

## Still Brothers

AS WE'VE LIVED THROUGH THE PAST FOUR weeks' Torah portions, a central thread tying the narratives together is that of Yosef's brothers' jealousy of him—and their gradual realization that what they had originally perceived to be reality hadn't really been as it seemed, as well as their subsequent regret and repentance.

It is fascinating to note that, although all of the brothers are lumped together in what was eventually revealed to be an almost heinous crime, there is one notable exception. If there were one person with a real claim against Yosef, it would be Reuven. After all, Reuven was the biological firstborn. Yet for many years he watched Yosef, Yaakov's favorite son, usurp his coveted position, becoming the one son who seemed destined to carry on Yaakov's legacy.

(Granted that Yosef was a bit of a firstborn in his own right—while Reuven was Yaakov's and Leah's firstborn, Yosef was the firstborn of Rachel, the wife who had truly been destined for Yaakov. Even so, it surely must have stung every time Reuven saw the close bond between his father and Yosef.)

Yet we find that Reuven consistently defended Yosef! For example,

[Yosef's brothers] said to each other, "Behold, that 'dreamer' is coming! Let's go now and kill him and throw him into one of the pits. We will say a wild animal devoured him, and then we'll see what becomes of his dreams!"

Reuven heard [this], and he saved [Yosef] from their hands; he said, "Let's *not* kill him!" Reuven said to them, "Don't spill blood! Throw him into this pit, in the wilderness, but don't lay a hand on him!" [He said this] in order to rescue him from their hands [and] return him to his father. (37:19-22)

When Reuven returned, later, to his brothers, and discovered that they had sold Yosef, he tore his garments in mourning and lamented,

"The boy is gone! And I—where will I go?" (37:30)

Years later, as they were being spoken to harshly by the Viceroy of Egypt, Reuven addressed his brothers again.

"Didn't I speak to you, saying, 'Don't sin against the boy?' Yet you didn't listen! And now, behold, his blood is being avenged!" (42:22)

So we are left wondering why the brother who had the biggest excuse to have it in for Yosef attempted to be his unlikely savior. If anything, he should have been leading the charge against him!

Yisroel bowed toward the head of the bed. (47:31)

[Yaakov thanked Hashem for] the fact that his "bed" was complete (that is, his offspring were completely good) and no wicked

person had come from it—for Yosef was a king and, furthermore, he had been a captive among gentiles, yet he had remained righteous. (Rashi's commentary)

Shouldn't Rashi have put the phrases of his explanation in a different order? Didn't Rashi mean to say that Yisroel bowed toward the head of his bed—firstly, because his "bed" was complete, as Yosef had remained righteous even among the gentiles, and secondly, because Yosef had become a king? Why did Rashi fold these two reasons together?

Back when the brothers had been plotting against Yosef, Reuven had a legitimate, unrelated reason to worry. Many years earlier, after Rachel's death, Yaakov had established his main residence in Bilhah's tent. Reuven, jealous for his mother's honor, had moved Yaakov's bed into Leah's tent. This action, while well-intentioned, was such a grave breach of propriety that the Torah (which couches it in very critical terms) immediately reassures us that Reuven was still counted among Yaakov's children. (See 35:22 and Rashi's commentary.) But the very need for the Torah's reassurances shows us that this outcome had not been guaranteed. In fact, Reuven was still engaged in repentance for this up to and including the very moment Yosef was being sold!

"Reuven returned"—He hadn't been there [when Yosef was

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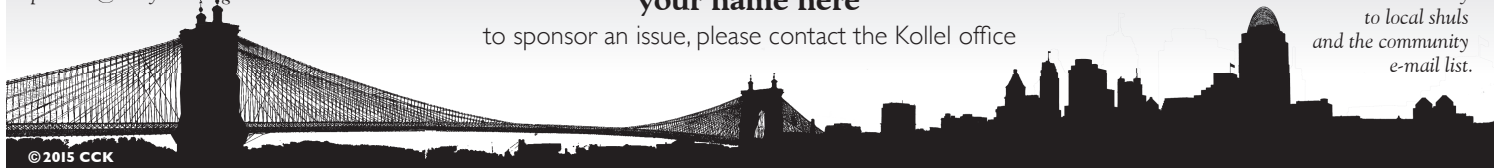
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weekdays: noon–1  
Sunday–Thursday: 8–9:45

