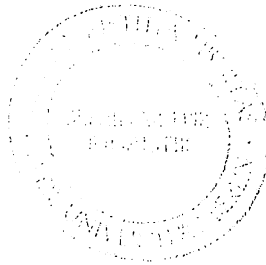


IBN EZRA'S

COMMENTARY ON THE PENTATEUCH

GENESIS (*BERESHIT*)



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Dedicated to

*My loving wife Zahava, my children Yaakov and Esther, my
cherished mother Chayyah and my unforgettable late father,
Bentzion Strickman of Blessed Memory.*

PREFACE

Abraham ben Meir ibn Ezra was one of the outstanding and colorful scholars of medieval Jewry. His knowledge was encyclopedic. He was a poet, mathematician, astronomer, astrologer, grammarian, physician and philosopher. However, his chief claim to fame rests on his commentary on the Bible, especially on the Pentateuch, the five books of Moses.

Ibn Ezra's commentary constitutes a major contribution to Biblical exegesis. One cannot be considered a true student of the Bible without having studied it. Indeed, Maimonides, writing to his son, states: "How true and authentic are the interpretations of the wise scholar Abraham ibn Ezra, of sainted memory...I exhort you not to pay attention or distract your mind by concentrating on commentaries, treatises and books other than those of Ibn Ezra's, which alone are meaningful and profitable to all who study them with intelligence, understanding and deep insight. They are distinguished from the writings of other authors, for Ibn Ezra was in spirit similar to our patriarch Abraham."

Nachmanides, whose own Bible commentary, together with Rashi's and Ibn Ezra's, forms the basis for and is integral to all Biblical commentary, was also an admirer of Ibn Ezra's work, although his appreciation was tempered with conflict. In Nachmanides' verses of introduction to this commentary he writes: "And with Abraham the son of Ezra we shall have open rebuke and hidden love." While often chastising Ibn Ezra whenever his independent views brought him into conflict with traditional authority, Nachmanides' hidden love was the

recognition of Ibn Ezra's mastery of language and grammar, understanding of Biblical syntax, and pioneer role in Biblical analysis and interpretation. For every instance of critical comment, Nachmanides has many more that express esteem.

This translation, the first into English of Ibn Ezra's commentary on Genesis, is a product of many years' effort. Anyone familiar with the original knows how difficult it is to understand Ibn Ezra's cryptic style. By remaining faithful to his text and through the use of copious notes, the authors have tried to convey both a sense of his style and his meaning.

The text which was used for translation is the *Mikra'ot Gedolot* version of Ibn Ezra's commentary on the Pentateuch. The general guidelines for transliteration laid down by *Encyclopedia Judaica* are employed, except for the *tzadi*, which is transliterated *tz*, and the *chet*, which is transliterated *ch*. *Dagesh chazak* is indicated by the doubling of the letter, except for *shin* and *tzadi*. When the end of a comment refers to the following verse, it occasionally has been placed next to the verse to which it pertains. In such cases the heading appears in brackets. When Ibn Ezra does not introduce a comment with a Biblical quotation and we, for clarity, do, then the quote is bracketed.

The English translation for the Bible used is that of the Jewish Publication Society's 1917 edition. This version was employed because the new J.P.S.'s translation was not yet complete when this work was started. Furthermore, the old translation is still widely used. The J.P.S. version was occasionally altered to fit in with Ibn Ezra's explanation; however, verses introducing Ibn Ezra's comments were never altered.

I would like to thank all who have helped in this difficult and what I hope will be a monumental work. I would like to particularly thank Mr. Harold Fink without whose technical help this work would probably not have been published. May the Almighty grant us life, health, strength and the wherewithal to complete the task.

Arthur M. Silver

27 Kislev, 5746

December 9, 1985.

FOREWORD

ABRAHAM IBN EZRA: HIS LIFE AND WORKS

HIS LIFE

Abraham ibn Ezra was born in 1089 C.E. in Tudela, Spain, and died in 1164 C.E. probably in London or possibly in Calahorra on his way back to Spain. Little is known of his family life. He alludes to five sons, but only one, Isaac, is known by name; the other four probably died in infancy. Isaac, a poet of note who spent most of his life in the Near East, was said to have converted to Islam and later returned to Judaism. A heart-rending lament by Ibn Ezra reveals that Isaac predeceased his father. Ibn Ezra's wife died some time before 1140 C.E. and he never remarried.

Until 1140 C.E. Abraham ibn Ezra lived in Spain. From then until his death he lived the life of a poor wandering scholar. It was during this period that most of his books were written. His travels included Rome, Lucca, Mantua, Verona, Narbonne, Beziers, Dreux, Rouen, Brent, London and possibly Palestine. Why did he leave Spain? Unsettled conditions in Spain, his son's apostasy, his wife's death and his poverty were all contributing causes. Concerning his poverty he lamented:

I cannot become rich, the fates are against me
Were I a dealer in shrouds, no man would ever die,
Ill-starred was my birth, unpropitious the planets,
Were I a seller of candles, the sun would never set.

HIS POETRY

Abraham ibn Ezra was a very versatile poet. He wrote liturgical poems (*piyyutim*), some of which are still used in the synagogue ritual, secular poems of friendship and love, verse on nature, astronomy, the seasons, the calendar, religious and nationalistic subjects. All came from his prolific pen. Some of his nationalistic and religious poems are among his best. In the former he gives vent to the suffering of Israel and protests against their humbled state. He writes:

The God of Israel Thou wast of yore
Thou wast their Father
And they were Thy children, but are they no more?
Then why didst Thou for a thousand years forget them?
And enemies from all around beset them.
Dost Thou not see, or is thy hand so weak,
That Thou canst not save those who help do seek?
Redeemer there is none as near as Thou;
Thy name from ever was Redeemer.
So hasten, our God, redeem us now.

His religious poems reveal him to be a deeply devout man. He writes:

In Thee, my God, is my desire,
In Thee my passionate love and fire.
To Thee my reins, to Thee my heart,
To Thee my soul and spirit dart.
To Thee my hands, to Thee my feet,

From Thee doth come my form complete.
My blood, my bones, they are all Thine,
My body and image divine.
To Thee belong my eyes and thought,
The form and pattern Thou hast wrought.
To Thee my soul, to Thee my might,
Thou art my trust and my delight.

HIS PHILOSOPHY

Ibn Ezra was not a systematic philosopher; his philosophical views are expressed mainly in his Biblical commentaries. He was essentially a Neo-Platonist and was greatly influenced by Solomon ibn Gabirol, the Spanish poet-philosopher. Ibn Ezra divided the universe into three worlds: the upper world of the "intelligences" or angels, the intermediate world of the heavenly spheres, and the lower, sublunar world, the corporeal world of creation and decay. He believed that the Biblical account of creation only applied to the sublunar world.

Ibn Ezra taught that God is one and that all things exist by virtue of Him. The Lord is incorporeal and has no likeness or form; hence God is not subject to human feelings or corporeal accidents. Thus Ibn Ezra held that Biblical verses that speak of God in human terms are not to be taken literally.

Ibn Ezra believed that God cannot come directly into contact with the material world and that the sublunar world was not created directly by Him, but by angels termed *elohim* by Scripture. Thus the word *elohim* in the first chapter of Genesis means God acting through the angels.

Ibn Ezra also held that man has three souls: vegetative, animal and rational. The rational alone is immortal. He believed that man's rational soul comes from a universal world soul, and that immortality is achieved by the reunification of the rational soul with the world soul. According to Ibn Ezra the wicked in this world are left entirely to the fates that the stars determine for them. However, their ultimate punishment is the failure of their souls to be reunited with the world soul.

Ibn Ezra further held that prophecy resulted from the contact made by the prophet's soul with the world soul. Ibn Ezra taught that man's rational soul must acquire wisdom before it can be reunited with the world soul. This is accomplished by studying the natural sciences and advancing from this study to the knowledge of God. Concomitantly, the knowledge of God is also attained by the study of Torah. Additionally, the Torah places restrictions on man's appetites and lust, thus preventing man's corporeal nature from being dominant and hindering the rational soul's development.

Ibn Ezra was of the opinion that God's knowledge extends only to the general and the eternal, and that the Lord knows the particular only to the extent that it is involved in the general and permanent. This view is hardly in accordance with present accepted orthodox thinking. He also believed that individual Divine Providence is extended only to those who have freely developed their intellectual capacities.

Ibn Ezra was a believer in astrology. However, at the same time he affirmed Divine Providence and free will. He reconciled these apparently contradictory beliefs with the following illustration. Let us assume that it is written in the stars that a certain city is to be flooded. A prophet then comes along and warns the townspeople of the impending disaster and urges them to repent. The people follow the prophet's advice, repent their wrongdoings and leave the city to offer prayer to God. The river

floods the city. The decree of the stars is fulfilled, but the righteous are saved.

THE BIBLE

Ibn Ezra's foremost achievement is his commentary on the Bible, particularly the one on the Pentateuch. This commentary has stood the test of time and ranks with Rashi's as the most widely studied.

Ibn Ezra began his commentaries on the Bible in Rome in 1140 C.E. and continued them for the rest of his life. He probably composed commentaries on the entire Bible, but we lack his work on the Early Prophets, Chronicles, Proverbs, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Ezra and Nehemiah.

He began his work on the Pentateuch in Lucca, a northern Italian city to which he went after practically being driven from Rome by scholars who claimed his ideas bordered on heresy. Scholars think he produced two commentaries on the Pentateuch, a "short commentary" and a "long commentary." The short commentary survives in *toto*, while the long commentary is extant only on Exodus and in fragments on Genesis. However, some scholars believe that his long commentary was limited only to the latter two books. Scholars are also divided as to which commentary came first. Did Ibn Ezra just write a short one and then expand it, or did he write a long one and then abridge it?

Where did Ibn Ezra get his material? Most scholars are of the opinion that he was not an original thinker. He copied from the Spanish grammarians and from Biblical exegetes. He often quotes the opinion of Saadiah Gaon and occasionally uses him without a citation. He frequently attacks and deprecates the Karaites, but quotes from them constantly, especially Yefet ben Ali and Joshua (either Joshua ben Judah

Abu al-Farag Furkan or Joshua ben Ali). Dr. Philip Birnbaum, the noted Hebrew scholar and authority on Ibn Ezra, says that Ibn Ezra is more indebted to Yefet ben Ali than he admits. Be that as it may, even if the material were only an anthology (and no one goes as far as to say that there is nothing original in his commentary), Ibn Ezra deserves the credit for having left us a memorable and everlasting work, with a definite point of view, theory, philosophy and method of Biblical study. We must remember that Rashi's great work is also largely an anthology.

Ibn Ezra's commentary on the Pentateuch is difficult to study because he is often unclear. One has to labor to decipher his comments. His philosophical references are for the most part allusions. His work is without doubt the most difficult to understand classic commentary on the Pentateuch. Why did Ibn Ezra choose such a style? Some scholars maintain that he did so in order to hide his anti-traditional beliefs. However, this is not borne out by his strong belief in the Oral Law, as evidenced in these same commentaries and his pietistic poetry. Others suggest that the commentary as we have it consists of Ibn Ezra's lecture notes upon which he elaborated when teaching. Dr. Philip Birnbaum notes that since Ibn Ezra wrote his works for patrons, he was under considerable pressure to produce and therefore did not edit or even review his compositions. Probably both of the latter explanations have validity, with the addition of a small dose of the first theory. Ibn Ezra no doubt wanted to make his novel approach to the Pentateuch obscure to the uninformed and unintelligent.

What was Ibn Ezra's approach to understanding the Pentateuch? He tells us himself, first as a hint in his introductory couplets and then much more precisely and clearly in the longer poetical introduction. In his opening poem he writes, *This book of Jasher composed by Abraham the poet is bound by ropes of grammar*. Jasher (*yashar*) means straight and alludes to the literal interpretation of the Bible. Ibn Ezra is saying that

his commentary contains a literal interpretation of Scripture based on the rules of grammar.

In the long introduction that follows, Ibn Ezra explains in detail. He says that there are five approaches to Biblical exegesis. The first four, which he rejects are: (a) long expositions interwoven with elements unrelated to the text; (b) anti-*halakhic* interpretations offered by heretics; (c) allegorical interpretations; and (d) Midrashic interpretations. The fifth method, the one chosen by Ibn Ezra, is a grammatical analysis of a verse, which is then accepted at face value.

Ibn Ezra's commentary deals with a host of grammatical and stylistic insights. They are:

(1) The *vav* is not always to be rendered "and," but, like the Arabic *fa*, has other meanings as well.

(2) The Bible occasionally uses the imperfect with the meaning of the perfect.

(3) Scripture employs repetition in prophetic utterances.

(4) The perfect is often to be understood as a pluperfect. This congruence of tenses explains the apparent contradictions and interruptions in the sequence of Biblical text.

(5) Scripture recurrently omits some prepositions because it expects the reader to introduce them.

(6) The Bible occasionally uses an adjective but leaves out the noun which it qualifies.

(7) Scripture often omits the subject or the object in a verse because it is implied by the verb used.

(8) The Bible omits particles, verbs and other items.

(9) The Bible often uses abridged phrases and sentences.

(10) When Scripture uses a noun in the absolute where the rules of grammar call for one in the genitive, the noun is to be repeated in the construct.

(11) When a verb in the singular governs a noun in the plural, the verb refers to each one within the plural.

(12) Scripture employs paragoric, or superfluous letters. Ibn Ezra points out superfluous *alefs*, *bets*, *hehs*, *vavs*, *yods*, *cafs*, *lameds*, *mems*, and *nuns*.

(13) Biblical chapters are not always in chronological sequence.

(14) Scripture employs round numbers. Consequently the numbers seven and ten are not always to be taken literally.

(15) Scripture occasionally first summarizes and then goes into detail.

(16) The Bible at times uses two words with the same meaning back to back where one would suffice.

(17) Scripture engages in word play.

(18) Some Biblical verses have to be rearranged in order to be understood.

(19) The Bible employs nouns in apposition.

(20) The Bible occasionally repeats a proper noun a number of times in one verse, rather than use a pronoun the second time the individual is mentioned.

The use of grammar and the literal interpretation of the Pentateuch led Ibn Ezra to some startling statements. We have already noted his

philosophical approach to and view of Biblical authorship. Among just a few of his novel insights in Genesis are: the tree of knowledge is sexual knowledge; the building of the tower of Babel was not evil in itself; Isaac was a poor man; Isaac had concubines in addition to his wife Rebecca; our patriarchs occasionally did not tell the truth; Simon was imprisoned by Joseph because he was next to the eldest, Reuben, whom he did not wish to imprison because he was innocent of selling Joseph into slavery. Ibn Ezra implies that Joseph was giving his brothers a subtle hint as to his identity. Every page contains a new approach, especially to one trained in the classical commentaries.

Although Ibn Ezra held that Biblical verses are to be taken at face value, he made an exception for those verses which contradict reason. He thus believed that all verses which refer to God in human terms are not to be taken literally; "far be it to attribute a body to God." He explains the case of anthropomorphism in the Bible this way: "It is well-known that the Torah spoke in the language of man, for the one who spoke it (Moses) and those who heard it (Israel) were human. Now a human being cannot speak of things above or below him without employing human terminology."

As stated above, where Scripture does not contradict reason, the Bible is to be taken at face value. Thus the account of the Garden of Eden, according to Ibn Ezra, took place exactly as described in Scripture.

Halakhic Midrashim presented a more difficult problem. Here we deal with the realm of the observance of Jewish law. In these cases Ibn Ezra tried to show that the Rabbinic interpretation was the literal one. In cases where this could not be maintained Ibn Ezra held that the law transmitted by the rabbis of the Talmud was true in itself, but that the sages used the Biblical verse as a peg on which to attach a law.

He thus maintains, contrary to the Rabbinic sages, that *Be fruitful, and multiply* (Gen. 1:28) is not a command but a blessing, and that the sages merely used this verse as a mode for the transmission of a law passed on to them. Commenting on Ex. 23:2, Ibn Ezra points out that the rabbis interpreted the last three words of this verse, *achare rabbim lehattot* (after a multitude to pervert justice), to mean that legal disputes are to be solved in accordance with the majority opinion of a legally constituted court of law. He notes that this is not the literal meaning of the verse, but that the rabbis used this text as a sign by which to remember the above-noted *halakhah*.

In other cases Ibn Ezra notes that a given Talmudic interpretation of a verse is Rabbinic in origin. For example, Ex. 23:19 reads, *Thou shalt not seethe a kid in its mother's milk*. According to the rabbis this verse prohibits the cooking of any kosher meat and milk. Ibn Ezra insists that the Pentateuch prohibits only the seething of a kid in its mother's milk and that the other above-noted prohibition is Rabbinic.

When Ibn Ezra offered an interpretation of a verse which was not in keeping with the *halakhah* he usually added a note to the effect that the *halakhah* is to be followed either because it is independent of the verse or because one is obligated to follow the Rabbinic enactments because "the minds of the sages were greater than our minds." Ibn Ezra did this because he did not want his literal interpretation to lead to a violation of the *halakhah* or to serve as support for anti-*halakhic* sectarians. Thus Ibn Ezra was infuriated when shown a commentary on the Bible which stated that the days mentioned in the first chapter of Genesis started in the morning, not the night before as maintained by *halakhah*. Ibn Ezra was aghast at this interpretation lest it mislead people to do work on the eve of the Sabbath and thereby violate its sanctity. He wrote a book entitled *The Sabbath Epistle* to refute the notion that the Biblical day begins in the morning, and he cursed the author (who was probably

Samuel ben Meir, Rashi's grandson) of the aforementioned commentary with the imprecation, "May the hand of him who wrote this wither, and may his eyes be darkened."

Ibn Ezra's heterodox statements, i.e., that certain verses and parts of verses in the Pentateuch are post-Mosaic, his philosophical view of the Almighty, his ideas concerning creation, his seeming disregard for and disrespect toward the Midrash, and certain opinions quoted in the Talmud, and his citations from the heretical Karaites have led many orthodox Jewish scholars to avoid his commentary. In fact, the great 16th century Talmudist, Solomon Luria, writes: "He (Ibn Ezra) was no Talmudist; the major portion of his work, including his commentary (on the Bible), treats of astronomy, natural sciences, and other secular subjects. Yet he dared to contradict Biblical scholars and the Talmud. Out of ignorance he ascribed Biblical laws to the Talmud and Rabbinic laws to the Bible. He countenanced the forbidden and prohibited sanctioned practices. His exegesis is not followed in matters of law; for in his legal pronouncements he often overruled the decisions of both Tannaim and Amoraim. He boasted that his independent rational faculty would alone guide him in interpreting the Bible and that he would not accept the commentaries of others. His work may best be judged by his adherents - heretics and Sadducees" (*Responsa of Solomon Luria*, pp. 9 and 10).

