

ONE TORAH FOR ALL

Zerubbabel ben Emunah
www.onetorahforall.com

Hebrew Word Studies Series

Coat of Many Colors?

B'reshit [Genesis] 37:3-4

3 Now Yisrael [Israel] loved Yoseph [Joseph] more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age: and he bestowed on him his long-sleeved coat.

4 And his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers; and they hated him, and could not speak peaceably to him.

Ya'aqov gives to Yoseph his long-sleeved coat!

Now you may ask, what does that have to do with anything at all; and besides, we have always heard this translated as “a coat of many colors”. But that translation does not really work from the Hebrew.

Let us examine the Hebrew.

Long-sleeved tunic	פְּסִיִּים כְּתֹנֶת
--------------------	---------------------

The first word כְּתֹנֶת (k'toneh) means “to cover,” as in a coat, garment, tunic or robe. The second word פְּסִיִּים (passeem – plural of פֶּס [pas]) means “the palm of the hand;” and by implication a “long-sleeved tunic or coat.”

Among the Bedouin tribes is a tradition in which the leader of the clan wears a long-sleeved tunic in which the ends of the sleeves are greatly belled. And when this leader passes on that leadership to the next in line (usually his oldest son), he passes on this long-sleeved tunic with the large belled sleeves.

It is quite possible that this is what Ya'aqov did when he presented Yoseph with this garment with the long sleeves.

The result of this would have been jealousy and hatred by his brothers. In verse four above it states that his brothers could not speak to him peaceably. Here we find a very interesting word. Normally we find the word שלום (shalom) spelled with a full cholem (ן). However, in the verse above we find it is spelled שֶׁלֶם (shalom) with a defective cholem. This is the only such place in Scripture that we find shalom spelled in this fashion. But what could this indicate to us?

Please note that the missing letter is a vav or waw (ם), which has the numerical value of 6, the number of man. Since shalom is a spiritual attribute and true shalom proceeds from the spiritual realm, this shalom then manifests itself in the physical realm. However, in the case of Yoseph's brothers, they had such great animosity towards Yoseph, that they could not even pretend (in the flesh) to have shalom towards him.

Zerubbabel ben Emunah

www.onetorahforall.com

zerubbabel@onetorahforall.com

© All material is copyrighted and no part may be changed, added to, shortened or edited; however, the entirety of the article may be reproduced as long as the author's name remains attached to the article. It is encouraged and a blessing for others to forward these teachings to others, and permission is hereby granted for this as long as the teaching is kept wholly intact, which includes the author's name and contact information, the "One Torah For All" header, and this copyright paragraph. Furthermore, it must be passed on without any cost whatsoever to those who receive it. The act of forwarding or sharing this teaching in any way constitutes agreement by the party forwarding it that he agrees to the terms and conditions of this paragraph.