

# Patent Leather Perpetrators

PARSHA INSIGHTS - VAYAISHEV (5760)

## A SUDDEN NEED FOR... NEW SHOES!

“Come, let us sell him to the Yishmaelim, but let our hand not be upon him, for he is our brother, our own flesh... they sold Yosef to the Yishmaelim for twenty pieces of silver...” (37:27-28). The brothers decided to sell Yosef instead of killing him or leaving him to die in the pit. Much analysis is needed to **begin to understand** all aspects of this dreadful incident, but we will center our attention on the actual sale and its implications.

Why was Yosef, a handsome, noble, strong man, sold for so little? The *Da'as Zekainim* suggests that EACH of the brothers received twenty silver pieces. Since there were nine of them present at his sale (see *Ibn Ezra* 37:25, plus *Rashi* 37:29), his TOTAL price was 180 silver coins, an impressive amount. Another answer, quoted by *Da'as Zekainim* from *Pirkai D'rebbi Eliezer* 38, is that Yosef's face had paled and changed color, so he was sold for less than he should have been. Why did this happen? He had been thrown into a pit of snakes and scorpions, as *Rashi* on 37:24 brings from the *Gemara Shabbos* 22A. The fear of these creatures had altered his appearance. According to this answer, his TOTAL price was twenty silver pieces, not 180.

What did the brothers do with the money? They purchased shoes. The *pasuk* [verse] in *Amos* 2:6 states that Hashem faulted the sons of Yaacov for “selling a righteous man for money, and a poor man for shoes”. We recount this in the hymn about the ten *tzadikim* [righteous people] executed by our cruel enemies - the *Asara Harugai Malchus* - recited toward the end of the *Yom Kippur* [the Day of Atonement] *Musaf* [additional prayer]. Please check your *Yom Kippur Machazor* [prayer book] for verification. There is a concept that centuries later, those ten martyrs helped atone for the involvement of ten brothers in Yosef's sale.

Even though Reuven was not involved in the actual sale, just the other nine (Binyamin was at home and Yosef was the one being sold), TEN people still needed atonement later. Perhaps this is because Reuven might have had the ability to “sling Yosef over his shoulder and rescue him”, as we have discussed in these *divrai Torah* [lessons] before, citing the *Midrash Rabba in Rus* [Ruth].

☞ Copies of the essay are available by clicking the following link, or online at TorahMax.com under: “Sefer Devarim”, “Parshas Ki Tavo”, “[If You Only Knew...](#)” - R. Moshe Heigh.

Rav Zalman Sorotzkin wonders: What suddenly happened to the *shevatim* [tribes], that they needed shoes precisely at that moment? This was obviously not just some shopping spree. The holy sons of Yaacov wanted to show that they were not mourning for Yosef. Recall that a mourner is not allowed to wear leather shoes, as we observe on *Tisha B'av* [historically a day of Jewish mourning]. By making a point of purchasing and wearing leather shoes, the brothers sent the following message: We are not lamenting about Yosef's fate!

Yosef was certainly going to die in Egypt, assumed his brothers. The Egyptians despised the “*Ivrim*” (Hebrews), monotheistic, pious descendants of Avraham *Avinu* [Abraham our forefather]. Particularly, they would not show a pampered, young Hebrew servant any compassion. Especially as a “*frum* [religious] Jew”, Yosef had no chance of surviving in the corrupt, immoral Egyptian society. His *ruchniyus* [spirituality] would certainly die, and probably his body also. (So they assumed, but they were proven totally wrong later.)

The brothers were sure of this, and they wanted to show that there was no obligation to mourn for Yosef. Why? They held that Yosef deserved to be executed the way offenders were put to death later on, in the time of the *Sanhedrin* [Jewish courts]. The *Mishna Sanhedrin* 46B at the top states that the relatives were not to observe mourning practices when someone was executed by *Bais Din* [Jewish court]. Yaacov's sons believed that their actions concerning Yosef were within *halachic* [legal] guidelines. Therefore, they put on shoes, indicating NO MOURNING for their brother.

What grave sin did the brothers feel Yosef committed, justifying their aggression toward him? Here are three opinions, but others do exist. Each of these needs much clarification; we will merely make mention of them now. *Sforno* 37:25 says they considered him a “*rodaif*” [pursuer], someone threatening their very existence. His evil reports about their behavior, which could have resulted in major harm, might have prompted this conclusion. *Kli Yakar* on 37:24 remarks that they viewed him as a *ba'al loshon hora* [slanderer] whose words threatened their

lives. *Or Hachaim* on 37:20 suggests that they thought of Yosef as an “*aid zomaim*” [a false witness] who deserves the punishment he attempts to give others through his scheming testimony. Yosef reported to Yaacov what he perceived as their faulty conduct, and this could have gotten them in great trouble.

Explore this episode as much as possible, and you will make astonishing discoveries.

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