Similarly some modern scholars claim that Ibn Ezra was in reality an anti-traditionalist in disguise who hid his true beliefs behind a mask of piety and "secrets." They go so far as to picture him as a forerunner of modern Biblical criticism. Is any of this true? The answer is no. His writings reveal him to have been a pious Jew who believed in the Written and Oral Laws. He accepted God's revelation of the Torah to Moses and all of the Biblical miracles. However, his approach to Rabbinic exegesis, both *halakhic* and non-*halakhic* was in the tradition of other Spanish

Jewish thinkers of his day. Thus Samuel Ha-Nagid wrote concerning the Aggadah: "One should learn from aggadic statements only those things which make sense. It is important to know that all matters which our sages established as law, in connection with a commandment transmitted by our teacher Moses who received it from the Almighty, cannot be augmented or diminished in any way. However, their interpretation of Biblical verses is subjective. Hence those interpretations which are logical we accept. The others we reject." Maimonides' approach to Aggadah is similar.

Judah ha-Levi also gave non-traditional interpretations to Biblical verses. Indeed, he interpreted the Biblical phrase *on the morrow after the Sabbath* (Lev. 23:11) literally, as the Sadducees did. Furthermore, he believed that the establishment of the observance of Shavu'ot 50 days from the second day of Passover was of Rabbinic origin. Judah Ha-Levi implied that the *halakhah* is in force because it was established by our ancestors. However, one is free to interpret Biblical verses independently of *halakhah*.

It is not only the Spanish scholars who felt this way. Some early Tosafists not only had a high regard for Ibn Ezra, but went even further along the path than even he ventured. We know that Rabbenu Tam exchanged poetry with Ibn Ezra and even quoted him in his Talmudic work. Moreover, the Tosafist Rabbi Samuel ben Meir, Rashi's grandson, who in his Biblical commentary followed the literal meaning so strictly, claimed that according to the first chapter of Genesis the day begins in the morning and not in the evening as the Talmud says, a view that horrified Ibn Ezra.

In conclusion, Abraham ibn Ezra's commentary is unique, has withstood the test of time, can offer something to anyone who cares to study it, follows a definite tradition in early Biblical exegesis, and is

most rewarding to those who, in the words of Maimonides, "study them (Ibn Ezra's words) with intelligence, understanding and deep insight."

I would like to thank my dear wife Zahava for the many hours she spent in deciphering my handwriting and typing the manuscript. Without her dedication and devotion I could never have accomplished my task. I would also like to thank Dr. Samuel Hoenig for graciously lending me his copy of the Vatican manuscript of Ibn Ezra's commentary on the Pentateuch. Thanks are also in order to Abby Aronson, Amy Wahrman, Wanda Stollop, and Sylvia Berkowitz for their assistance in typing the manuscript.

H. Norman Strickman

Touro College, N.Y.
27 Kislev, 5746
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INTRODUCTION

Invoking¹ the name of the Great and Awe-inspiring God,
I begin to explain the meaning of the Torah.
I beseech thee, O God of my father Abraham,
deal kindly with thy servant Abraham.²
May the opening of thy words give light
to thy servant the son of thy servant Meir.
And from the salvation of thy face,³ may help come
to the son of thy maid servant who is named Ben Ezra.
This *Book of Jashar*,⁴ composed by Abraham the poet,
is bound by ropes of grammar.
The eyes of the intelligent will find it fit.
All who take hold of it will be glad.
The above mentioned Abraham the Spaniard says:
Those who comment on the Torah do so in one of five ways.

The first way (to Biblical interpretation) ranges far and wide (from the text). It is beyond the interest of our time. If truth be likened to a dot within a circle then this approach can be compared to the periphery of the circle, which goes round about only to return to its starting point. A number of great scholars chose this approach, namely, the wise men of the academies in Moslem countries, such as Rabbi Isaac⁵ who composed

¹ I.E. opens with a poetic introduction. In fact, in Hebrew the entire introduction was in rhyme.

² The first Abraham refers to the patriarch, the second to the author, Abraham son of Meir.

³ Cf. Ps. 80:4, 8.

⁴ I.E. called his commentary on the Torah, *The Book of Jashar*. Cf. Josh. 10:13.

⁵ It is not clear which Isaac I.E. is referring to. Some identify him with the philosopher Isaac Israeli (c. 850-950). Cf. Weiser.

two books on the first chapter of Genesis, from *In the beginning* to *were finished*, and did not finish his commentary, so verbose was he. He makes mention of the believers in a god of light and a god of darkness⁶ in his comments on the verse *Let there be light* (Gen. 1:3). But he (Rabbi Isaac) walked in darkness without being aware of it. In his comment on *And the earth brought forth grass* (Gen. 1:12), he brought forth words from his fancy⁷ and spoke about trees and plants both large and small. On the other hand, on the term *living creature*⁸ he quoted foreign sciences. In the same vein, Rabbi Saadiah, Gaon of the Diaspora, commenting on the verse *Let there be lights* (Gen. 1:14), quoted the opinion of secular scholars and gave the dimensions of the heavenly bodies according to the astronomers. Similarly Rabbi Samuel ben Hofni *gathered wind in his fists* (chofnav) (Prov. 30:4)⁹ in his lengthy comments on *And Jacob went out from Beer-sheba* (Gen. 28:10). He there mentioned every prophet by name, and how many times each one was exiled from his place. He also expounded on the value of travel. The only value of his commentary is its length. On the verse *And he dreamed* (Gen. 28:12) he expostulated on dream interpretation and why people see what they see when they are asleep. If one desires to learn secular wisdom let him learn it from the works of experts in these fields and let him examine their proofs and see if they are correct. The Geonim only cited from these works without offering any of the proofs as to the veracity of the opinions they quoted.¹⁰ Some of the Geonim had no knowledge of the method of the ancient sages and how they arrived at their conclusions.

⁶ Zoroastrianism (Weiser).

⁷ Literally, heart. He did not quote anyone but gave his own opinion or invented facts.

⁸ Weiser.

⁹ A play on the words *chofni* (Hofni) and *chofnav*.

¹⁰ The reader thus has no way of knowing whether what is quoted is true or not.

A second approach is the one chosen by the distorters, albeit they are Israelites. They think that they have reached the very point of the circle, but in reality they do not know its place. This is the way of the Sadducees,¹¹ such as Anan,¹² Benjamin,¹³ Ben Mashiach, Joshua,¹⁴ and of all heretics who do not believe the words of the transmitters of tradition,¹⁵ turning away from it to the right or the left.¹⁶ Each one interprets verses as he sees fit. They do the same even with respect to commandments and laws. They are ignorant of the form of Hebrew and therefore err even in grammar. How can people rely on their opinion, with regard to the precepts when they are always changing their mind, moving from one extreme to the other? They do this because there is not a single commandment fully explained in the Torah itself. I will note one example.¹⁷ Someone conversant with these things will recognize its significance because it entails the penalty of *karet* (shortened life span) with regard to eating on Yom Kippur, eating leaven on Passover and, for one who is in a state of ritual purity on Passover, not offering the

¹¹ The Karaites. The medieval rabbis called the Karaites Sadducees because like the Sadducees they denied the authority of the Rabbinic sages, the Mishnah and the Talmud.

¹² The founder of Karaism. He lived in the 8th century.

¹³ Benjamin ben Moses Nahavendi (c. 9th century). He was the first Karaite scholar to write in Hebrew and was responsible for the term "Karaites" replacing "Ananites."

¹⁴ Some of the printed editions omit Ben Mashiach and Joshua. Hasan ben Mashiach was a Karaite who engaged in polemics with Saadiah Gaon. Joshua was a Karaite scholar often quoted by I.E. It is suggested that the reference is to Joshua ben Judah Abu al-Farag Purkan, one of the founders of Karaism (Weiser).

¹⁵ The Rabbinic sages.

¹⁶ According to Rabbinic tradition, the Biblical verse, *thou shalt not turn aside from the sentence which they shall declare unto thee, to the right hand, nor to the left* (Deut. 17:11), is a command to heed the words of the "transmitters of tradition."

¹⁷ The "one example" offered by I.E. is, "Nowhere in the Torah do we find the rules governing the establishment of the years nor how to calculate months." However, he digresses before coming to the point.

paschal lamb.¹⁸ It also involves the seven rest days of the festivals,¹⁹ the festival sacrifices, dwelling in booths and the sounding of the shofar. Nowhere in the Torah do we find clearly stated the rules governing the establishment of years nor how to calculate months. These wretched, poor in learning, find support for their calendric calculations in the verse *and let them be for signs, and for seasons (festivals)*²⁰ (Gen. 1:14). But they don't know that *Let them be* is in the plural and speaks about the sun, moon and stars.²¹ As to the person who says that the *vav* of *u-le-mo'adim* (and for seasons) is superfluous and that *for signs* is connected to *for seasons*,²² let him search for a friend to tell it to; perhaps he will believe it. If we do find two or three superfluous *vavs*, how do we know that this is one of them,²³ since we find thousands of *vavs* in Scripture which have meaning? Furthermore, the verse *Who appointedst the moon for seasons* (le-mo'adim) (Ps. 104:19) is not in accordance with the

¹⁸ One who is "impure" on Passover is forbidden to sacrifice the paschal lamb. Cf. Num. 9:1-14. Our rendition is based on the Vatican manuscript of I.E. henceforth written *Vat. Ebr.* 38. The printed texts read, "and leavened bread on Passover which one in a state of purity did not observe." This is an impossible reading.

¹⁹ There are seven festival days when work is Biblically prohibited. They are: the first and seventh day of Passover, Shavuoth, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, the first day of Sukkot and Shemini Atzereth.

²⁰ The Hebrew word for seasons is *mo'adim*. *Mo'adim* also means festivals. Genesis 1:14 reads, *Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven...and let them be for signs, and for seasons* (mo'adim). The Karaites interpreted this verse: Let them be for signs for the festival, i.e., let the moon (the lunar month) determine the time of the festivals.

²¹ Scripture reads *ve-hayu* not *ve-hayah*. *Ve-hayu* is a plural and so cannot refer only to the moon.

²² Aside from the above, the verse presents another problem for the Karaites. It does not read: and let them be for signs for seasons (festivals). It reads: and let them be for signs *and* for seasons (festivals). The Karaites tried to get around the problem by claiming that the *vav* of *u-le-mo'adim* is superfluous and should not be translated. *U-le-mo'adim* should be rendered: for seasons (festivals) rather than: and for seasons. Thus the verse is to be translated: And let them be for signs for seasons (festivals).

²³ I.E. concedes that there are a few superfluous *vavs* in Scripture, but he asks, how do we know that this is one of them?

interpretation of those whose loins totter.²⁴ Even if Scripture explicitly stated (which it never does) that the moon shall be for a sign for the appointed seasons (*mo'adim*) falling in the various months, how could we determine that the Bible speaks of God's holy appointed seasons, since various types of appointed seasons are mentioned in the Pentateuch, the Prophets and the Holy Writings?²⁵ Furthermore, even if the Bible explicitly said: let the moon be as a sign for God's holy seasons,²⁶ a very important aspect of the problem remains to be solved.²⁷ Does a new moon start when the moon completes circling the

²⁴ Cf. Ps. 69:24. The Karaites interpreted Ps. 104:19 as meaning God appointed the moon for festivals.

²⁵ The point is if the Bible said: the moon shall determine the *mo'adim*, how do we know that the *mo'adim* refer to religious festivals? The word *mo'ed* may refer to any appointed time and does not necessarily refer to a religiously appointed one.

²⁶ Even if the Bible explicitly stated the moon shall be for a sign for God's holy festivals, it would not solve the problem as to what constitutes a month.

²⁷ Namely, what constitutes a new moon (the beginning of a month)? In order to understand what follows it is necessary to have some idea of medieval astronomy. The daily movement of the moon varies between approximately 11 and 15 degrees in a rather complicated fashion. To explain these motions the ancients introduced a complex scheme of combined circular movements. (For a full discussion of this problem and the solution offered for it, see *Yale Judaica* series, Vol. XI, *The Code of Maimonides, Sanctification of the New Moon*, p. 126). Cherez explains that the moon was believed to move within four spheres. The first is called *galgal ha-domeh* (the all-encompassing sphere). It is so called because like the zodiacal sphere, it encompasses the whole world and like it has the earth as its center. This sphere turns from east to west. Within the all-encompassing sphere lies another sphere called *galgal ha-noteh* (the inclined sphere). This sphere is not contained within the *galgal ha-domeh* but intersects it. The chord connecting the points of intersection are called the *tehi* (the dragon). The point at which the moon moves north of this intersection is called the head (or top) of the *tehi*; its opposite point, where the moon moves south, is called the tail of the *tehi*. The *galgal ha-noteh* is inclined five degrees above the *galgal ha-domeh* on the north and five degrees below it on the south, hence the term *galgal ha-noteh*. The center of this sphere is the same as that of the *galgal ha-domeh*. This sphere also turns in an east to west direction. Within the *galgal ha-noteh* is another sphere called the *galgal ha-yotze* (the eccentric sphere). It is so called because the earth is not the center of this sphere. It is also called the *galgal ha-noseh* (the carrying sphere) because it bears a sphere which the moon circles (the *galgal ha-katan* or epicycle). The *galgal ha-yotze* turns from west to east. These spheres move at different speeds and their movements explain the complicated motions of the moon.

sphere of the zodiac, i.e., every 27 days and some limited hours,²⁸ or when it completes circling the apogee of the eccentric sphere whose center is far from the center of the earth,²⁹ or when it completes circling the sphere of the dragon according to the calculation of the wise men because its epicycle turns in the opposite direction.³⁰ On the other hand, it may be that the month depends upon the conjunction of the sun and the moon.³¹ There are three such conjunctions: the mean conjunction,³² the true conjunction³³ and the conjunction contingent on the place of the beholder.³⁴ We do not know which conjunction determines the new

²⁸ That is the time it takes the moon to return to a given point in the zodiac (Weiser). Medieval man believed that beyond the spheres of the moon, sun and planets there is a sphere containing the constellations. It takes the moon 27 and about a third of a day to complete this cycle (Weiser).

²⁹ The time it takes the moon to complete its epicycle within the eccentric sphere, i.e., every 27 days and about 13 hours. So Cherez. However, his interpretation is questionable.

³⁰ The moon in its epicycle turns from west to east while the "sphere of the dragon" rotates from east to west (Weiser). These contrary motions must be taken into consideration in establishing the time it takes the moon to complete the latter revolution. According to Krinsky what I.E. means by "the time it takes the moon to circle the sphere of the dragon" is the time it takes the moon to return to the head of the dragon after leaving it. It should be noted that the commentaries differ as to what I.E. means by the "sphere of the dragon," as they do with regard to what he means by the moon's cycle around the apogee of the "eccentric sphere" and indeed as to how I.E. envisioned the system of the lunar spheres cited in note 27. For their opinions and differences see, Joseph ben Eliezer Ha-Sephardi, *Margaliot Tuva*, Amsterdam, 1722; Hayyim Wolf Kaputa, *Or La-netivah*, Lemberg, 1897; Weiser and Cherez. While the specifics of I.E.'s comments are difficult to unravel, as is evidenced by the wide interpretation given his comments in the above-noted commentaries, the thrust of his remarks is clear. The moon makes a number of cycles in the sky. If a new moon is to be determined by the moon's revolution, which one of its cycles is to determine the new moon?

³¹ A Hebrew month is determined by the conjunction of the sun and moon. Cf. Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Laws of Sanctification of the New Moon*, 6:1.

³² The mean conjunction of the sun and the moon takes place every 29 days, 12 hours, and 793 parts of an hour (dividing the hour into 1,080 parts). Cf. Weiser. The mean conjunction is the time when the sun and moon would come together if both moved uniformly.

³³ The true conjunction of the sun and moon is their actual conjunction.

³⁴ The conjunction varies in different places of the globe. See I.E.'s commentary on Ex. 12:2.

moon; is it one or the other? As to that which they say, that the month begins when the new moon is actually seen, they have been deceived, for they have eyes but see not. Let them show us where in the Torah and the testimony³⁵ it is stated that the new moon is to be so determined. Similarly they did not correctly comment on *This is the burnt-offering of every new moon throughout the months of the year* (Num. 28:14) because this verse does not mention the moon.³⁶ It merely says that the various sacrifices are to be offered in their proper time and day and the Sabbath sacrifices on the Sabbath.³⁷ It is also known that sometimes there are six hours between the birth of the new moon and sunset. At such times the new moon can only be seen under certain astronomical conditions. At other times there may be a thirty hour difference between them,³⁸ and the moon will not be visible even to one standing on a mountain. This is so because the path of the moon changes due to its and the sun's spheres.³⁹ Its time of appearance also changes depending on the longitude and the latitude of the country from which it is observed. If it is cloudy and the new moon is not seen at the beginning of Elul or Tishri, shall we fast three days of atonement?⁴⁰ Furthermore, who says

³⁵ A synonym for Torah.

³⁶ The Karaites interpreted *chodesh be-chodsho* to mean the moon when it is new. They claimed that *be-chodsho* is to be interpreted as *be-chiddusho* (when it is new). I.E. disagrees. He feels that *be-chodsho* means in its month, and furthermore, *chodesh* does not mean moon but month. Cf. I.E. on Num. 28:14.

³⁷ Num. 28:10.

³⁸ In other words, the moon will not be visible at the first sunset following its conjunction with the sun.

³⁹ The ancients believed that the sun traveled around the earth. However, the earth was not the center of the sun's orbit. When the sun is further from the earth, it appears to be traveling more slowly, when closer to the earth, faster (*Yale Judaica* series, Vol. XI, p. 126).

