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NEWS & VIEWS

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Blog Edition



Grounded in Uncertainty

Parashat Va'yeshev (*Genesis 37:1-40:23*)

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Last spring, a Federal Reserve survey reported that 47% of people living in the United States could not come up with \$400 in an emergency.

The striking thing about this statistic is not that some people would struggle to pay for unexpected expenses like basic car or home repairs, but that nearly half of the country would.

The world we inhabit and the lives we lead could unravel at any moment, individually and collectively. In the U.S. we have had to acknowledge that our civilized democracy is not a given, that a descent into hatred, violence, and chaos is possible even here. The anxiety for many people about the 2016 Presidential election and subsequent years of turmoil is at least in part a result of the confrontation with our personal and national vulnerability that we had not thought to be lurking so close to the surface.

The world of instability is the world of the biblical Jacob. Perhaps no patriarch lived a more consistently tumultuous life. His life leading up to this week's parasha, *Vayeshev*, has been punctuated with repeated experiences of the given world being turned upside down. From his and his mother's familial engineering to reverse the birth order so he could appropriately carry on the family legacy, to his marrying Leah in the dark when he thinks he is marrying her sister Rachel, to his father-in-law Lavan's ongoing dissembling, to his fraught reunion with his twin Esau—one he is sure will be his end but he instead proves triumphant—Jacob regularly experiences a topsy-turvy world in which the reality he thought he was inhabiting keeps being overturned.

So when we encounter the opening words of this week's parasha, "Jacob was settled in the land of his father's sojourning" (Genesis 37:1), it is a stunning and confusing moment.

Read more



In Case You Missed it: Giving Tuesday Survey

On Giving Tuesday we asked you to give - your advice, that is!

Many of you responded to our anonymous survey with very helpful feedback. If you'd like to follow up and speak with someone about your comments, please contact Sharon Katz at skatz@hebrewcollege.edu or 617.559.8764. And if you haven't had a chance to answer our short survey, we would greatly appreciate you taking a few minutes to complete it. As we embark this month on a planning process to define our future vision and strategy, we are eager to hear your thoughts and your hopes for Hebrew College.

[Start the Survey](#)

Thank you. The information you share will be invaluable.

Rabbi Sharon Cohen Anisfeld
President, Hebrew College



Annual Lecture on Jewish Genealogy with Rebecca Kobrin

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