't have gone. V'loh hayah mesaken b'atzmoh - he wasn't going to willingly put himself in the lion's den.

Aval hakavonah - what it means, what the Sages are saying, is; Ki ha'ish Gavriel - that this man who they say is an angel; Asher higgid lo - that told him they left here - that even though he was sort of pointing him towards the situation which was a doom-like situation; Higgid emet - he actually told the truth; V'amar lashon meshamesh l'shenei panim - he actually said something which had a double entendre.

This of course is what much of Medrash is about, the sort of double entendre, the second meaning. There was a secondary meaning in his words. He said something which could be understood in more than one way. U'sheneihem emet - and both are true. On the one hand they're in Dotan, the plain meaning of the text, on the other hand they've left behind - there's a way, there's an implication in they've left this behind, the non-grammatical nature of it suggests this other, secondary meaning, a sort of sub-conscious meaning, they've left behind brotherhood. He was alluding to that even as he was giving Joseph directions and he was saying they went that a way.

The bottom line then as we put this together, we've seen two sets of parallels working at the same time. We've seen these Akeidah parallels - the Binding of Isaac - and we've seen these expulsion of Ishmael parallels. What's the meaning of both them? I want to argue that it's really a matter of perspective. From Yaakov's perspective what is this story? This story is an Akeidah story, I'm testing my Bechor. This is my firstborn is he a worthy firstborn? Is he responsible for these problems? Can he solve these problems? Can he really carry on my legacy? This is an Akeidah story. It's a story of a test. Much like the heavenly father, G-d, tests Avraham, can he carry My legacy forward in the world, so too Jacob the earthly father is testing Joseph, can you carry my legacy forward? But that is the meaning of the story from Yaakov's perspective.

What is the meaning of the story from the brothers' perspective? From their perspective the whole story of Chapter 37 is an expulsion story. If Yaakov is viewing Yosef as his Bechor, the brothers are saying, you're not even our brother; Heisi'u atzman min ha'achva - they've left - in the words of Medrash - brotherhood behind, they're expelling Yosef from the family. Not only is he not a firstborn in their views, they're treating him as if he's not a brother at all.

When we come back in our next video, I want to explore with you something which I've been alluding to a little bit, the Rashbam's view of the story of the sale of Yosef. The Rashbam is a Medieval Commentator, actually the grandson of Rashi himself. The Rashbam has a fascinating way of understanding the whole entire story of the sale of Joseph, which jives with these two perspectives in a very, very fascinating way. I think gives a new understanding to what it means to say that this is an Akeidah story on the one hand and an expulsion of Ishmael story on the other. When we come back I want to introduce the Rashbam to you, and the puzzle which he's seeking to solve. I'll see you in our next video.

Hi Rabbi David Fohrman back with you, today I want to discuss with you three mysteries that pervade the Biblical text, the story of the sale of Joseph. They are subtle mysteries but very powerful ones, and when you add them up they lead to what seems like, I think, a very, very startling conclusion. A conclusion articulated by Rashi's grandson the Rashbam. Rashi known often as the grandfather of the Medieval Commentators, the Rashbam much, much lesser known commentator, but really a [Pashtan 0:53] devoted to understanding that the Peshuto Shel Mikrah - the very simple meaning and direct meaning of the text. Simple meaning of the text is not always simple, it's not always so plain, it's the most obvious meaning of the text, but sometimes the most obvious meaning of the text is very, very un- obvious to see. To give you an example of that, I want to kind of articulate to you the Rashbam's theory about the sale of Yosef. In order to do that we need to discuss these three mysteries that underlie, that underpin the Rashbam's theory.

So let's go to them right now. Mystery number 1. Mystery number 1 is why do the brothers seem to pull their punches when they express regret for the sale of Joseph? Let me explain what I mean by that. There is a point where it's kind of explicit in the text later on in the story - not in Chapter 37 which we've been focusing on, but later on in the story - when the brothers seem to - or actually do - express regret for what they've done in selling Joseph. It happens later on in the story when they actually meet up with Joseph in Egypt. Now they don't know that Joseph is Joseph, they think that Joseph is just this Egyptian official who is in charge of all the grain. Joseph recognizes them, and they do not recognize him. At that point Joseph kind of starts tormenting them and suggests that he's going to actually keep one of them in prison, allow the rest to go back home and that they're going to have make good on their claim that they are upright people, and that they are not spies. He accuses them of being spies and says, if you want to prove that you're not spies, that you're upright people, I need you to come back with the brother that you've left at home. You've left a brother at home, you say you left a brother at home - this of course is Benjamin, the brother that Yaakov insisted they leave at home - come back and bring Benjamin to me to prove that you're not spies.