⁴⁰ The point is, if we do not rely on the traditional calculation and rely on the mean conjunction, then when for some reason the moon is not seen at the beginning of Elul we do not know when that month starts. If the same occurs with regard to Tishri, we have three possible dates for Yom Kippur, viz., when did Elul start and did it have 29 or 30 days? To satisfy all doubts we would have to fast three days in a row.

that a month consists of thirty days, for behold, Judah Ha-Parsi⁴¹ wrote a book in which he counted the year and the months according to a solar year. We also do not find in the Torah of Moses the law of witnesses testifying that they saw the new moon, or who is qualified to testify that he saw the new moon, or if one is permitted to walk a great distance on a holy day to testify that he saw the new moon,⁴² or if a father and son, or proselytes, or women are fit to testify that they saw the new moon. Even if all these things were written in the Torah, another problem remains. The Torah of Moses does not state how many months make a year. And even though the Torah connects the new year with the fresh young ears⁴³ it is not clear whether it refers to the fresh young ears of the wheat⁴⁴ or barley,⁴⁵ or when during this period the new year is to start, or from where young fresh ears of barley are to be brought.⁴⁶ If there is a hunger in the land of Israel and its environs and there is no seed and certainly no fresh ears, what is to be done? In such a case shall we leave the year as it is or add an additional month?⁴⁷ In such a year the Omer would not be counted and there would be no festival of weeks.⁴⁸ Therefore all these commandments are dependent on true traditions. Those who dispute what I have said and say, do not the sages of the Mishnah also teach that the months are determined by when the new

41 Judah Ha-Parsi was a Karaite who wrote a book claiming that the Pentateuch follows a solar year of 12 months, with each month consisting of 30 days. However, the Bible nowhere says that a month consists of 30 days. Cf. I.E.'s commentary on Ex. 12:2.

42 Mishnah, *Rosh Hashanah* 1:5-8.

43 Cf. Ex. 12:2, 13:4.

44 The month of Sivan.

45 The month of Nisan.

46 Assuming that the new year starts with the ripening of the barley, what place is to determine its ripening and hence the spring? The barley ripens at different times in different places.

47 Perhaps we ought to add another month and see if something will grow and there will be fresh young ears. Cf. Weiser.

48 Since there is no barley. Cf. Lev. 23:9-22.

moon is seen, to them I reply that if you accept their tradition as truth, that the month is determined by the sighting of the new moon, also accept their tradition that the needs of the people also determine the new moon. For the new moon is contingent upon its announcement by the Bet Din. The Bet Din took into consideration the time of the fresh young ears, the solstice and the needs of the community⁴⁹ in determining whether to add an additional month. Why, with regard to the laws of plagues, which apply only to individuals and very rarely at that, does the Torah go into such great detail? And yet with regard to the laws of the calendar, which determine the festivals that apply to all Israel at all times, there is no clear-cut statement so that we must look for hints here and there as to how the month is to be determined. Why is this so in this perfect Torah? This is ironclad proof that Moses relied in these matters on the oral Torah which is a gladness to the heart and a healing to the bones. In reality, there is no difference between the written and oral *Torot*. They were both handed down to us by our ancestors. The Passover observed by King Hezekiah supports our faith in the Rabbinic tradition. It was done so on the advice of wise elders. Hezekiah did not offer the paschal lamb in its time and he presumed to eat leaven in the first month. He observed the "second Passover" for seven days, in a manner similar to the "first Passover."⁵⁰ There is ample proof that the Most High and Exalted One accepted what he did. This was so because

⁴⁹ Cf. *Sanhedrin* 11b.

⁵⁰ Hezekiah put off the observance of Passover for a month upon the advice of "his princes and all the congregation in Jerusalem." Cf. II Chron. 30:2. This supports the teaching of the Oral Law to the effect that a Bet Din may delay observance of Passover for a month if it is felt that the needs of the community warrant it. Otherwise, Hezekiah would have been guilty of eating leaven on Passover. Furthermore, he would have invented a new way to celebrate the Second Passover. Cf. Num. 9:9-13. For the Second Passover is observed for one night and Hezekiah kept it for seven days. Since Hezekiah was a pious king we must assume that the festival he observed was not the Second Passover but the Passover itself after an extra month was added (intercalated) to the year.

his actions were based on the ruling of a Bet Din. There was no deceit in him.

The third approach is the way of darkness and gloom. It lies outside of the circle. This is the approach of those who invent secret explanations for everything in Scripture. They believe that the laws and statutes of the Torah are riddles.⁵¹ I will not expend much time answering them for, *they are a people who do err in their heart* (Ps. 95:10). The fact of the matter is that the laws of the Torah do not disagree with what is right.⁵² They are correct in only one thing, viz., that every precept, be it minor or major, must be weighed in the scale of one's heart wherein the Eternal has planted some of his wisdom. Thus if there appears something in the Torah that is intellectually impossible to accept or contrary to the evidence of our senses, then we must search for a hidden meaning. This is so because intelligence is the basis of the Torah.⁵³ The Torah was not given to ignoramuses. Man's intelligence is the angel which mediates between him and his God. Thus anything in the Torah which does not contradict reason we must explain literally, take as it is written, and believe that it is so. We should not grope walls as the blind do, and interpret verses according to our subjective needs. Why should we turn what is evident into mysteries? Now if there are places with two meanings both of which are clearly true, one referring to the body and the other to the mind such as "circumcision of the flesh,"⁵⁴

⁵¹ I.E. takes issue with those who interpret the Torah as allegories. In I.E.'s alternate commentary on the Pentateuch this group is identified as the Christians.

⁵² Krinsky. That is, all the laws of the Torah must make sense.

⁵³ Cherez.

⁵⁴ Gen. 17:11.

and "uncircumcised of heart,"⁵⁵ and if there is a secret meaning to the *tree of life*, they are to be taken literally as well.⁵⁶ Now if anyone cannot accept what I have said, if he be wise let him open his eyes. In nature, too, we find things that serve more than one purpose, such as the nostrils, the tongue, and the legs that serve two purposes.⁵⁷

The fourth approach is close to the point, and a group of commentators have pursued it. This is the method adopted by the scholars in the land of the Greeks and Romans.⁵⁸ They do not rely on grammar but rather on Midrashic exegesis as do the books *Lekah Tov*⁵⁹ and *Or Enayim*.⁶⁰ Since the interpretations quoted in these works are already found in the books of the ancients, why do these later interpreters tire us by writing them again?⁶¹ There are Midrashic interpretations that are, in reality, in keeping with the literal meaning of the text.⁶² There are other Midrashim that are not to be taken literally, they have a secret meaning, an example being the Midrash to the effect that the Torah pre-dated the world by two thousand years. This Midrash

⁵⁵ Deut. 10:16. The point is the reason the flesh is circumcised is so that it will serve as a reminder to the Jew that there is a God above to whom he must submit. Thus the circumcision of the flesh serves as a reminder that one is to circumcise one's heart. Now although this reason for the commandment of circumcision is (in the opinion of I.E.) self-evident it in no way negates the literal meaning of this law (Cherez). I.E. is vague. For additional interpretations see Weiser and Meijler.

⁵⁶ Cf. I.E.'s comments on Gen. 3:24.

⁵⁷ Hence a verse or a law may have a literal as well as a secret meaning.

⁵⁸ The Christian world in contradistinction to those living in the Moslem world.

⁵⁹ A "Midrashic commentary to the Pentateuch and the five scrolls composed by R. Tobiah ben Eliezer of Castoria (Bulgaria) in the 11th century." (*Standard Jewish Encyclopedia*, N.Y., 1966.)

⁶⁰ A Midrash composed by R. Meir of Castoria. R. Meir was a student of R. Tobiah ben Eliezer.

⁶¹ These books merely quote earlier Midrashic material. Weiser explains that I.E. was upset with these books because they kept people from comprehending the literal meaning of the text and from learning how to analyze the Bible from a grammatical point of view.

⁶² Weiser. An alternate interpretation is: there are Midrashim which contradict each other.

is true only according to its secret meaning. However, many do not understand it so. Actually, it is impossible to take this Midrashic statement literally because a year is made up of a given number of days, and the measure of the minute and the day is contingent upon the motion of the sphere.⁶³ Hence if there is no sphere there is no day, certainly not two days or a year or two thousand years. If one were to ask,⁶⁴ what was the world like before creation, would he not be ashamed of himself for seeking an entity when as yet there was nothing in existence? Those who respond⁶⁵ by saying that God created other worlds before this one and that he created this world at a propitious time⁶⁶ are offering an answer based on the *plummet of emptiness* (Is. 34:11). Similarly those who say that the Almighty brought the world into existence to show his might to man, the object of creation, have satisfied themselves with a miserable answer which takes into consideration only part of a larger problem. There is clear proof to all but the blind that only one-twelfth of the earth is inhabited. Furthermore, the entire earth is an insignificant dot in relation to the sphere over it⁶⁷ and even less so to the uppermost sphere. The interpretation of *yom yom* (daily) (Prov. 8:30) as meaning two thousand years is also wrong from a purely exegetical point of

⁶³ Medieval man believed that the earth is surrounded by a sphere, in which the sun, moon, planets and stars are embedded. Without these spheres and their contents there can be no time, for time is made up of minutes, hours, days, weeks, months and years (cf. I.E.'s alternate introduction).

⁶⁴ This question is implied by anyone who takes literally the statement that the Torah existed two thousand years before the creation of the world.

⁶⁵ That is, they respond to I.E.'s insistence that the Rabbinic statement under discussion cannot be taken literally by saying: it can because there were other worlds in existence prior to this one.

⁶⁶ Cf. *Bereshit Rabbah* 3, "Rabbi Judah bar Simon said, 'Scripture states and there was evening' (Gen. 1:5), this teaches that there was time before this...Rabbi Abahu said, 'God created worlds and destroyed them until he created this one...'"

⁶⁷ The reference is to the lunar sphere which surrounds the earth (Cherez, Krinsky). The point is how can one maintain that man is the object of creation when he and the whole earth are insignificant dots in the universe.

view.⁶⁸ If the meaning of *yom yom* (day) was two thousand years, Scripture would have read: *yomayim* (two days) rather than *yom yom* (daily). This is so because the meaning of *yom yom* is daily. We similarly read, *ish ish* (what man soever) (Lev. 17:3) and *Blessed be the Lord day by day* (*yom yom*) (Ps. 68:20). Furthermore, the end of the verse *Playing always before him* proves the point.⁶⁹ Additionally, Proverbs goes on to say, *Happy is the man, that hearkeneth to me, Watching daily* (*yom yom*) *at my gates* (Prov. 8:34). Now, if *yom yom* means two thousand years then it follows that we should observe the true Torah for two thousand years.⁷⁰ Furthermore, the verse *For a thousand years in Thy sight are but as yesterday* (Ps. 90:4) speaks of man not of God.⁷¹ Those who are interested in the interpretation of this verse will find it in my commentary on Psalms.

There are also Midrashim whose main purpose is to relieve the mind tired by the study of a difficult and intricate *halakhah*.⁷² Other Midrashim are based upon well-known concepts. There are also Midrashim that are not according to *halakhah*. There are some Midrashim whose main

⁶⁸ The Midrash states, "The Torah preceded the existence of the earth by two thousand years, this is what Scripture means by, *Then I was by Him, as a nursling; And I was daily* (*yom yom*) *all delight, Playing always before Him* (Prov. 8:30). Now a day of God consists of one thousand years, as it is written, *For a thousand years in Thy sight are but as yesterday* (*yom eimol*) (Ps. 90:4)." Hence *yom yom* means that the Torah was God's delight for two thousand years (*Bereshit Rabbah*, 8:2).

⁶⁹ *Playing always* means the same as *yom yom*; hence *yom yom* means daily not two thousand.

⁷⁰ If *yom yom* means two thousand years then Prov. 8:34 reads: Happy is the man that hearkeneth to me, watching for two thousand years at my gates, i.e., observing the Torah for two thousand years. Since no one lives that long what purpose is there for Scripture to make such a statement? Hence *yom yom* cannot mean two thousand years.

⁷¹ See note 68. I.E. disagrees with the rabbis who interpret *Thy sight* as God's sight. According to I.E. *Thy sight* refers to man's sight.

⁷² When the sages wanted to relieve their minds they engaged in fanciful Midrashim (Chercz). Cf. *Sabbath* 30b.

purpose is to enlighten others.⁷³ These Midrashim explain the Torah to the young. There is a bird that cannot see on sunny days and is able to see only at night because its eyes are dim.⁷⁴ Among the Midrashim that are for the young is the one that says that the Torah opens with a *bet* because the word *berakhah* (blessing) opens with a *bet*. Now, the fact is that there are many curses that open with a *bet*, viz., *Behold, the Lord maketh the earth empty* (bokek) *and maketh it waste* (bolekah) (Is. 24:1); *And I will lay it waste* (batah) (Is. 5:6); *And the grinders cease* (batelu) (Eccles. 12:3); *And as for his ordinances, they have not known them* (ba'al-yeda'um) (Ps. 147:20); *From the pit of corruption* (beli) (Is. 38:17); *Your clothes are not waxen old* (balu) (Deut. 29:4); *The Lord hath swallowed up* (billa) (Lam. 2:2); *The Lord did there confound* (balal) (Gen. 11:9); *and thrust thee through* (bittekukh) (Ezek. 16:40); *and despatch them* (bare) *them with their swords* (Ezek. 23:47); *between the parts thereof* (betarav) (Jer. 34:18); *contempt* (bizzayon) *and wrath* (Es. 1:18); *bring forth for terror* (behalah) (Is. 65:23); *I will make thee a terror* (ballahot) (Ezek. 26:21); *a base fellow* (beliyya'al) (II Sam. 20:1); *Baal-peor* (Deut. 4:3); *Bel boweth down* (Is. 46:1); *priests of the high places* (bamot) (I Kings 13:33).

As to the *resh*,⁷⁵ if it stands for head as in *its head* (resheh) *was of fine gold* ((Dan. 2:32), it can also stand for evil (*ra*) as in *the wicked men* (*ra*) *and base fellows* (I Sam. 30:22).

Anyone with a little bit of intelligence and certainly one who has knowledge of the Torah can create his own Midrashim. The Midrashic

⁷³ The composer of the Midrash knew the literal meaning of the verse. However, the literal meaning was beyond the comprehension of his audience; hence he composed a homiletic interpretation.

⁷⁴ Similarly there are people who cannot be told the literal truth.

⁷⁵ There either was a Midrash which interpreted the *resh* this way, or I.E. points it out, should one so wish to interpret the *resh*.

interpretations are like clothes to the naked body.⁷⁶ Concerning such interpretations our sages of blessed memory said, *a verse never loses its literal meaning*.⁷⁷

One Midrash⁷⁸ interprets the word *bereshit* to mean that God created the world through the Torah, as it is written, *The Lord made me as the beginning (reshit) of His way* (Prov. 8:22).⁷⁹ Another Midrash states that the world was created upon the leviathan, as it is written, *He is the beginning (reshit) of the ways of God* (Job. 40:19). Another Midrash states that the world was created so that God might be feared, as it is written, *The fear of the Lord is the beginning (reshit) of wisdom* (Ps. 111:10). Another Midrash states that the world was created because of the *bikkurim* (first fruits), as it is written, *The choicest (reshit) first-fruits of thy land thou shalt bring into the house of the Lord thy God* (Ex. 23:19).

Another Midrash asks, why does the Torah open with a *bet*? To teach that God is one. It is only His creation that has two (*bet*) aspects, i.e., matter and form.⁸⁰ Another Midrashic reason given for the Torah opening with a *bet* is that the *bet* alludes to the two worlds.⁸¹ Another Midrash asks, why does the Torah open with a *bet* followed by *resh*, *alef*, *shin* and finally by *yod tav*? It answers that Scripture teaches that the first Temple, which preceded the creation of heaven and earth,⁸² will

⁷⁶ The body remains unchanged regardless of one's dress.

⁷⁷ *Sabbath* 63a.

⁷⁸ I.E. offers examples of a word being "dressed" in various garments.

⁷⁹ Cf. *Bereshit Rabbah* 1:2, *God looked into the Torah and created the world*.

⁸⁰ In other words, prior to creation there was only the *One*; after creation there came into being something with two aspects. The word *bet* also serve as the number two.

⁸¹ The earth and the eternal world.

⁸² Cf. *Pesachim* 54a.

stand for 410 years and then be destroyed.⁸³ The Bible continues, *Now the earth was unformed and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep* (v. 2). This means that darkness descended upon the earth following the removal of the Divine presence from the earth.⁸⁴ However, all was not lost, for *(and) the spirit of God hovered over the face of the waters* (v. 2); i.e., the spirit of wisdom and understanding rested on the expounders of the Torah which is likened to water.⁸⁵ Ultimately God will say, *Let there be light* (v. 3); i.e., the Messianic age will come. At that time God will separate those who hope for the Lord's salvation and those who do evil deeds in the dark.⁸⁶

Another Midrash interprets *bereshit* to be two words that mean that everything was created out of fire which is the foundation of all.⁸⁷ Another Midrash states that *bereshit* alludes to six, as in *six (shit) cubits* (Dan. 3:1).⁸⁸ The six allude to the six compass points of every body. The numerical value of first letters of each word in the first verse of the Torah comes to 22. This alludes to the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Similarly the seven letters in this verse allude to the seven vowels or to the seven planets.⁸⁹ The first verse of the Torah has 28 letters corresponding to the 28 phases of the moon. The same is the case with the 28 "times" mentioned in Kohelet (Eccles. 3:2 and 8).

⁸³ The interpretation is as follows: *bet* stands for *bayit* (the Temple), *resh*, *alef*, *shin* stands for *rishon* (first). *Tav* is numerically equivalent to 400 and *yod* to 10, hence, the interpretation: the *bayit rishon* (first Temple) will stand for 410 years.

⁸⁴ When the Temple was destroyed.

⁸⁵ The *Tikune Zohar* 30 reads, "What does, and the spirit of God hovered over the face of the waters, mean? Without a doubt it means that when the *Shikhinah* went into exile God's spirit hovered over those who study the Torah."

⁸⁶ This is the meaning of *And God divided the light from the darkness*, etc. (v. 4).

⁸⁷ The Midrash apparently rearranges the word *bereshit* as *berit esh*, a covenant of fire. Cf. Weiser and Cherez. See also *Tikune Zohar* 22, which similarly interprets *bereshit*.

⁸⁸ The Midrash breaks up *bereshit* as follows: *bara* (he created) *shit* (six).

⁸⁹ Literally, the seven moving stars. They are: Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, the Sun, Venus, Mercury and the Moon.



The Midrash also states that Genesis opens with a *bet* and closes with a *mem*⁹⁰ because it alludes to the name of God⁹¹ enunciated by the High Priest on the Day of Atonement. The name was revealed to Moses at Sinai, as it is written, *The Lord is among them* (bam),⁹² *as in Sinai, in holiness* (Ps. 68:18). Another Midrash says that the Torah opens with *In the beginning* and closes with the word *Israel* because Israel was on God's mind at the time of creation.⁹³ The end of the matter is, there is no limit to Midrashic interpretations.