## Minyanim for Standard Time

### Shacharis

Sunday .....8:15 AM  
Monday–Friday .....7:20 AM

### Mincha

Sunday *thru January* .....1:15 PM  
Mon.–Thurs. *thru January* .....2:35 PM  
Sunday–Thurs., *Feb.–Mar.* .....5:45 PM  
Shabbos .....2:45 PM

### Ma'ariv

#### In the Beis Midrash:

Sunday–Wednesday .....9:45 PM  
Thursday .....10 PM

## Still Brothers CONTINUED

sold]... for he was engaged in sackcloth and fasting over mixing up his father's couches. (Rashi's commentary to 37:29)

However, there was a slight glimmer of hope, which Reuven clung onto:

[Yosef] dreamt another dream and recounted it to his brothers. "...Behold! The sun, the moon, and eleven stars were bowing down to me." (37:9)

It seemed that Reuven was still being included with his brothers—Yosef had dreamt of eleven stars! Midrash Rabba says that Reuven was therefore indebted ever after to Yosef, for confirming that he was indeed counted among the Tribes. This sense of gratitude wiped away any thoughts of jealousy, however justifiable, that might have cropped up in his mind.

...[Yosef's] father kept an eye on the matter. (37:11)

He was waiting and looking forward to when it would come to pass. (Rashi's commentary)

What exactly was Yaakov waiting for?

Rav Naftali Katz, of blessed memory, (cited by *Ma'ayana Shel Torah*) turns the classic interpretation of this Rashi on its head and explains that although Reuven was relieved at that point, Yaakov was still not convinced—for this might have been merely the dream of an ambitious young man. Yet Yaakov could still hope...

Years later, when he saw that Yosef had indeed become the Viceroy, and the dream had become a reality, Yaakov too could finally relax, confident that all of his sons were counted among the Tribes of Israel.

Now we can understand Rashi's explanation, that Yaakov was grateful for the fact that his "bed" was complete, because no wicked person had come from it. Yaakov had long been worried over both Reuven and Yosef. Now he knew that he needn't be concerned *about Reuven*, because Yosef had indeed become a king—and his dream, in which he had prophesied about his brothers, had included Reuven. Yaakov also didn't have to worry about Yosef, for Yosef had been a captive among gentiles, yet he had remained righteous. 🕊

## Every Day

### 🕊🕊 "Dirshu" Gemara Shiur

(Maseches B'choros)  
Rabbi Yitzchok Preis.....  
Sunday 7:15–8:15 AM  
Monday–Friday 5:50–6:45 AM

### 🕊🕊 Kollel Yisgaber K'ari (amud-a-day of Mishnah B'rurah)

Rabbi Chaim Heinemann .....  
Monday–Friday 6:55–7:20 AM

### 🕊🕊 Kitzur Shuchan Aruch

Live video conference!  
Rabbi Dani Schon.....  
Monday–Friday 12:05–12:20 PM

### 🕊 Daf Yomi

Rabbi Meir Minster.....  
Sunday–Thursday 8–8:45 PM  
Shabbos (at CZE) 1:00 pre-mincha

### 🕊🕊 Nightly Halacha Chabura

Rabbi Dani Schon  
& Binyamin Teitelbaum .....  
Monday–Thursday 9–9:45 PM

## Sunday *Free brunch!*

### 🕊🕊 America Runs on Torah (Jewish Law & Parasha)

Rabbi Dani Schon  
and Yisroel Kaufman..... 10 AM  
*Grand Deluxe breakfast served*

### 🕊 Shivti

(Self-contained learning, geared  
toward practical halacha) 10–noon A

## Tuesday

### 🕊🕊 Partners in Torah at the Mayerson JCC

Rabbi Binyamin Teitelbaum.....8 PM

## Wednesday

### 🕊🕊 Torah Treasures for Seniors at the Mayerson JCC

Rabbi Yitzchok Preis..... 10:30–11:15 AM

### 🕊🕊 Downtown Lunch-n- Learn at Strauss & Troy

Rabbi Yitzchok Preis..... 12–1 PM

## Thursday

### 🕊🕊 Halacha based on the parasha

Rabbi Chaim Heinemann.....9:10–10 PM  
*Homemade refreshments served.*

**KEY:** 🕊 Beginners  
🕊 Intermediate  
🕊 Advanced  
🕊🕊 for men and women