This is Joseph's request and he says, in order to make sure that you're going to come back, I'm going to actually take one of you prisoners. Im kenim atem achichem echad ye'asser b'beit mishmarchem - I'm going to insist on keeping one of you prisoners over here until you guys return to fetch him. Now go, here's some food, go back and bring me the brother that you said you've left behind.

Now when this happens, the brothers are very troubled by this and they start talking amongst themselves. Now remember, they don't know that the person who the narrator identifies here as Yosef is in fact Joseph, they think he's just this Egyptian official, and most Egyptian officials wouldn't be understanding Hebrew, so they begin talking amongst themselves and they're unaware, a later verse suggests, that Joseph can understand. This is what they say to themselves - say among themselves - as they are talking. Vayomru ish el achiv - one brother says to another; Aval asheimim anachnu - we are guilty for what we've done; Al achinu - for our brother; Asher ra'inu tzarat nafsho behitchaneno eleinu v'loh shamanu - we saw his trouble, we saw his pain as he was pleading to us in the pit; V'loh shamanu - we didn't listen to him. Al kein ba'ah eleinu hatzara hazot - and that's why this trouble has to come to us. We saw his pain and we didn't respond, that's why we are in trouble now and that's why G-d is doing

this to us and this is sort of a heavenly sign that we have done wrong in the sale of Joseph.

Now the problem here - and this is one of the three legs of the Rashbam's theory - the problem here is that the brothers seem to be pulling their punches. They're sort of not telling the whole truth over here. In other words, if you were the brothers, you're going to say, okay what is your guilt? What is it that you've done over here? Well what they've done is they kidnapped another brother and they sold him into slavery, I mean that's what they've done. Notice that they are not saying that, nowhere over here in verse 21 as they talk among themselves and express their guilt do they actually say that they're guilty of having sold their brother. Why are they pulling their punches? Who are they hiding from?

Remember they're talking amongst themselves - Vayomru ish el achiv, they're not talking to the microphone, they're not talking to posterity, they don't know Joseph is listening, they're not trying to hide anything, so there's no reason for them to rose-color this, to sugarcoat this. They know what they did, so why don't they say, oh we are guilty, we sold our brother, it was such a terrible thing, that's why G-d is getting us back? Why do they pull their punches when they have nothing - there's no reputation they're trying to hold onto, trying to salvage. They're being honest, they're speaking amongst themselves, why do they only say that they're guilty for having seen the trouble of their brother and not listening? As if that's their only guilt. They did something much worse than that, they sold him into slavery for goodness sakes, I mean isn't that worse?

Now you could say possibly that one possible answer is maybe that the brothers thought that they were justified. They thought they were justified in selling Joseph as a slave, and if they were justified in selling Joseph as a slave, some suggest that they felt that the only thing that they were guilty of is seeing him pleading there and begging to be saved and not responding. That the only thing that they were guilty of, therefore, is being sort of insensitive to his pleas, but they were not guilty of actually selling him because they were justified in selling him. That actually is what some suggest. It's not what the Rashbam suggests, it's what some suggest.

I want to ask you actually, before we go further, do you find that theory convincing? What do you say to that? Is that a reasonable explanation for you?

So for my money I think that is actually a very unsatisfactory theory. The reason why I think this theory is unsatisfactory is that if you believe that you were justified in selling Yosef, how could you not believe that you were justified in sort of deafening yourself to his cries? I mean, why are you guilty for deafening yourself to his cries, what do you expect Yosef to do? If he's in the pit obviously he's going to be asking for help. If you really think you're justified in selling him for whatever reason you think you're justified, so what do you do, you expect him not to be screaming for help, not to say please help me? Obviously you're going to have to sell him despite the fact that he says please help me, you're obviously going to have to deafen yourself and say, sorry Joseph, it's just what we have to do. Is Joseph really going to be

that much happier if you say, oh poor Joseph, you know we really wish - we feel so sorry that you're

screaming and asking for mercy as we're selling you as a slave? I mean, would that have been helpful? I don't think that would have been terribly helpful. So if you do believe that you were justified regarding

the sale, how could you not believe that you're justified in not responding to his pleas not to be sold?

So again, this is the first of the Rashbam's questions, why do the brothers seem to pull their punches when they express regret for the sale? They're talking amongst themselves, there's no reason they should be pulling their punches, they have nothing to hide, so why don't they just come out and say it? If they believe they're guilty then why don't they just say we're guilty for selling him? Why do they only say we're guilty for not responding to Joseph's plea?

So that is question number 1, this is the first of these three mysteries, mystery number 1. When we come back, I'll introduce you to the other two.