The fifth method is the one upon which I will base my commentary. It appears to me to be correct in the presence of God whom alone I fear. I will not show favoritism to anyone when it comes to interpreting the Torah.⁹⁴ I will, to the utmost of my ability, try to understand grammatically every word and then do my best to explain it. Every word whose meaning the reader desires to know will be found explained the first time the word is encountered. For example, the meaning of sky (*shamayim*) will be given in the first verse of Genesis. This will apply to all terms. I will not make mention of the reasons offered by the Massorites⁹⁵ as to why certain words are at times spelled full and at other times defectively because all of their reasons are of a Midrashic nature. The fact is that Scripture sometimes fully and clearly spells out a word and at other times omits an unpronounced letter for the sake of

⁹⁰ The *bet* in Gen. 1:1, *bereshit*; the *mem* in Gen. 50:26, *mitzrayim*. *Mem bet* is numerically equivalent to 42.

⁹¹ Maimonides in Chap. 1:62 of the *Guide for the Perplexed* writes, "There was also a name (of God) of 42 letters known among them. Every intelligent person knows that one word of 42 letters is impossible. But it was a phrase of several words which totaled 42 letters."

⁹² *Bam* (*bet mem*) is numerically equivalent to 42.

⁹³ "In the beginning...Israel," cf. *Bereshit Rabbah* 1:5.

⁹⁴ I.E. will take issue with accepted authorities when he feels they misinterpret the Biblical texts.

⁹⁵ "The commentators who sought to explain the cause of the deviations from normal orthography." (M. Friedlander, *Ibn Ezra Literature*, Vol. III, London, 1877).

brevity. Since the Massorites claim to be able to explain the reasons for full and defective spellings, let them tell us what spelling the scribes should have used in writing Scripture.⁹⁶ Now Moses left out the *vav* of *yimlokh* (shall reign) in *The Lord shall reign* (*yimlokh*) (Ex. 15:18), whereas the editors of Proverbs spelled the word *yimlokh* with a *vav* in *For a servant when he reigned* (*yimlokh*) (Prov. 30:22). However, many years passed between Moses and the editors of Proverbs.⁹⁷ Actually, the reason given by the Massorites for the different spellings of the same word are for children. I would also add that one who correctly interprets the Torah does not need to assume any scribal emendations.⁹⁸ It should also be noted that the Aramaic translation of the Torah accurately rendered the meaning of the Pentateuch and explained to us all its difficult parts. Now if at times he (the Aramaic translator, Onkelos) followed the Midrashim,⁹⁹ although he knew the basics better than we, he did so in order to offer additional meanings to a given text where even the simple could grasp the plain meaning of the text.¹⁰⁰ Thus he renders *iroh* (Gen. 49:11) not as foal but as his city, and *beni* (colt) as will build. He also renders *atono* (his ass's colt) (*Ibid.*) as "the gate of the entrance" (*sha'ar ha-iton*).¹⁰¹ No harm was done by this because the literal meaning of a verse is never negated by Midrashic interpretations for there are 70 faces to the Torah. However, with regard to verses which deal with laws, statutes and regulations, if we find two possible

⁹⁶ This interpretation is based on the reading in *Vat. Ebr.* 38.

⁹⁷ The point being that one cannot expect consistency over such a long period.

⁹⁸ See I.E.'s comments on Gen. 18:13.

⁹⁹ The point is that Onkelos occasionally offers a Midrashic interpretation of a verse whose meaning is obvious. He does so to offer additional meanings to the text. In these instances no harm is done since the plain meaning is obvious.

¹⁰⁰ In such cases there is no chance of even a simpleton misunderstanding the literal meaning of a verse which Onkelos interprets Midrashically.

¹⁰¹ Cf. Ezek. 40:15. Onkelos renders *Binding his foal* (*iroh*) *unto the vine*, *And his ass's colt* (*beni atono*) *unto the choice vine* as, *Israel (the vine) will go round about His city (Jerusalem). Israel (the choice vine) will build (beni) His Temple (atono), connecting atono with sha'ar ha-iton in Ezek. 40:15).*

interpretations for a verse and one of them is in keeping with the interpretation of the transmitters of tradition,¹⁰² all of whom were righteous men, then without reservation and with all our might we will rely on the truth of their words.¹⁰³ Heaven forbid that we should join the Sadducees who claim that the traditions of the Rabbinic sages contradict the literal meaning of Scripture and the rules of grammar. The fact of the matter is that our ancient sages are true and all their words are true. May the Lord God of truth lead his servant in the way of truth.

¹⁰² The Rabbinic sages.

¹⁰³ The point is, when the Rabbinic interpretation is in keeping with the meaning of the verse it must be accepted even if it is possible to interpret the verse differently. As to those instances where the Rabbinic interpretation contradicts the plain meaning of a verse, see I.E.'s comments on Gen. 1:26 and the notes thereto.

CHAPTER I

BERESHIT

1. IN THE BEGINNING. Our wise men¹ taught that the letter *bet* (of *bereshit*, in the beginning) is superfluous.² They compare it to the *bet* in the word *ba-rishonah* (at the first) (Genesis 13:4). We know the *bet* in *ba-rishonah* to be superfluous for we find *they shall set forth first* (*rishonah*) (Numbers 2:9).³ However, if this were so the *bet* (of *bereshit*) would be vocalized with a long *kamatz*.⁴

Other scholars maintain that the word *bereshit* is always in the construct and its meaning in our verse is: "In the beginning of the evening, or of the night, or of the darkness."⁵ However, they have

¹ The Hebrew grammarians. See Ibn Janah, *Sefer ha-Rikmah*, 6:2.

² The letter *bet* placed before the word *reshit* has no translatable meaning. According to Weiser it is there for emphasis. Our verse should thus be rendered: First God created heaven and earth.

³ According to this opinion *rishonah* and *ba-rishonah* mean the same. Hence the *bet* of *ba-rishonah* is superfluous.

⁴ As is the *bet* of *ba-rishonah*. The fact that the *bet* of *bereshit* is vocalized with a *sheva* proves that both cases are not exactly the same.

⁵ The word or phrase that *bereshit* is connected to is missing and must be supplied by the reader. According to Cherez, I.E. is trying to explain why the superfluous *bet* of *bereshit* is vocalized with a *sheva* while that of *ba-rishonah* is vocalized with a *kamatz*. The reason is that *bereshit* is in the construct and therefore is vocalized with a *sheva*.

overlooked *And he chose a first part (reshit) for himself* (Deuteronomy 33:21).⁶

Others say that the *bet* of *bereshit* is a preposition.⁷ They explain that Scripture intends to preclude the thought that heaven and earth were preexisting. Hence it states, *In the beginning*.⁸

I believe that *bereshit* is in the construct, as in *In the beginning of (bereshit) the reign of Jehoiakim* (Jeremiah 26:1).⁹ Don't ask, how can a word in the construct be connected to a verb in the perfect.¹⁰ This presents no problem, for we find that very case in the verse *When the Lord spoke at first with Hosea* (Hosea 1:2),¹¹ and in the verse *the city where David encamped* (Isaiah 29:1).¹² The meaning of *bereshit* will be explained in our comments on the next verse.¹³

CREATED. Most Biblical commentators explain that the word *bara* (created) indicates creation *ex nihilo*. *But if the Lord make (yivra) a new thing (beri'ah)* (Num. 16:30) is similar. However, they have overlooked *And God created (va-yivra) the great sea monsters*¹⁴ (Gen. 1:21) and the

⁶ Where the word *reshit* is in the absolute.

⁷ The Hebrew texts printed in our editions are most probably incorrect. We have followed *Vat. Ebr.* 38, which has *kli ta'am* rather than *bli ta'am*. For alternate interpretations see Filwarg, Weiser and Cherez.

⁸ The *bet* is there for emphasis. The meaning of the verse is: *In the beginning*, i.e., before anything was created, God created heaven and earth.

⁹ I.E. agrees that *bereshit* is in the construct. He disagrees with the earlier quoted opinion only in maintaining that it is not always in the construct.

¹⁰ A noun is usually in the construct when connected to another noun, hence I.E.'s comment.

¹¹ *Techillat* (at first) is in the construct with *dibber* (spoke).

¹² *Kiryat* (the city) is in the construct with *chanah* (encamped).

¹³ That is, the explanation of what *bereshit* in the construct is to be connected to.

¹⁴ God obviously did not create the sea monsters *ex nihilo*, for the verse concludes, *and every living creature that creepeth, wherewith the waters swarmed*, which shows that the sea monsters were created out of the water. Also, it is absurd to assume that on the fifth day of creation God would create sea monsters *ex nihilo*.

three times the word created is used in one verse, viz., *And God created (va-yivra) man in His own image, in the image of God created (bara) He him; male and female created (bara) He them* (Gen. 1:27). They also failed to consider *I form the light, and create darkness* (Is. 45:7) wherein darkness, which is the opposite of light, an existing entity, is described by the prophet as being created.¹⁵

The following is the precise explanation of the word *bara*. *Bara* has two meanings, one of which has been noted above.¹⁶ The second¹⁷ is found in the verse *neither did he eat (bara) bread with them* (II Samuel 12:17). However, in the latter case, an *alef* has been substituted for a *heh*.¹⁸ The reason is that *bara* (in I Sam. 12:17) is similar to *le-havrot* (to urge to eat) in *And all the people came to cause David to eat (le-havrot) bread* (II Sam. 3:35). The verb *le-havrot* appears in the *hifil* (and its root ends with *heh*), for if it ended with an *alef*, Scripture would have read *le-havri*, as in *to make yourselves fat (le-havri'achem) with the chiefest of all the offerings of Israel* (I Sam. 2:29).

We also find *bara* conjugated in the *pi'el*, as in *and cut down (u-vereta) for thyself (trees)* (Joshua 17:15). This is not like the similar word *beru* in *choose (beru) you a man for you* (I Sam. 17:8) but rather

¹⁵ Darkness is the absence of light. Thus Isaiah uses the term created in the opposite sense of creation *ex nihilo*. In Isaiah it means the creation of nothing out of something (Krinsky). Hence *bara* does not necessarily imply creation *ex nihilo*.

¹⁶ That is, to create or make.

¹⁷ That is, to eat.

¹⁸ Most of our manuscripts of the Bible have *barah* with a *heh*. However, Ibn Ezra's manuscript must have had *bara* with an *alef*. See also Jacob ben Haim's edition of the Hebrew Bible, 1524, which has the same reading as Ibn Ezra. There is some difficulty in understanding this comment as the printed text is corrupt. We have followed *Vat. Ebr.* 38 as suggested by Weiser. For a different rendering see Filwarg.

like *bare* (hack, dispatch) in *and dispatch them* (u-vare) *with their swords*¹⁹ (Ezekiel 23:47).

The meaning of *bara* is to cut or to set a boundary. The intelligent person will understand what I am alluding to.²⁰

GOD. *Elohim* (God) is a plural. We know this because we come across the singular form *Elo'ah*.²¹ *Elohim* is employed stylistically. Every language has honorific terminology. In the non-Hebrew tongues when an inferior addresses a superior he employs the plural. In Arabic it is customary for a dignitary such as a king to speak in the plural. In Hebrew, too, it is considered a sign of dignity to employ the plural when speaking of a superior. Such is the case with the words *adonim* (lords) and *be'alim* (owners). Thus Scripture says, *a cruel lord* (adonim) (Is. 19:4),²² and *and the owner thereof* (be'alav) *shall accept it* (Exodus 22:10).²³ The terms *alav* (upon him), *elav* (to him), and *adav* (unto him)

¹⁹ Ibn Janah, *The Book of Roots*, root *bet, resh, alef*, explains *bara* in Josh. 17:15 to mean chose, as in I Sam. 17:8. Ibn Ezra disagrees. The point of I.E.'s comment is that *bara* spelled *bet, resh, alef* primarily means to cut. It is encountered with this meaning in both the *kal* and *pi'el*. *Bara* also means to eat. However, in the latter case its root is *bet, resh, heh*, although it is found spelled *bet, resh, alef* in I Sam. 17:8. In the latter instance, however, we treat it as if there were an interchange between the *heh* and *alef*.

²⁰ I. Husik, *A History of Medieval Jewish Philosophy*, p. 190, notes, "The Hebrew word *bara*, ordinarily translated "created," which implies to most people the idea of *creatio ex nihilo*, Ibn Ezra renders, in accordance with its etymology, to limit, to define, by drawing or incising a line or boundary. Having said this, Ibn Ezra, in his wonted mysterious manner, stops short, refusing to say more, and preferring to mystify the reader by adding the tantalizing phrase, 'The intelligent will understand.' He means apparently to indicate that an eternal matter was endowed with form." Nahman Krochmal, *More Nevuche Ha-zeman* (quoted by Krinsky), suggests that Ibn Ezra's belief is similar to that of the Kabbalists; i.e., the world was created out of an emanation from God. See also C. Sirot, *Philosophy in the Middle Ages* (Hebrew), p. 112. Ibn Ezra was a neo-Platonist. According to neo-Platonism the world came about by emanation from God. Ibn Ezra is apparently saying that at the creation spoken of in the first chapter of Genesis, God gave final form to what had previously emanated from Him.

²¹ Ps. 114:7. *Elo'ah* being the singular of *Elohim*.

²² *Adonim* is a plural, yet its meaning in this verse is singular (lord). The singular of *adonim* is *adon*.

²³ *Be'alav* literally means, its owners.

are similar.²⁴ It is for this reason that Scripture reads *bara Elohim* and not *bare'u Elohim*.²⁵

We know from the study of logic that speech is called *safah*²⁶ because it is seen to come from the lips. Similarly man's highest soul is called heart (*lev*) even though the soul itself is incorporeal while the heart is corporeal. It is referred to in this manner because the heart is its first resting place. Similarly God is called *Elohim* because His actions are executed via angels who do His will and who are referred to as *Elohim*.²⁷ I will explain part of the secret of God's name when I comment on *for My name is in him* (Ex. 23:21).

Pay no heed to the opinion of Rabbi Saadiah Gaon who holds that man is superior to the angels. I have already explained to you in *The Book of Foundation* that all of his proofs are wrong. We know that the prophets are the most exalted human beings. Nevertheless, the prophet Joshua fell upon his face and prostrated himself before God's angel and said to him, *What saith my lord unto his servant* (Josh. 5:14).²⁸ The same is true of the prophets Zechariah and Daniel.²⁹ Why should I elaborate when this point is so elementary?

²⁴ All of these words have plural endings, yet are used to indicate singulars.

²⁵ Since *Elohim* is to be understood as singular, the verb following it (*bara*) is in the singular. If *Elohim* were plural, the verb following it would also be plural (*bare'u*).

²⁶ *Safah* is the Hebrew word for lip. The point is that more than the lips are involved in speech, but speech is so called because it is seen to come from the lips.

²⁷ Man's soul is often referred to in Scripture as *lev* because the soul acts via the heart. Similarly God is called *Elohim* because He acts via the angels. Husik, p. 191, points out that according to I.E., "God cannot come in contact with the material and changeable (hence)...it follows that (the terrestrial world)...was not made directly by him, but by angels; hence the word *Elohim* is used in the first chapter of Genesis, which means primarily the angels, and secondarily God as acting through the angels."

²⁸ Joshua's bowing before God's angels proves that angels are superior to prophets.

²⁹ Both address the angels as superiors. See Zechariah 1:9 and Dan. 10:17.

The meaning of Lord of Hosts (*Elohe ha-tzeva'ot*) is the same as *God of gods* (*Elohe ha-Elohim*) (Deut. 10:17).³⁰ The definition of *elohim* (lord) is angels.³¹ People engaged in the dispensation of God's justice are also called *elohim*.³² *Elohim* is an adjective, not a proper noun.³³ It is not found conjugated in the perfect or imperfect.³⁴

One should not assume that angels are composed of fire and air because Scripture states, *Who makest winds Thy messengers, The flaming fire Thy ministers* (Psalms 104:4).³⁵ This is not the literal meaning of this verse. David (in Psalm 104) speaks first of creation. He starts with light and says, *Who coverest Thyself with light as with a garment* (Ps. 104:2). He then goes on to say, *Who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain*, heaven referring to the firmament upon which is water, fire, snow and wind. David next says that the wind serves as God's agent; i.e., it goes wherever God sends it. He speaks in a similar vein of fire as one of God's ministers.³⁶ David then says, *Who didst establish the earth upon its foundations* (Ps. 104:5), which refers to dry land. Similarly it is written, *Stormy wind, fulfilling His word* (Ps. 148:8).³⁷

³⁰ We thus see that *Elohim* means the same as *tzeva'ot* (hosts or angels).

³¹ Reading *malakh* (angel) rather than *melekh* (king) (Weiser).

³² According to Rabbinic interpretation *Elohim* at times signifies a judge. See *Mekhila* on Ex. 21:6.

³³ Hence it can be declined and be in the construct. A proper noun cannot. I.E. seems to limit the term noun to proper nouns. Apparently common nouns were treated like adjectives.

³⁴ Hebrew adjectives have verbal forms. However, *Elohim* is never found in the verbal form. Nevertheless, Ibn Ezra insists that it is an adjective.

³⁵ Which implies that God makes his angels out of wind.

³⁶ Psalm 104. It is not to be taken as implying that the angels are made out of fire. It rather means that fire is God's agent. Cf. Ibn Ezra on Ps. 104:4.

³⁷ Which shows that the wind is God's agent. Krinsky suggests that this quote is misplaced and should follow, "it (the winds) goes wherever God sends it."

Et indicates the very thing. It signifies the direct object, as in *the heaven* (et ha-shamayim).³⁸ However, sometimes it is omitted, as in *that God created man* (Deut. 4:32). It is also found placed before the subject, as in *and when there came a lion, or (ve-et) a bear* (I Sam. 17:34). However, the latter usage is very rare. Furthermore, *et* is used in place of with or from.³⁹

THE HEAVEN. The definite article (*ha*) is placed before heaven (*shamayim*) to indicate that Scripture speaks of the heaven visible to man.⁴⁰ Heaven (*shamayim*) is always written in the plural.⁴¹ It is possible that *its dominion* in *Knowest thou the ordinances of the heavens? Canst thou establish its dominion over the earth?*⁴² (Job 38:33) refers to the dominion exercised by each one of the heavenly spheres.⁴³

The meaning of *shamayim* (heaven) is high and above, as it is in Arabic, a language akin in form to Hebrew. There is also a heaven of heavens.⁴⁴ The word for heaven (*shamayim*) is never written in the singular.⁴⁵ It is like the words millstone (*rechayim*) and noon

³⁸ Gen. 1:1. The word *et* is a most difficult word to translate because it has many different meanings, depending on the context.

