

# Torah Portion for Vayeishev

*Shabbat beginning December 16, 2022*

We can learn how to write through text both within and about Vayeishev (he settled). Within are contrasting stories. Joseph's brothers resenting their father's favoritism, sell him into slavery. His brother Judah's eldest son married Tamar, died afterwards, then so did the second son. Falsely blaming Tamar, Judah refuses her his third son. She deceives him by masquerading as a prostitute, demanding his seal, cord, and staff to guarantee promised payment. Later, discovering her pregnancy, he condemns her to death, until she produces his guaranty. In Egypt, Joseph prospers until being imprisoned after refusing the advances of his owner's wife.

For writing about Vayeishev, [ReformJudaism.org](https://www.ReformJudaism.org) gives a conventional summary, while the *Women's Commentary* offers multiple perspectives. One teaches caring for those without power using Tamar's underdog tricksterism. Another teaches using our gifts to benefit others by contrasting Joseph's youthful bragging with his mature loyalty to his Egyptian slaveholder. A third teaches judging others by actions, not ethnicity by contrasting Canaanite Tamar's righteous ensuring of Jacob's lineage with the Egyptian wife's evil seduction and revenge. Organizing diverse, but replicable views into one source produces inspiring Jewish knowledge. Summaries, multiple perspectives, and inspiring knowledge compete as writing practices, but all have value.