³⁹ Cf. Ex. 2:21; 9:29.

⁴⁰ That is, the firmament. According to I.E. there is a heaven above the firmament which is invisible to man. This heaven is eternal. It contains the spheres in which the planets and constellations are embodied. Above this heaven is the abode of the angels. Cf. Husik, p. 190.

⁴¹ The word *shamayim* (heaven) is a plural.

⁴² In this verse *its dominion* is in the singular. Since *shamayim* is a plural, we would expect "their dominion" rather than "its dominion."

⁴³ See note 40 above. See also Ibn Ezra's Introduction, page XVII, second paragraph.

⁴⁴ Cf. Ps. 148:4. Scripture in our chapter speaks of the visible heaven. However, in Psalm 148 it speaks of the "heaven of heavens." The *heaven of heavens* is the spheres (Krinsky). See note 40.

⁴⁵ Even if the reference is to one of the heavens.

(*tzohorayim*). Those who are well-versed in geometry will understand these secrets.⁴⁶

Saadiyah Gaon says that the earth may be compared to a point and the heaven to a thread circling it. Since Scripture tells us that heaven and earth were created, we deduce from this that all their contents, such as fire and water, were also created.⁴⁷ Others say that the earth includes water and the heaven air.⁴⁸ However, in my opinion the heaven and earth spoken of in our verse refer only to the firmament and the dry land.⁴⁹ For only one thing was created on each day. Thus light was created on the first day, the firmament on the second, plants on the third, luminaries on the fourth, and living creatures on the fifth and the sixth. This interpretation is borne out by the psalm quoted above (Psalm 104).

It is impossible to maintain that the line circling the dot was created before the dot, or the dot before the circle. Hence our sages say that heaven and earth were created simultaneously.⁵⁰ They offer as proof of their viewpoint, *Yea, My hand hath laid the foundation of the earth, And My right hand hath spread out the heavens; When I call unto them, They stand up together* (Is. 48:13).⁵¹ However, this proof is questionable. The plain meaning of this verse is not so, for how could God address

⁴⁶ They will understand the reference to the heaven of heavens.

⁴⁷ Scripture does not explicitly mention the creation of fire and water, two of the four elements. However, according to Saadiyah the creation of these two elements is implied. There was no need for Scripture to mention their creation as their creation is self evident. For how could the fire and water, which filled the void between heaven and earth, be in existence before the creation of their container? Cf. I.E.'s alternate commentary on this verse in Weiser, p. 145.

⁴⁸ Hence Scripture does state that these two elements were created.

⁴⁹ Gen. 1:1 does not tell us that God created heaven and earth on the first day; neither does it deal with the creation of matter. I.E. will explain the meaning of this verse later on in his comments.

⁵⁰ *Hagigah* 12a.

⁵¹ *They stand up together* implies that they were created simultaneously.

that which was not yet created?⁵² How could He call to that which was in a chaotic state? The explanation of this verse is as follows: I, God, created heaven and earth. When I call them, they stand before Me as servants ready to do My will. The meaning of this verse is similar to that of *Thy word standeth fast in heaven* (Ps. 119:89). After stating this the Psalmist makes mention of the earth (Ps. 119:90). He then goes on to say that heaven and earth stand ready to execute any commands that God will direct to them (Ps. 119:91).

2. NOW THE EARTH. The word *ha-aretz* (the earth) is irregular in that it is always vocalized with a *kamatz* beneath both the *heh* and the *alef*.⁵³ It is unlike the word *ha-elef* (the thousand) in *Thou, O Solomon, shall have the thousand* (*ha-elef*) (Canticles 8:12); or *ha-even* (the stone) in *and this stone* (*ha-even*) (Gen. 28:22).⁵⁴

UNFORMED. Saadiah Gaon claims that the word *tohu* (unformed) is a derivative of *tehom* (the deep). This explanation is incorrect because the *mem* of *tehom* is a root letter⁵⁵ like the *mem* of *hadom* (footstool).⁵⁶

The *Sefer Yetzirah* explains *tohu* (unformed) and *bohu* (void) as follows: *Tohu refers to the green line; bohu alludes to the smooth stones*.⁵⁷ However, the correct meaning of these terms is found in the Aramaic translation of the Pentateuch.⁵⁸ We similarly read, *And in the*

⁵² How can the Bible say, "When I call unto them," if they were not yet in being?

⁵³ That is, the word *eretz* (earth) is vocalized *aretz* when preceded by the definite article. The normal vocalization should be *ha-eretz*, with a *segol* beneath the *alef*.

⁵⁴ In *elef* and *even* the *segol* remains in place even when preceded by the definite article.

⁵⁵ Hence the *mem* would not fall out. Thus *tohu* cannot derive from *tehom*.

⁵⁶ The *mem* of *tehom* is similar to the *mem* of *hadom*. Both *mems* are integral parts of the respective words and do not drop out.

⁵⁷ Cf. *Hagigah* 12a. "*Tohu* is a green band which encompasses the whole world, out of which darkness proceeds..., and *tohu* consists of the smooth stones in the abyss, out of which the waters proceed."

⁵⁸ That is, Onkelos. The latter renders these terms as "waste and empty."

waste (tohu), a howling wilderness (Deut. 32:10), and go after vain things (tohu) (I Sam. 12:21), which means worshipping things that have no substance.⁵⁹

[VOID.] *Bohu* is a synonym of *tohu*.

The *vavs* of *tohu* and *bohu* are in place of a *heh*. They are like the *vav* in (*va-yishtachu*) (and he bowed)⁶⁰ and the *vav* of *achu* (reed-grass) in *They fed in the reed-grass* (*achu*) (Gen. 41:2).⁶¹

The meaning of our verses is this: When the creation of the firmament and the dry land took place, the earth was uninhabited because it was covered with water. God created the earth in such a way that by the laws of nature it would be below the waters.⁶² Do not reject this interpretation because of the *vav* that is placed before the words *the earth* (*ve-ha-aretz*), for its meaning is identical to that of the Arabic *fa*.⁶³ The *vav* placed before the word mist (*ed*) in *but there went up a mist* (*ve-ed*) *from the earth* (Gen. 2:6)⁶⁴ is analogous.

Our verses are to be so interpreted because Moses did not speak of the eternal world, which is the world of the angels; he spoke only of the

⁵⁹ That is, idols.

⁶⁰ The final *vav* of *va-yishtachu* (and he bowed) is in place of a *heh*.

⁶¹ The final *vav* of *achu* (reed grass) is in place of a *heh*.

⁶² Earth is the heaviest and water is the second heaviest of the four elements. Hence according to the laws of nature earth has the lowest position and water the next lowest. Thus at the beginning of creation the earth was covered with water. It took a special act of God to dry the land.

⁶³ The *vav* of *ve-ha'aretz* (and the earth) introduces a new idea. This contradicts I.E.'s assertion that verse 2 is a mere continuation of verse 1, for I.E. interprets verse 1 and 2 as reading: When God made heaven and earth the earth was unformed and void. I.E. thus explains that the *vav* does not always mean "and" (it is like the Arabic *fa*). Thus verse 2 reads: the earth was, rather than: and the earth was.

⁶⁴ The *vav* of *ve-ed* does not mean "and a mist."

transient world.⁶⁵ How can those who say that the word heaven in the first verse refers to the highest heavens explain the presence of the earth in the same verse?⁶⁶ Intelligent people have reputable proof that there is only one earth.⁶⁷ As to the Midrash, when it says that there are seven earths it means that the area of the world inhabited by human beings is divided into seven sections.⁶⁸ The Holy Temple was in the center of the inhabited world.⁶⁹ It was not in the center of the earth because we know that it was far from there.

AND THE SPIRIT OF GOD. *Ru'ach* (wind) is in the construct with *Elohim* (God) because it was the medium employed by God to dry the land.⁷⁰

[THE WATERS.] *Mayim* (waters) is in the plural. It does not come in a singular form. It belongs to the dual forms,⁷¹ the latter being either

⁶⁵ There were those who explained the sky in Gen. 1:1 as referring to heaven. Cf. *Hagigah* 12a; note 40 above. I.E. disagrees. He maintains that heaven in verse 1 refers only to the firmament.

⁶⁶ If *shamayim* does not refer to the firmament but rather to the abode of the heavenly beings, what, then, does earth refer to? It is illogical to assume that the Bible juxtaposes the creation of the eternal with the creation of the transient.

⁶⁷ Perhaps one will argue that earth refers to some spiritual earth, hence I.E.'s argument that unlike the heavens there is only one earth.

⁶⁸ The Midrash is not to be taken literally. The seven earths are mentioned in *Zohar Chadash* 1:216.

⁶⁹ According to the Midrash the Temple was in the center of the world. Cf. *Midrash Tehillim* 48:2. Here too world means the inhabitable world and not the globe.

⁷⁰ I.E. renders *ru'ach* (spirit) as wind. Thus *ve-ru'ach Elohim* (and the spirit of God) means: and God's wind.

⁷¹ Certain Hebrew words are found only in the dual forms, e.g., noon (*tzohorayim*), heaven (*shamayim*), ears (*oznayim*), hands (*yadayim*), legs (*raglayim*).

masculine or feminine.⁷² *Mayim* is also found used in the singular in *the water of sprinkling was not dashed against him* (Num. 19:13).⁷³

[HOVERED.] *Merachefet* (hovered) means "blowing above the waters." *As an eagle...Hovereth (yerachef) over her young* (Deut. 32:11), is similar.

3. AND GOD SAID. Saadiah Gaon interprets *va-yomer Elohim* (and God said), as and God wanted. However, if this were the case Scripture should have stated God wanted (said) light to be. Therefore *va-yomer Elohim* is to be rendered "and God said."⁷⁴ We similarly read, *By the word of the Lord were the heavens made* (Ps. 33:6), and *For He commanded, and they were created* (Ps. 148:5).⁷⁵ Scripture describes creation as coming about by God's word because it wants to teach us that heaven and earth came into being without any labor on God's part. We may compare this to a king assigning certain tasks to his servants.

[LIGHT.] The light spoken of in this verse was above the air.⁷⁶

4. AND GOD SAW THE LIGHT. "Saw" is to be understood here as perceived. Compare, *Then I saw that wisdom excelleth folly* (Ecclesiastes 2:13).⁷⁷

⁷² Most of the words in dual form are feminine. However, I.E. points out that this is not necessarily so. *Waters* is in the masculine. A masculine noun may also come in the dual form (Filwarg). For an alternate interpretation see Krinsky.

⁷³ Strictly speaking, if *mayim* is in the plural, the verb pertaining to it should also be in the plural. Hence, rather than "was not," one would expect "were not."

⁷⁴ If *va-yomer Elohim* means God wanted, rather than God said, Scripture should have used the infinite *li-heyot* in place of *yehi*; *Let there be* implies a statement.

⁷⁵ Here creation is described as coming about by God's word. The terms used are: spoke and command. It is absurd to translate these two words as wanted.

⁷⁶ See note 88.

⁷⁷ I.E.'s proof text may be Dan. 10:7, viz., *And I Daniel alone saw the vision*. I.E. reads, *and I saw*.

The meaning of *divided* is: He divided them by naming one, day and the other, night.⁷⁸

5. AND GOD CALLED. The *heh* of *laylah* (night) is superfluous, because the word is penultimately accented. It is always a masculine noun.⁷⁹

EVENING. *Erev* (evening) is close in meaning to *choshekh* (darkness). *Erev* is so called because forms are then intermingled.⁸⁰ The opposite of evening is called *boker* (morning) because one can then distinguish between various forms.⁸¹

One day refers to the movement of the sphere.⁸² There is a secret meaning to the Midrashic statement to the effect that the world will exist for six thousand years.⁸³

Once it is stated that God called the light "day," it is impossible to maintain that the evening, too, is considered part of the day.⁸⁴ The correct interpretation of *And there was evening and there was morning, one day* is that evening passed and the morning of the first day also came. If the intention of this verse is to teach that evening and morning

⁷⁸ God divided light from darkness by giving each a name. This verse doesn't speak of a physical division. Thus verse 5 explains how God divided the light from the darkness (Filwarg).

⁷⁹ If the *heh* of *laylah* (night) was an essential part of the word, *laylah* would be a feminine noun and would be accented on the last syllable (Filwarg).

⁸⁰ The root of intermingle (*erev*) is *ayin, resh, bet*.

⁸¹ *Bakker* means to examine. Cf. Lev. 27:33.

⁸² The heavenly sphere made one revolution. The sun was not yet seen in the firmament; neither was there as yet a firmament. Hence I.E.'s comment.

⁸³ Cf. *Sanhedrin* 97a.

⁸⁴ I.E. takes issue with those who maintain that the evening is part of the day. According to I.E. day refers only to daylight. For the implications of this comment see Weiser.

make a day, then what is the meaning of *And there was evening and there was morning, a second day* (v. 8)?⁸⁵

6. AND GOD SAID. Saadiah Gaon says things about the firmament that are not so.⁸⁶ The correct interpretation of firmament (*raki'a*) is something spread out, as in *And they did beat* (va-yirakke'u) *the gold into thin plates* (Ex. 39:3); *Then did I beat them* (erka'em) (II Sam. 22:43); and similarly, *And spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in* (Is. 40:22).

How precious are the words of he who said that the firmament begins at the point where the sun and the ocean merge.⁸⁷ The firmament is the air because when the light shone very strongly upon the earth and a wind dried off from the earth, the flame turned into the firmament.⁸⁸ Similarly⁸⁹ the Psalmist states, *Who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain; Who layest the beams of Thine upper chambers in the waters* (Ps. 104:2 and 3). The Psalmist then makes mention of the clouds and the wind and the establishment of the earth. The latter is above the waters. We thus read, *For He hath founded it (the earth) upon the seas* (Ps. 24:2), and *To Him that spread forth the earth above the waters* (Ps.

⁸⁵ If the intention of Scripture is to teach us that evening and morning make a day, why keep on repeating this with regard to the subsequent days? Hence Scripture is only describing what happened (Kaputa).

⁸⁶ Saadiah says that the waters are congealed on the firmament in a manner similar to the albumen of an egg. Saadiah also identifies the firmament with heaven (Krinsky).

⁸⁷ Reading *ketzot ha-shamayim*, as in *Vat. Ebr.* 38, for *ketzot ha-shemesh*. Cf. *Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer*, Chap. III.

⁸⁸ I.E. apparently alludes here to "the light as the medium whereby the chaotic base elements were progressively transformed into their present form" (Levine). Fire was believed to be one of the primeval elements out of which the world was created. I.E. believed that this element "changed and became the *raki'a* (firmament)" (Cohen).

⁸⁹ Ps. 104:2 describes the heaven (firmament) as being "stretched out like a curtain," which agrees with I.E.'s interpretation that the firmament is "something spread out." Furthermore, Psalm 104, like Gen. 1:6-10, first describes the creation of the sky and then that of the dry land.

136:6). Similarly whoever goes to the ocean is said to be going down.⁹⁰ The meaning of *(He) That calleth for the waters of the sea, And poureth them out upon the face of the earth*⁹¹ (Amos 5:8) is that God commands the waters of the sea to give birth to clouds, and, afterward, *And (He) poureth them out upon the face of the earth.*

7. AND GOD MADE. Dividing one thing from another is expressed by placing the preposition *ben* (between) before the first object and a *lamed* before the second, as in *And let it divide*⁹² *the waters* (ben mayim) *from the waters* (la-mayim) (Gen. 1:6) and *between the holy* (ben kodesh) *and the common* (le-chol) (Ezek. 44:23). It may also be expressed by placing the preposition (*ben*) before each one of the objects, as in our verse *and divided the waters*⁹³ (ben ha-mayim) *which were under the firmament from the waters* (u-ven ha-mayim) *which were above the firmament.* And it is found with the word *ben* repeated and a *lamed* before the second object, as in *But your iniquities have separated Between you* (benekhem) *and your God* (le-ven elohekhem) (Is. 59:2).

[AND IT WAS SO.] This phrase is connected to the verse which follows it: *When it was so, God called the firmament heaven.*⁹⁴

8. AND GOD CALLED. There are five things which God named because there was then no man to name them. They are: light, darkness, heaven, earth and the seas. In addition, God named man.⁹⁵

⁹⁰ For the earth is above the waters. Cf. Ps. 107:23.

⁹¹ Which implies that the waters are above the earth.

⁹² The verse literally reads: *and let it divide between.*

⁹³ The verse literally reads: *and God divided between the waters.*

⁹⁴ *And it was so* is out of place following *And God made the firmament.* If he made it, then obviously it was so. Hence it does not apply to verse 7 but is connected to verse 8; viz., after the firmament came into being God called it heaven (Krinsky).

⁹⁵ Scripture explicitly tells us that God named the Light, the Darkness, etc. I.E. points out that God also named Adam, even though this is not expressly stated in our chapter.

9. AND GOD SAID. I believe that this chapter is connected to the one preceding it⁹⁶ because the firmament did not come into being until the land dried.⁹⁷ Proof of this is Scripture's statement, *In the day that the Lord God made earth (dry land) and heaven (the firmament)* (Gen. 2:4). Thus they were made on the same day. The revelation of something which had previously been hidden (the land) or the gathering of something which was scattered (the water) into one place is not a creation.⁹⁸ The meaning of our verse is: now God had said, *Let the waters under the heaven be gathered.*⁹⁹ There are hundreds of similar instances in the Torah. I will offer two examples from the portion of *Bereshit*. One is: *And the Lord God planted a garden eastward, in Eden; and there He put the man whom He had formed* (Gen. 2:8). After stating this, Scripture goes on to say, *And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight* (v. 9). However, God caused vegetation and trees to sprout before the creation of man.¹⁰⁰

The second example is when God commanded man not to eat from the tree of knowledge (Gen. 2:16). However, immediately after this it is written, *And out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto the man*, etc.

⁹⁶ In the Hebrew Bible verses 6-8 and 9-13 form separate chapters. According to I.E. verse 9 does not start the account of the third day of creation, but is a continuation of verse 8. See note 99.

⁹⁷ Thus land was created on the second day and not on the third day.

⁹⁸ Hence Scripture (Gen. 2:4) states, *the Lord God made earth and heaven*, rather than the Lord God created earth and heaven. I.E. had previously commented that only one thing was created on each day. He therefore explains that the making of the firmament and dry land on one day does not constitute the creation of two things on the same day, for the drying of the land was not a creation.

⁹⁹ *And God said* is to be understood as a pluperfect. Verses 8 and 9 are to be read as one verse and understood as follows: And God called the firmament heaven...for God had said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place (Cohen).

¹⁰⁰ According to Gen. 1:11,12, vegetation was created before man. Therefore the meaning of Gen. 2:9 is: And out of the ground the Lord God had previously made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight.

(Gen. 2:19).¹⁰¹ The meaning of *formed* thus is had formed. According to this interpretation it follows that *And God saw that it was good* (Gen. 1:10) is connected to the act of creation which took place on the second day.¹⁰² The account of the creation which took place on the third day thus begins with *And God said: Let the earth put forth grass* (Gen. 1:11).

[LET...BE GATHERED.] The meaning of *yikkavu* is let them come together. *Ve-nikvu in At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the Lord; and all nations shall be gathered (ve-nikvu) unto it* (Jer. 3:17) is similar.

[SEAS.] Scripture employs the term seas (*yammim*) because there is no one name for the sea that surrounds all of the earth.¹⁰³

11. AND GOD SAID. Scripture states, *Let the earth put forth grass* (Gen. 1:11); *Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures* (Gen. 1:20); *Let the earth bring forth the living creature after its kind* (Gen. 1:24). This teaches that God placed in the earth and in the water the power to bring forth these things at God's command. These are the generations (offspring) of the heaven and the earth (Gen. 2:4).¹⁰⁴

[LET THE EARTH PUT FORTH GRASS.] *Tadshe* means let it put forth.

¹⁰¹ The implication is that the beasts of the field were created after man. However, Gen. 1:25 tells us that man was created after the beasts of the field. Hence the meaning of *formed* in Gen. 2:19 is had formed, i.e., before creating man God had formed the beasts of the field and every fowl of the air.

¹⁰² The account describing the making of the sky and the earth concludes with Gen. 1:10, *And God saw that it was good*.

¹⁰³ Ibn Ezra, in line with other medievalists, believed that there is one sea covering most of the earth. Thus he was faced with the problem of why Scripture doesn't say God called the gathering of the waters "sea." His guess was that the sea had different names in different places. Hence Scripture refers to it as seas. For an alternate interpretation see Filwarg.

¹⁰⁴ Filwarg. For an alternate interpretation see Krinsky.

WHEREIN IS THE SEED THEREOF. Wherein the seed is in the fruit and each one produces its own kind.

14. AND GOD SAID. *Yehi* (let there be) is short for *yiheyeh*. Due to the frequency with which this term is used, it is employed before both the singular and the plural.¹⁰⁵ It is also employed in Scripture with the feminine as in, *If there be a damsel (yiheyeh) that is a virgin* (Deut. 22:23).¹⁰⁶

FOR SIGNS AND FOR SEASONS. *For signs*, i.e., for minutes, and *for seasons*, i.e., for hours. *For signs* may also be interpreted as referring to the eclipse of the moon and the sun and also to shooting stars. The last-mentioned phenomena are to be included among the signs produced by the lights of the firmament because they are caused by the stars. This meaning of signs is like signs in *And be not dismayed at the signs (omens) of heaven* (Jer. 10:2).

Anyone who explains the *lamed* of *le-otot* (for signs) as superfluous is mistaken.¹⁰⁷

AND LET THEM BE FOR SIGNS. A prominent Spanish sage¹⁰⁸ stated that the firmament is divided into eight parts, seven for the seven spheres of the seven stars and one for the constellations.¹⁰⁹ However, this cannot be so because we know there is no body above the sphere of

¹⁰⁵ Luminaries is a plural, so Scripture should have used the plural *yiheyu*, rather than the singular *yehi*.

¹⁰⁶ Since damsel is a feminine, the verb *tiheyeh*, rather than *yiheyeh* (which is masculine), should have been used. I.E. points out that there is a tendency toward uniformity when a word is employed frequently.

¹⁰⁷ I.E.'s point is that the *lamed* is a preposition.

¹⁰⁸ Ibn Janah (Krinsky).

¹⁰⁹ The eighth sphere is a sphere of the constellations. The seven "planets" are the Moon, Mercury, Venus, the Sun, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn. Each "planet" has its own sphere (Krinsky). Hence the firmament consists of eight parts. Heaven consists of the seven planets and the constellations. Thus according to the Spanish sage the firmament and heaven are identical.

the constellations. Behold, Scripture explicitly states, *And God set them in the firmament of the heaven*, which clearly indicates that there is a heaven above the firmament. *The heaven of heavens* (Nehemiah 9:6) and *To Him that rideth upon the heaven of heavens, which are of old* (kedem) (Ps. 68:34) are similar.¹¹⁰ Note that the word *kedem* in the verse quoted above does not mean east but ancient.¹¹¹ Indeed, Rabbi Saadiah Gaon, may the righteous be remembered for a blessing, was afraid to comment on this verse.¹¹² It appears to me that the sun, the moon and other luminaries are called *lights in the firmament* because they are visible there.¹¹³

16. AND GOD MADE. The sun and the moon are called the great lights in contradistinction to the stars.¹¹⁴ Similarly the first three sons of Jesse are called the elders, in contrast to their younger brothers.¹¹⁵ In reality, Eliab, the first born, was the oldest of them all. As to the Midrash, which states *One was not greater than the other*,¹¹⁶ there is a secret meaning to it.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁰ The term *heaven of heavens* refers to the heaven above the firmament. It is I.E.'s belief that the planets and constellations are above the firmament (see note 40).

¹¹¹ *Kedem* may also mean east, but not here. If the verse alluded to the eastern sky it could not refer to the heaven above the firmament (the ancient heaven) which is invisible.

¹¹² The word *kedem* means old. It implies that they are older than the earth and may even be eternal. Hence Saadiah refrains from commenting on this verse. See Krinsky.

¹¹³ According to I.E. the luminaries are not in the firmament. They are above it. Nevertheless, Scripture states that God placed them in the firmament because they shine through the firmament and thus appear to be there.

¹¹⁴ The term "two great lights" implies that both lights were of equal size, hence I.E.'s comment. Cf. Rashi's comment on this verse.

¹¹⁵ Obviously only one of them was the eldest.

¹¹⁶ That is, both the sun and the moon were the same size at creation. Cf. *Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer*, Chap. VI.

¹¹⁷ The Midrashic statement is not to be taken literally.

[TO RULE THE DAY.] The sun rules during the day and not at night because it is not seen. Conversely, the light of the moon and stars are not seen during the day.

One may ask, do not the astronomers teach that Jupiter and all the stars, with the exception of Mercury and Venus, are larger than the moon? Why, then, is it written *the great lights*?¹¹⁸ The answer is that the term great does not refer to size but to light, and the light of the moon is many times greater than their light because of its proximity to the earth. Thus we see that Scripture describes them as lights.¹¹⁹

17. AND GOD SET. Do not be surprised that Scripture states, *And God set*,¹²⁰ for the Bible also says, *I have set My bow in the cloud* (Gen. 9:13).¹²¹

18 AND TO RULE. The day spoken of in the Torah begins at sunrise and lasts until sunset. Night begins when the stars are first visible. Those who say that night begins with the appearance of three stars are correct.¹²² Know that evening begins at sunset and lasts for one and a third hours, during which time a light-like appearance is seen in the clouds. Similarly morning dawns before sunrise.¹²³ When the light of

¹¹⁸ The implication from Scripture is clearly that the moon is larger than the stars.

¹¹⁹ Scripture calls the sun and the moon lights because it refers to the light given off by them and not to their physical size.

¹²⁰ If the stars are above the firmament, why does Scripture state, *And God set them in the firmament* (Filwarg). According to Weiser the question is, "If the stars are set in the sky then why are they not visible there at all times?"

¹²¹ The rainbow only appears to be in the cloud (Krinsky). Weiser interprets, "The rainbow is not always visible there." Even so Scripture states, *I have set My bow in the cloud* (Gen. 9:13).

¹²² According to the Talmud (*Sabbath* 35b), night begins with the appearance of three stars.

¹²³ Morning dawns one and a third hours before sunrise (Krinsky).

the sun shines during the day and the light of the moon at night, they separate between the light and the dark.¹²⁴

20. AND GOD SAID. *Yishritzu* (let it swarm) is a transitive verb, as is *sharatz* (swarm) in *And the river shall bring forth swarms of frogs* (ve-sharatz) (Ex. 7:28).¹²⁵ The meaning of *Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures and let fowl fly above the earth* is that the waters shall produce living beings that will immediately fly.¹²⁶

The verse *And let fowl fly...in the open firmament of heaven* proves my interpretation of the firmament.¹²⁷

Saadiyah Gaon¹²⁸ explains *al pene* (in the open) to mean with the face of. Hence, according to the Gaon, the heavens face down.¹²⁹

The *feh* of *ye'ofef* (let fly) is doubled like the *nun* in *yekhonen* (till He establish) (Is. 62:7).¹³⁰

¹²⁴ Thus *and to divide the light from the darkness* refers to both the sun and the moon.

¹²⁵ In Gen. 9:7 and Ex. 1:7 swarm is intransitive. I.E. points out that here and in Exodus it is transitive. Therefore swarm may be either a transitive or an intransitive verb (Weiser).

¹²⁶ Filwarg.

¹²⁷ According to I.E. the firmament is the air or atmosphere, not heaven. See I.E.'s comments on verse 6. The birds fly in the air, not among the spheres; thus *raki'a* cannot be the domain of the spheres (Cherez).

¹²⁸ Filwarg explains that according to Saadiyah the stars are in the firmament which is in motion. Thus the fowl fly along with the firmament. It should be noted that Saadiyah identifies the firmament with heaven.

¹²⁹ Scripture says that the birds fly on the face of the firmament. Since, according to Saadiyah, the fowl fly along with the face of the firmament (heaven), then the firmament (heaven) faces down. This is absurd and shows how wrong Saadiyah is.

¹³⁰ An *ayin vav* has its final letter doubled in the *pi'el*. The root of *ye'offef* is *ayin, vav, peh*. The root of *yekhonen* is *caf, vav, nun*.

21. AND GOD CREATED. The meaning of *romeset* (creepeth) is walks. Some are of the opinion that the *sin* of *romeset* is in place of a *samekh*.¹³¹

22 AND GOD BLESSED. The meaning of *Be fruitful, and multiply* is, "You shall be fruitful and you shall multiply." *And die in the mount* (Deut. 32:50) is similar because it is not in one's power to determine the time of one's death.¹³²

24. AND GOD SAID. *Living creature* is a general term for what the fire, water and earth gave birth to.¹³³ It also includes man.

CATTLE. Domesticated beasts that are utilized by man for their needs, for riding and for food.

AND CREEPING THING. Small animals that walk upon the earth.

AND BEAST OF THE EARTH. Animals that are in the wilderness where there are no human settlements. The *vav* at the end of *ve-chayeto* (and beast of) is superfluous. It is like the *vav* of *le-mayeno* (into a fountain) in *into a fountain* (le-mayeno) *of waters* (Ps. 114:8), and the *vav* in *the son of* (beno) *Beor* (Num. 24:3).

26. LET US MAKE MAN. Some are of the opinion that *na'aseh* (let us make) is a *nifal* participle¹³⁴ and is to be compared to the same word

¹³¹ The root *resh mem samekh* means to tread. Thus *romes* with a *sin* means the same as *romes* with a *samekh*.

¹³² *And die in the mount* is to be rendered: and you shall die in the mount. For we cannot determine the time of our death. Similarly one can have intercourse but one cannot guarantee conception. Hence *Be fruitful, and multiply*, like *and die*, is not an imperative.

¹³³ The basic elements according to medieval scientific belief.

¹³⁴ *Na'aseh* is not a first person plural future *kal* but rather a *nifal* participle. This interpretation eliminates the problem of God using a plural form when speaking of Himself. The verse is to be read as follows: *And God said, Let a man be made* (Cherez).

in *Now that which was prepared* (na'aseh) *for one day* (Neh. 5:18).¹³⁵ They further say that *in our image, after our likeness* are the words of Moses.¹³⁶ They also explain the pronominal suffix "his" in *And God created man in His own image* (v. 27) as referring to man,¹³⁷ and connect God (in Gen. 9:6) to *made* rather than to *image*. They read this verse as follows: "For God made man in an image," rather than "for in the image of God made He man."¹³⁸

Now this interpretation is absurd. According to it the first quoted verse should have read, "Let a man be made."¹³⁹ Similarly Scripture should have read, "He made him in his image."¹⁴⁰ Furthermore, how can the *his* in *His image* (v. 27) refer to man? If this were the case then man had an image before he was created.¹⁴¹ Finally, what sense would there be to *Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed* (Gen. 9:6), if the reason for the above is that man was made in an image? All living things have an image.¹⁴²

¹³⁵ Here *na'aseh* is definitely a *nifal* form.

¹³⁶ They interpret the verse as follows: God said, "Let a man be made." Moses added: "in our image after our likeness," i.e., in human form. This eliminates the problem of God having a human form.

¹³⁷ The verse is to be explained as God created man in man's own image.

¹³⁸ They read the verse, *ki be-tzelem, Elohim asah et ha-adam*. The usual and correct reading is, *ki be-tzelem Elohim, asah et ha-adam*. Cherez notes that the same interpretation applies to verse 27, i.e., *be-tzelem, Elohim bara oto*.

¹³⁹ If *na'aseh adam* means "Let (*yehi*) a man be made," then the text should read *yehi na'aseh adam*.

¹⁴⁰ The reference is either to Gen. 9:6 (Netter) or 1:27 (Cherez). I.E.'s point is, why use such roundabout language to say that God made man in his (human) image when the Bible could have said this directly (Cherez). *Vat. Ebr.* 38 reads, "It should have stated, He made him in our image"; i.e., if "our image" relates to man's image, 9:6 and 1:27 should have so read.

¹⁴¹ If man was created in man's image, then man had an image before he was created. This is obviously an impossibility.

¹⁴² The verse stresses man's uniqueness; i.e., he was created in God's image. But if the verse speaks only of man having an image, animals, too, have an image. Wherein is the uniqueness of man?

Saadia Gaon explains *in our image, after our likeness* as referring to the dominion man exercises on earth.¹⁴³ He explains *His image*¹⁴⁴ as the image that God in His wisdom chose for man because He saw that this image was good for man. The Gaon further notes that Scripture connects image to God (*be-tzelem Elohim*) to stress man's glorified state.¹⁴⁵ Similarly Scripture states, *and are gone forth out of His land* (Ezek. 36:20). The Bible says this to emphasize the importance of the land of Israel because, in reality, *The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof* (Ps. 24:1).¹⁴⁶ The Gaon also says that the word *na'aseh* (let us make) has the meaning of the singular even though it is in the plural because it is the plural of majesty.¹⁴⁷ He offers as proof, *and we will give thee the other also* (Gen. 29:27); *and we will tell the interpretation thereof before the king* (Daniel 2:36); *peradventure I shall prevail, that we may smite* (*nakkeh*) *them* (Num. 22:6). However, these witnesses are false witnesses.¹⁴⁸ First of all, *and we will give thee* (*ve-nittenah*) (Gen. 29:27) is a *nifal* and its meaning is "the other will also be given thee."¹⁴⁹ It is like the word *nittenah* (is given) in *and the city is given* (*nittenah*) (Jer. 32:24). The *vav* conversive changes *nittenah* (she was given) to "she will be given (*ve-nittenah*)," as is the case with every verb in the perfect which becomes an imperfect when a *vav* conversive is prefixed to it. Similarly *nakkeh bo* (we may smite them) (Num. 22:6) means, "I and my army will smite them."¹⁵⁰ Further, *nakkeh* may be a

¹⁴³ Man rules over the world just as God rules over the universe (Weiser).

¹⁴⁴ Reading *His image* for image (Filwarg).

¹⁴⁵ In the image of God (*be-tzelem Elohim*) means in the image chosen by God. A very precious image.

¹⁴⁶ All of the earth is in reality His land. There is thus no reason to call Israel "His land." Hence the Torah calls the land of Israel "His land" in order to stress its importance.

¹⁴⁷ Therefore *Let us make* really means: I will make.

¹⁴⁸ These verbs are not examples of the plural of Majesty.

¹⁴⁹ It is not a first person plural *kal*.

¹⁵⁰ In other words, *nakkeh* is not a plural of majesty.

pi'el infinitive¹⁵¹ meaning to smite, like *nakeh* (destroy)¹⁵² in *But will not utterly destroy thee* (ve-nakkeh lo anakkekah) (Jer. 46:28). The latter interpretation is supported by the fact that Scripture employs the phrase *lo nukku* (were not smitten) (Ex. 9:32), and a verb cannot come in the *pu'al* unless it also comes in the *pi'el*.¹⁵³

Rabbi Moses Ha-kohen, the Spaniard, errs in his book.¹⁵⁴ Similarly *we will tell* (Dan. 2:36) is Aramaic.¹⁵⁵ For if *we will tell* is a plural of majesty, how would Daniel dare to speak in such haughty terms before Nebuchadnezzar who was the "King of Kings"?

I will now explain. Note that all the works of creation came into being by God's command for the sake of man. Scripture relates that the earth and water brought forth plants and all living creatures. After all plants and living creatures had been created, God said to the angels, *Let us make man*; i.e., We, rather than the earth and water, will occupy ourselves with his creation. We know that the Torah spoke the language of man,¹⁵⁶ for it was given to humans who speak and hear. Now a human being cannot speak of things above or below him without employing human terminology. Hence Scripture uses such terms as the

¹⁵¹ The *nun* of *nakkeh* (smite) is not the *nun* of the first person plural but is part of the root of the word *nakkeh*. The meaning of the word thus is *to smite*, rather than *we will smite*.

¹⁵² *Nakkeh* is a *pi'el* infinitive.

¹⁵³ *Nukku* (were smitten) is a *pu'al*. *Pu'al* is the passive of *pi'el*. If a verb is found in the *pu'al* it can also come in the *pi'el*, Hence smite can be a *pi'el* (Meijler). For alternate interpretations see Krinsky and Filwarg.

¹⁵⁴ Rabbi Moses ben Samuel Gikatila, an 11th century Bible commentator. It is not clear what error I.E. is referring to. Cf. Filwarg. Perhaps R. Moses also interpreted *nakkeh* as the plural of majesty.

¹⁵⁵ It is not a plural of majesty but the normal way of speaking in Aramaic (Krinsky).

¹⁵⁶ *Berekhhot* 31b.

mouth of the earth (Num. 16:30), *the hand of the Jordan* (Num 13:29),¹⁵⁷ and *the head*¹⁵⁸ *of the dust of the world* (Proverbs 8:26).

Far be it from us to believe that God has an image.¹⁵⁹ Scripture clearly refutes such a notion by stating, *To whom then will you like Me, that I should be equal* (Is. 40:25). It is because man's upper soul is eternal and is compared in its existence to God and because man's soul is incorporeal and fills the body, which is a microcosm, in the same way that God fills the universe that Scripture states, *in our image, after our likeness*. May God's name be blessed. He commenced with the macrocosm and concluded with the microcosm.¹⁶⁰ The prophet also says that he saw God's glory appear in human form (Ezek. 1:26).¹⁶¹ God is one. He is the creator of all. He is all. I cannot explain further.¹⁶²

Man was originally created with two faces;¹⁶³ man is thus one but also two. *In the image of God* means in the image of the angels. Man was created both male and female.¹⁶⁴ The words *Be fruitful, and*

¹⁵⁷ J.P.S. translates: the side of the Jordan.

¹⁵⁸ J.P.S. translates: beginning.

¹⁵⁹ On the basis of our verses reading, *in our image, after our likeness*.

¹⁶⁰ Man. The account of creation begins with the creation of the "large world," the universe, and concludes with the creation of the "small world," man. "Man is : microcosm, a universe in little, for like the great universe he consists of a body animated by a soul" (Husik, p. 191).

¹⁶¹ Hence Ezekiel, like Moses, employed human terminology in speaking of God (Weiser).

¹⁶² I.E. "seems to favor the idea of eternal creation and maintenance of the universe the relation of which to God is as the relation of speech to the speaker, which exists only so long as the speaker speaks. The moment he ceases speaking the sounds cease to exist" (Husik, p. 190). The mystery of God being "All" is difficult to comprehend and lends itself to misinterpretation. It might lead one to believe in pantheism.

¹⁶³ Hence there is no contradiction in Scripture stating, *created He him*, and the saying, *created He them* (Meijler). Weiser explains that I.E.'s interpretation is : keeping with the Rabbinic tradition that man was originally androgynous (*Erub. 18a*). Levine (p. 135) suggests that I.E. speaks of man's dual nature; i.e., he has body and a soul.

¹⁶⁴ The angels are of only one sex, man is of two. Nevertheless, man was created in the image of the angels.



multiply are a blessing not a command,¹⁶⁵ just as they are with regard to the creatures brought forth by the waters (Gen. 1:22).¹⁶⁶ Nevertheless, there is in fact a commandment to be fruitful and multiply transmitted by our sages, of blessed memory, which they attached to this verse in order to remember the commandment.¹⁶⁷

29. AND GOD SAID: BEHOLD I HAVE GIVEN YOU. God permitted mankind and every living thing to eat all herbs. He also permitted man to eat the fruits of the trees and limited the animals and creeping things to green herbs. At this point in time the consumption of flesh was not permitted. That came after the flood.

31. THE SIXTH DAY. Some say that the word *yom* (day) is in the construct with sixth,¹⁶⁸ and the meaning of *yom ha-shishi* (the sixth day) is the day of the sixth sphere.¹⁶⁹ They say the same with regard to *yom ha-shevi'i* (the seventh day). However, they are wrong. Proof of their error is found in the teaching of the astrologers who tell us who the lord¹⁷⁰ of the sixth day is.¹⁷¹ The meaning of *yom ha-shishi*, then, is the sixth day from day one. This is also the meaning of the seventh day.

¹⁶⁵ According to the rabbis of the Talmud there is a commandment to "be fruitful and multiply." Cf. *Kiddushin* 35a.

¹⁶⁶ Obviously no command is addressed to animals.

¹⁶⁷ According to I.E. when a Rabbinic interpretation is not in keeping with the literal meaning of the verse, then the verse is to be interpreted literally, and the Rabbinic interpretation accepted as true in itself but not as being derived from the verse. The verse merely serves as a peg on which to attach an authentic tradition.

¹⁶⁸ If sixth were an adjective then *yom* should have a definite article prefixed to it, i.e., *ha-yom ha-shishi* rather than *yom ha-shishi*, as in Deut. 3:25 *ha-har ha-tov* (that goodly hill-country); or both *yom* and *shishi* should be written without a *heh*, as in *yom sheni* (a second day). Hence *yom ha-sheshi* means the day of the sixth (Filwarg).

¹⁶⁹ That is, the day when the sixth heavenly sphere (the sphere of Jupiter) exerts an astrological influence on the earth.

¹⁷⁰ That is, the dominant sphere.

¹⁷¹ The astrologers say that the sphere of Venus is dominant on the sixth day (Weiser). Venus is the third sphere (Cherez). It should be noted that in the Romance languages Friday is called Venus's day. Thus in Italian, Friday is known as *venerdi* and in French as *vendredi*.

We similarly find¹⁷² *ish ha-yisraeli* (the Israelite man) (Leviticus 24:10)¹⁷³ and many such cases, among them *reki'a ha-shamayim* (Gen. 1:20),¹⁷⁴ which should be rendered as "the firmament which is heaven."

¹⁷² Where the noun is not preceded by a *heh* and the adjective is (Filwarg).

¹⁷³ J.P.S. translates: *a man of Israel*, taking man to be in the construct with Israel.

¹⁷⁴ J.P.S. renders: *firmament of heaven*, taking firmament to be in the construct with heaven.

CHAPTER 2

1. WERE FINISHED. *Va-yekhullu* is a *pu'al*. It follows the paradigm of *va-yekhussu* (were covered) in *and all the high mountains...were covered* (Gen. 7:19). Its meaning is: were finished.

The earth includes the oceans since they form one entity.¹

2. AND ON THE SEVENTH DAY GOD FINISHED. Some say² that the days are created entities, and with the creation of the seventh day God's work was finished. However, this interpretation is unpalatable. Others say that the *bet* may indicate before, as in *Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out (be-disho) the corn* (Deut. 25:4), and in *howbeit the first day (ba-yom ha-rishon) ye shall put away leaven out of your houses* (Ex. 12:15).³ However, why go through all this trouble⁴ when finishing work does not constitute an act. Saying God finished is equivalent to saying God did no work. This is the meaning of *God finished* and of *and He rested*.⁵

¹ Hence Scripture states, *And the heaven and the earth were finished*, rather than, *And the heaven, the earth and the oceans were finished*.

² *And on the seventh day God finished* implies that God created something on the seventh day. The question is what?

³ *And on the seventh day God finished* is to be translated as *And by the seventh day God had finished His work which He had made*. They similarly translate Deut. 25:4, *Thou shalt not muzzle the ox before he treadeth out the corn*, and render Ex. 12:15 as *howbeit before the first day ye shall put away leaven out of your houses*.

⁴ Why give the *bet* a novel meaning (before) when in fact "finished" does not imply that any work was done on the Sabbath.

⁵ Both mean God did no work.

His work which He had made refers to the work that he had done on Friday prior to the onset of the Sabbath. *And He rested on the seventh day from all His work* pertains to all creations that God brought into being.⁶

3. AND GOD BLESSED. A blessing means an increase in well being. On the Sabbath the body is blessed with a renewal of its reproductive strength and the soul with an increase in its intellectual and reasoning capabilities.

AND HALLOWED IT. No work was done on the Sabbath, in contrast to the other six days.

[WHICH GOD IN CREATING HAD MADE.] Its meaning is: God placed in the root of all the species the power to reproduce themselves.⁷ I disagree with the person who explains *la'asot* (had made) as having the same meaning as made⁸ and who, furthermore, insists that created and made are synonymous.

Saadia Gaon explains that the blessing and the holiness spoken of in this verse refer to those who observe the Sabbath.⁹ They will be blessed and sanctified.

⁶ In other words part A of verse 2 refers to Friday, part B to the six days of creation. This also explains the reason why part A of the verse reads, *His work* and part B, *all His work*. Thus part B complements part A and is not redundant (Krinsky).

⁷ I.E. explains *asher bara Elohim la'asot* (which God in creating had made) as follows: God created (*bara*) his creation in such a way that they would do (*la'asot*), i.e., reproduce themselves in the future. That is why *bara* is a perfect and *la'asot* is an infinitive (Cherez).

⁸ They interpret *asher bara Elohim la'asot* to mean, which God created and made. They maintain that *la'asot*, an infinitive, is to be interpreted as *asah*, a perfect (Filwarg). They also do not differentiate between *bara* and *asah*, and interpret "made" in verse 2 as created (Filwarg, Krinsky). For I.E.'s interpretation of *bara* see Gen. 1:1; for *asah* see verse 4.

⁹ According to Saadia the blessing refers not to the Sabbath but rather to those who observe the Sabbath. We have translated according to Nachmanides' rendering of I.E., which had a *vav* before sanctified.

4. THESE ARE THE GENERATIONS. These are what they gave birth to.¹⁰

WHEN THEY WERE CREATED. When the firmament came into being and the earth became visible.

[IN THE DAY THAT THE LORD GOD MADE.] *Be-yom asot* means in the day that God fixed.¹¹ Proof of this can be seen in *and He hastened to dress it* (la-asot oto) (Gen. 18:7), and in *Whom I have created* which is then followed by *I have formed him*, and finally by *yea, I have made him* (asitiv) (Is. 43:7).¹²

5. SHRUB. *Si'ach* (shrub) means a tree: so, too, in *Among the bushes* (sichim) *they bray* (Job 30:7). In my opinion *si'ach* refers to a fruit-bearing tree, because Scripture compares man to a tree.¹³ Behold, Scripture employs such terms as tree (*si'ach*),¹⁴ fruit,¹⁵ bough,¹⁶ limb,¹⁷ top of a tree¹⁸ and branch¹⁹ when speaking of man.

¹⁰ I.E. usually renders *toledot* as "accounts of." Cf. Gen. 6:9; 37:1. Here *toledot* refers to what heaven and earth produced: trees, living creatures, man.

¹¹ I.E. explains that *asah* (make) means "to fix in its final form." When the firmament and the earth received their final form, God commanded them to produce offspring (*toledot*).

¹² The prophet first speaks of creation (*berativ*) and last, of fixing in final form (*asitiv*).

¹³ Scripture compares man to a fruit bearing tree. Cf. Ps. 1:1-3, *Happy is the man...And he shall be like a tree planted by streams of water, That bringeth forth its fruit in its season.*

¹⁴ The Hebrew word for speech is *si'ach*. Speech is the fruit of the mouth. Hence the tree to which it is compared, *si'ach*, must be a fruit-bearing tree (Filwarg).

¹⁵ Malachi 1:12.

¹⁶ Ps. 119:113.

¹⁷ Job 18:13.

¹⁸ Deut. 26:18. See I.E. on the latter verse.

¹⁹ Ps. 94:19.

6. A MIST. *Ed* (mist) means smoke.²⁰ *The day of their calamity* (yom edom) is similar (Deut. 32:35). An evil day is called a cloudy day and a day of thick darkness.²¹ The meaning of our verse is that via the power of the lights a mist arose from the earth and watered it and caused it to bring forth vegetation. Saadiah Gaon explains as follows: "And no mist yet went up from the earth."²²

7. THEN THE LORD GOD FORMED. Via the power of the lights.²³

[FORMED.] *Va-yitzer* (formed) is a *kal*. It belongs to those verbs whose first root letter is a *yod*.²⁴ It is like *va-yiketz* in *And Noah awoke* (*va-yiketz no'ach*) (Gen. 9:24).

The meaning of *and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life* is that man lives through the nostrils. They remove the air heated by the heart and replace it with fresh air.

Scripture says man became *nefesh chayyah* (a living soul)²⁵ because like the animals he was immediately able to walk, and thus differed from babies subsequently born.

8. AND THE LORD GOD PLANTED. God had previously planted a garden in the eastern section of the world in a place called Eden. He now placed the man there.²⁶

²⁰ I.E. reads *ashan* (smoke). That is, a smoke-like substance went up from the earth. Weiser suggests reading *anan* (cloud) because smoke is out of place here since I.E. speaks of clouds.

²¹ Hence *yom ed* means a cloudy day, i.e., a dark day or day of calamity.

²² According to Saadiah the word *lo* found in verse 5 also applies to this verse.

²³ This sentence is omitted in *Vat. Ebr.* 38. It has been suggested that a scribe mistakenly copied it from the previous note (Weiser).

²⁴ The root of this verb is therefore *yod, tzadi, resh*.

²⁵ This very term is also used in describing the creation of animals. Cf. Gen. 1:24.

²⁶ I.e., *va-yitta* (planted) is a pluperfect.

The *bet* of *be-eden* (in Eden) in *in Eden the garden of God* (Ezek. 28:13) governs not only Eden but also garden.²⁷ Its meaning thus is, in Eden, in the garden of God. *Even by the God (me'el) of thy father, who shall help thee and by (ve-et) the Almighty, who shall bless thee*²⁸ (Gen. 49:25) is similar. There are many other such instances in Scripture.²⁹

[THE MAN.] There is a secret meaning as to why the definite article has been placed in front of Adam.³⁰ The definite article is also found prefixed to *Menasheh* in *the half tribe of Manasseh* (shevet hamenasheh)³¹ (Deut. 3:13) and before the word *Araunah* in *of Araunah the Jebusite* (II Sam. 24:16).³² It is also possible that the definite article is placed before Adam because the word *adam* is derived from the word used for ground (*adamah*). Hence the name Adam may be a proper name or an adjective.³³

²⁷ I.E. is trying to solve the following problem. In Genesis, Scripture refers to a "garden" in Eden (*gan be-eden*). However, in Ezek. 28:13 the Bible states, *in Eden the garden of God*. The former implies that the garden is located in Eden, the latter that Eden is located in the garden, hence I.E.'s comment (Filwarg).

²⁸ The *mem* of *me'el* is also to be placed before *ve'et* and it is to be read as if written *u-me'et*. Thus this verse is to be rendered: *Even by the God (me'el) of thy father who shall help thee, and even by (u-me'et) the Almighty who shall bless thee*.

²⁹ The technical term used by I.E. for this is *mesharet* (or *moshekh*) *atzmo ve-acher immo*. Friedlander explains this phrase as follows: "one word which stands for two" (literally, the word draws itself and another with it).

³⁰ Adam is a proper noun and a proper noun does not have a definite article placed in front of it. As to the secret alluded to by I.E., Filwarg comments, "I do not understand what secret he is hinting at." However, it appears that I.E. is hinting that "Adam" is a collective noun meaning mankind, the secret being that God placed mankind in the Garden of Eden. I.E. will later elaborate on this theme when he speaks of the secret meaning of the garden (Kaputa). Abravanel writes, "Ibn Ezra stirred the world by saying that the definite article which precedes the word "Adam" contains a secret. By this he means... (that) Adam should be understood as a noun designating the genus of mankind rather than an individual."

³¹ According to Krinsky, I.E. is noting that a proper name which later becomes the name of a group may have a definite article placed in front of it. Thus Adam, although originally a proper noun, became a collective noun.

³² According to I.E. *araunah* is a collective noun.

³³ See Kimchi, II Sam. 24:16. In our case it is an adjective meaning the one taken from the ground, and thus has a definite article prefixed to it.

9. AND OUT OF THE GROUND MADE THE LORD TO GROW. When God made the trees grow from the ground throughout the world he did the same in the Garden of Eden, but there he placed two trees not found anywhere else in the world.

AND THE TREE OF THE KNOWLEDGE. In my opinion the phrase *and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil* is to be understood as if written, "And the tree of the knowledge, knowledge of good and evil," because the word knowledge has a definite article prefixed to it and thus cannot be in the construct.³⁴ *The ark of the covenant*³⁵ (Josh. 3:14) and *even the prophecy of Oded the prophet* (II Chronicles 15:8)³⁶ are similar. There are many other similar instances in Scripture.

10. AND A RIVER. Before man was created the river watered the garden on all sides.

[HEADS.] The *alef* in the word *roshim* (heads) is a root letter.³⁷ In *marashotekhem* (headtires)³⁸ (Jer. 13:18) the *alef* is enunciated. The meaning of *marashotekhem* is your headtires.

11. THE NAME OF THE FIRST. Saadiah Gaon identifies Pishon with the Nile. But it is known that the Gihon³⁹ is close to the land of Israel, for Scripture states, *And bring him (Solomon)...down to*

³⁴ A word in the construct cannot have a definite article placed before it.

³⁵ Ark has a definite article placed in front of it. Hence the phrase is to be read as if written, the ark, ark of the covenant.

³⁶ Prophecy has a definite article prefixed to it. Hence the phrase is to be read as if written, even the prophecy, prophecy of Oded the prophet.

³⁷ However, it is silent. There are times when the *alef* is not a root letter, e.g., *the tillage of the poor* (*rashim*) (Prov. 13:23). The *alef* of *rashim* (the poor) is not part of the word's stem (Filwarg).

³⁸ According to Weiser. For other readings and the problems inherent in them see Filwarg.

³⁹ The second river flowing out of the garden.

Gihon...and...anoint him there king over Israel (I Kings 1:33,34). It (the Gihon) flows from southeast of the land of Israel.⁴⁰ The same is true of the Euphrates (Perat), which marks the furthestmost eastern boundary of the land of Israel. The commentaries also tell us that the Tigris (Chiddekel) is another river, in addition to the Euphrates, that flows through Baghdad. Thus these three rivers (the Gihon, the Euphrates and the Tigris) lie east of the land of Israel.⁴¹ Furthermore, the source of the Nile is in the mountain of Frankincense far south of the equator. Proof of this can be seen by the fact that its waters swell in the summer.⁴² We know that the Garden of Eden is below the equator where day and night are always equal. Fools question this and ask, how is this possible?⁴³ However, there is positive proof that this is so. Thus according to Saadiah one must believe that the Pishon (the Nile) flows from the Garden of Eden, which is in the east, toward the mountain of Frankincense, which is in the southwest, and then flows north.⁴⁴

There is, in fact, no proof that the Pishon is the Nile. Indeed, Saadiah translates the *land of Havilah* which the Pishon compasses to fit in with his translation of the Pishon as being the Nile. The fact of the matter is that he had no tradition concerning these things. He did the

⁴⁰ The Garden of Eden is located in the east (v. 8). Furthermore, according to I.E. the Garden of Eden lies south of the equator and the land of Israel is north of the equator. Thus the Gihon flows from the southeast of the land of Israel (Krinsky). Actually the Gihon is not a river but a spring located in the valley of Jehoshaphat. Here as in other places in his commentary I.E. errs with regard to geographical knowledge of the land of Israel.

⁴¹ Hence, in contradistinction to the Gaon, the Pishon, too, must lie east of the land of Israel (Krinsky). However, the Nile is west of the land of Israel.

⁴² "For when it is summer time in the northern hemisphere, it is the time of the rainy season in the southern hemisphere. Thus the Nile, the source of which is in the southern hemisphere, swells during the summer" Chevel, *Ramban, Commentary on the Torah*, Vol. I, p. 86, note 414.

⁴³ For day and night to be equal.

⁴⁴ The Nile flows from the south to the north. The Garden of Eden is south of the equator toward the east. Thus if the source of the Nile is in the garden it must make this circuit.

same with families, states, animals, fowl and precious stones.⁴⁵ Perhaps these things were revealed to him in a dream. He definitely erred in a number of them as I will point out in their proper place.⁴⁶ So we will not rely on his dreams. Perhaps he did so out of respect for the honor of God, for he translated the Torah into Arabic language and script and he did not want the Arabs to think that there are parts of Scripture⁴⁷ which we do not understand.

Scripture mentions that there is gold in the land of Havilah in order to glorify the river coming out of the Garden of Eden.

12. AND THE GOLD. Saadiah Gaon renders *bedolach* (bedellium) as pearls. He compares manna to them. However, Scripture merely says that manna had the color of *bedolach*⁴⁸ (Num. 11:7). The Gaon also says that *shoham* (onyx) is a precious clear white stone. The fact of the matter is that we do not know the precise meaning of either of these two items.

[14. TOWARD THE EAST OF ASSHUR.] The *tav* of *kidmat* (toward the east of) is in place of a *heh*.⁴⁹ The difference between *kedem* and *kedemah* is that the *heh* suffixed to *kedemah* is in place of the preposition "to" (*el*), which is vocalized with a *segol*.⁵⁰ Similarly in *and Abram went down into Egypt* (*mitzraymah*) (Gen. 12:10), *mitzraymah* means "to Egypt." *Kidmat asshur* thus means *toward the east of Asshur*.

⁴⁵ Whenever Saadiah came across an unfamiliar term he translated it as he saw fit. He explained Havilah as referring to Egypt because he translated Pishon as the Nile.

⁴⁶ Cf. I.E., Ex. 28:9 and Lev. 11:13.

⁴⁷ Most texts of I.E. have the word *mitzvot* (commandments) instead of *millot* (words).

⁴⁸ Not that it was identical to it. Saadiah says that *bedolach* resembles manna. As manna is round, so are *bedolach* round. This strengthens his interpretation that *bedolach* means pearls, for the Bible says that the appearance of the manna was like *bedolach* (Cherez).

⁴⁹ Thus *kidmat* is *kedemah* in the construct.

⁵⁰ In other words *kedemah* means to the east, *kedem*, east.

Note that from the first verse of the Torah until the word *made* (Gen. 2:3), Scripture refers to the Deity as *Elohim*. Afterward, the honored and revered name (the Tetragrammaton) is coupled with it. How precious are the words of the ancients of blessed memory who said that the complete name of God is used over a complete world. Prior to the completion of creation there was no power to receive this name.⁵¹ If God grants me life I will explain the secret of the Tetragrammaton when I comment upon the first Torah portion of the book of Exodus. I will then explain its meaning in the absolute and in the construct.

Note that the location of the ground from which Adam was created was close to the Garden of Eden.⁵² I note this because some say that Adam was created out of the ground of the land of Israel.⁵³ They have overlooked *And it came to pass, as they journeyed east* (Gen. 11:2).⁵⁴

15. INTO THE GARDEN OF EDEN. *Gan* (garden) can be both masculine and feminine,⁵⁵ hence the plurals *gannim* and *gannot*.⁵⁶ We ask those who maintain that the words *to till (dress) it*⁵⁷ *and to keep it* (le-ovdah u-le-shomrah) refer to the ground (*adamah*), how it is possible

⁵¹ Creation came to an end with the making of man. The use of the Tetragrammaton is proper only with reference to man. See I.E.'s comment on Gen. 4:1 and Gen. 1:26.

⁵² Hence man was not created in the garden. The commentaries assume that man walked to the Garden of Eden. According to Rabbinic tradition man came to the garden on the very day that he was created, hence I.E.'s comment that Adam was created close to the Garden of Eden (Krinsky).

⁵³ *The Kuzari*, 2:14.

⁵⁴ Literally, *From the east*. The garden was located in the east (v. 8). The tower of Babel was built after the survivors of the flood journeyed from the east (Gen. 11:2). We know that the ark rested on Mt. Ararat (Gen. 8:4); thus Mt. Ararat lies in the east. (See I.E. on Gen. 11:2). Mt. Ararat (in the east) is far from the borders of Israel. Hence the Garden of Eden (in the east), too, must be far from the land of Israel.

⁵⁵ The pronominal suffixes of the verbs *to toil* and *to keep* are in the feminine.

⁵⁶ For the feminine plural form of garden see Eccles. 2:5. For the masculine plural form see Cant. 4:15. *Gannim* is masculine plural; *gannot*, feminine plural.

⁵⁷ J.P.S. translates "to dress it." The literal meaning of *le-ovedah* is to till it. Till fits in better with I.E.'s comment.

to till and keep a large area from a small one.⁵⁸ Furthermore, after Adam sinned God expelled him from the garden and commanded him to till the soil. But according to their interpretation he was already tilling the soil while he was living in the Garden of Eden. *To till it* (le-ovdah) therefore refers to the garden of whose fruit he ate. It was only after he sinned that he had to eat the grass of the ground, i.e., bread. *To till it* means to water it. *To keep it* means to guard the garden so that no animals enter therein and befoul it. Some say that *le-ovdah* means to serve God's commandment.⁵⁹ However, a commandment is not served.⁶⁰

16. AND THE LORD GOD COMMANDED THE MAN. The verb *tzivvah* (command) with the preposition *al* (upon) implies a prohibition. We similarly read, *I will also command (atzavveh) the clouds (al he-avim) That they rain no rain upon it* (Is. 5:6).

[17. THOU SHALT NOT EAT OF IT.] Even though I (God) permitted you to eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden, do not eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge.⁶¹ One might ask, What need is there for the term *of it* after having stated *but of the tree of the*

⁵⁸ If Adam's task was to till and keep the soil outside the garden, then how was it possible for Adam to do this while he was in the garden? The land outside of the garden obviously extended for many miles. It would thus be impossible for Adam to live in the garden and tend the land outside of the garden. The pronominal suffixes (it) of *le-ovdah* and of *le-shomrah* are in the feminine. Those who say that these words refer to the ground do so because they believe *gan* to be masculine while ground is feminine. However, I.E. maintains that *gan* can be either masculine or feminine. Thus *le-ovdah u-le-shomrah* can refer to *gan*.

⁵⁹ See *Targum Yerushalmi* on this verse. The root of the word till, *ayin, bet, dalet*, is also used in reference to worship (Deut. 6:13; 10:20).

⁶⁰ While the root *ayin, bet, dalet* is used in referring to worship, it is not used in Scripture as a technical term for the practice of a precept. The term used for the latter is *lishmor* (to keep) (Deut. 8:1; 10:13). One serves (*oved*) God and observes (*shomer*) the commandments. One cannot be said to serve the commandments, hence I.E.'s objection to this interpretation.

⁶¹ The Hebrew term implies a commandment to eat of the other trees in the garden, hence I.E.'s comment (Krinsky).

*knowledge...thou shalt not eat?*⁶² The answer is that the Bible elaborates. We find a similar case in *And she opened it, and saw it, even the child* (Ex. 2:6).⁶³ It is also possible that the term *of it* means even a part of it. You will find the exact grammatical explanation of the term *mi-mennu* (of it) in the *Sefer ha-yisod*.⁶⁴

Note that Adam was an intelligent being, for God would not direct commands to one who was unintelligent. He was deficient in the knowledge of *good and evil* of only one thing.⁶⁵ Don't you see that Adam named every animal and fowl according to the nature of each of their respective species? Thus he was extremely intelligent. If Adam was unintelligent, God, knowing this, would not have brought His creatures to him to see what name he would give to each one of them.

God also showed Adam the tree of knowledge, for his wife knew that it was in the midst of the garden.⁶⁶

18. AND THE LORD GOD SAID. *It is not good* means it is not good for the man.⁶⁷

A HELP MEET. *Help meet* should be understood in the light of *Two are better than one* (Eccles. 4:9).

⁶² The verse reads, *but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it*. It would have sufficed to state, *but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat*.

⁶³ Scripture should have stated, *And she opened it and saw the child*. The elaboration is there for emphasis (Weiser).

⁶⁴ A Hebrew grammar composed by I.E. The book survives only in fragments.

⁶⁵ Sexual desire. See I.E.'s comment on 3:6.

⁶⁶ Scripture does not explicitly tell us that God told Adam exactly where the tree was. However, from Eve's action we may surmise that He did. See I.E.'s comment on Gen. 3:6.

⁶⁷ The verse literally reads: *And the Lord God said, it is not good, being the man alone*, hence I.E.'s comment. Cherez suggests that I.E. is negating an interpretation which holds it is not good for creation that man be alone lest it be said that he is a god on earth. Cf. Rashi.

[19. WHATSOEVER THE MAN WOULD CALL.] The *lamed* (to) in the clause *and whatsoever the man would call* also applies⁶⁸ to the phrase *living creature*. Our clause is to be read as follows: *and whatsoever the man would call to it, to every living creature, that was to be the name thereof*. The verse elaborates,⁶⁹ as in *And she opened it, and saw it, even the child* (Ex. 2:6).⁷⁰ There are many other such instances.

[20. TO ALL CATTLE.] *Le-khol* (to all) also governs two words,⁷¹ for the meaning of our verse is: *And the man gave names to all cattle, and to all the fowl of the air*.⁷² *In that his men become few* (Deut. 33:6)⁷³ and *And I have not learned wisdom* (Prov. 30:3)⁷⁴ are similar. There are many other such instances.

[BUT FOR ADAM.] The meaning of *but for Adam he did not find a help meet* is that Adam did not find a helpmeet for himself.⁷⁵ This is the way of the Hebrew language. Thus we find Samuel saying, *And the Lord sent Jerubbaal, and Bedan, and Jephthah, and Samuel* (I Sam.

⁶⁸ The verse literally reads: *and, whatsoever the man would call it (lo) every living creature*.

⁶⁹ That is, it repeats the object *to it, to every living creature* (Shadal). See note 62.

⁷⁰ See note 63.

⁷¹ See above, note 29. According to I.E. *le-khol* (to all), which is prefaced to *cattle*, also governs *fowl*.

⁷² J.P.S. translates, *And the man gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air*.

⁷³ It should be read as if written, *In that his men not become few*. In other words, the word *ve-al* in the first part of the verse also governs *yehi* (let).

⁷⁴ The verse literally concludes, *And I have knowledge of the Holy One*. The *not* of the first part also applies to the second part. Thus the above should read: *And I do not have knowledge of the Holy One*. Thus *not* governs two words.

⁷⁵ J.P.S. translates, *but for Adam there was not found a help meet*. However, the literal reading of the verse is: *but for Adam he did not find a help meet*. The question is, to whom does "he" refer? I.E. suggests it refers to Adam, not God. I.E. points out that the Bible occasionally uses a proper noun in instances where a reflexive pronoun is expected. Cf. David Kimchi's commentary on this verse.

12:11).⁷⁶ It appears farfetched to me that *he did not find a help meet* refers to God.

Scripture says here that the fowl were created out of the ground.⁷⁷ However, it states above that they were created out of the water.⁷⁸ This is so because the fowl were created out of both earth and water.

21. AND THE LORD GOD CAUSED A DEEP SLEEP TO FALL. *Va-yappel* (caused to fall) is a *hifil*, as is *va-yashev* (drove away) in *and Abram drove them away* (Gen. 15:11).⁷⁹

A DEEP SLEEP. *Tardemah* is a deeper sleep than *shenah*, and *shenah* is a deeper sleep than *tenumah*.⁸⁰ The *tav* of *tardemah* (deep sleep) is not part of its root.⁸¹

ONE OF HIS RIBS. Adam had two sides.⁸² *Tzela* here is like *tzela* (side) in *and for the second side (tzela) of the tabernacle* (Ex. 26:20).⁸³ *Tzela* is a feminine noun. It means a side.

INSTEAD THEREOF. *Tachtannah* means in its place. *Tachtannah* (instead thereof) spelled with a superfluous *nun* is in the singular.

⁷⁶ Rather than saying "and me," Samuel says, "and Samuel." Here, too, rather than saying "but for himself he did not find a help meet" the Bible says, *but for Adam*.

⁷⁷ See verse 19.

⁷⁸ Gen. 1:20.

⁷⁹ Both *va-yashev* and *va-yappel* are *hifils* whose first root letter is a *nun*. The root of the former is *nun, shin, bet* and of the latter, *nun, peh, lamed*.

⁸⁰ There are a number of Hebrew terms for sleep, *tardemah, shenah* and *tenumah*.

⁸¹ The root being *resh, dalet, mem*.

⁸² J.P.S. translates *tzela* as rib, I.E. as side.

⁸³ I.E.'s comment is in keeping with the Rabbinic view (*Erubin* 18a) that man was originally created male and female. God then separated the one female side from the male side (Krinsky).

Tachtehah is its plural form. *Tachteni* (under me) and *tachtai* (under me)⁸⁴ are similar.⁸⁵

22. MADE HE. *Va-yiven* (made me) is a *hifil* conjugation.⁸⁶ We find similar instances with the *kal* conjugation in *va-yifen* (and he turned) (Ex. 7:23) and *va-yiken* (and he bought) (Gen. 33:19).

AND BROUGHT HER. When Adam awoke from his sleep he thought that the woman was brought⁸⁷ before him as the animals were brought before him. Scripture speaks of Adam's thoughts. Similarly, *And the men pursued after them* (Josh. 2:7).⁸⁸ It is also possible that the woman was created outside of the garden and then was brought to Adam. When he looked around he knew that she had been cut from him, for one of his sides with its flesh was missing and he felt that it had been closed with other flesh.

23. AND THE MAN SAID. Then Adam said, "This time I have found a help meet like me for me, for this being came out of me." The tradition concerning Lilith is a homily.⁸⁹

⁸⁴ Cf. II Sam. 22:40; Ps. 18:40.

⁸⁵ *Tachteni*, the singular form, has the superfluous *nun*; *tachtai*, its plural form, does not (Weiser).

⁸⁶ This comment is difficult. *Va-yiven* is a *kal* conjugation. Krinsky and Weiser suggest deleting it. Indeed, some versions do. If it is retained then it must be explained as follows: *Va-yiven* (from the root *bet, nun, heh*) is short for *va-yivneh*. I.E. notes that this type of short form of a *lamed heh* root is found in the *hifil* and in the *kal* (Weiser). *Vat. Ebr.* 38 reads, *va-yiven* is a *kal*, as is *va-yifen*. This appears to be the correct reading.

⁸⁷ The word brought is not to be taken literally. The woman was created next to Adam as he slept; thus she could not have been brought to Adam.

⁸⁸ The men thought that they were pursuing the Israelite spies. In reality they were not, for the spies were hidden by Rahab.

⁸⁹ There is a Rabbinic tradition that before the creation of Eve, Adam lived with the female demon Lilith. Hence he said, "This one, in contradistinction to Lilith, is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh." Cf. L. Ginsberg, *Legends of the Jews*, Vol. I., p. 65.

Le-zot (she) means because of this.⁹⁰ *Say of me: (li)*⁹¹ *He is my brother* (Gen. 20:13) is similar.

[WOMAN.] The *shin* in the word *ishah* (woman) receives a *dagesh* in place of the inaudible *yod* which is found in the word *ish* (man).⁹² However, it is possible that *ishah* (woman) receives a *dagesh* to distinguish it from *ishah* (her husband) for at times the *dagesh* in the suffixed pronominal *heh* in *ishah* (her husband)⁹³ is not pronounced. The plural *nashim* (women) is derived from the words *enosh* (man) and *anashim* (men).⁹⁴

[SHALL BE CALLED.] This refers to the name of the woman.⁹⁵

[SHE WAS TAKEN.] The *dagesh* is omitted in the *kof* of *lukachah* (she was taken) in order to simplify its enunciation. This word is a *pu'al* conjugation even though we do not find it conjugated in the *pi'el*.⁹⁶

[24. AND THEY SHALL BE ONE FLESH.] This means they shall live together as if they were one flesh, or let them once again be one

⁹⁰ A *lamed* in front of a word usually means to. *Zot* means this. Thus *le-zot* should be rendered to this. However, I.E. points out that the *lamed* may also mean because. The meaning of our verse then is: because of this; i.e., because she is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh she shall be called woman.

⁹¹ Literally, *say to me*. Here, too, *li* does not mean to me but about me or of me.

⁹² The *dagesh* makes up for the *yod* which is missing in *ishah* (woman).

⁹³ When the pronominal *heh* is sounded there is no doubt that the speaker intends to say *her husband*.

⁹⁴ The feminine plural is formed by adding a *vav* and a *tav* to the singular. However, the word for women (*nashim*) is not formed in this manner. It is not the word for woman (*ishah*) plus the plural ending, hence I.E.'s comment.

⁹⁵ The Hebrew reads, *yikkare ishah*. *Yikkare* (shall be called) is masculine and cannot refer to the woman. It refers to *shem* (name) which is masculine.

⁹⁶ *Pu'al* is the passive of *pi'el*. Thus if we find a word in the *pu'al* we would expect to find it in the *pi'el*. However, the root *lamed*, *kof*, *chet* is not found in the *pi'el*, hence I.E.'s comment. According to Hebrew grammar a *dagesh* is placed in the second radical of a *pu'al*.

flesh.⁹⁷ Some say they will be one flesh through the child they will produce. However, this interpretation is farfetched.⁹⁸

25. NAKED. *Arummim* (naked) is an adjective. *And stripped the naked (arummim) of their clothing* (Job 22:6) is similar. Some say that *arum* (prudent) in *A prudent man (arum) seeth the evil and hideth himself* (Prov. 22:3) has essentially the same meaning. What the verse means is that the mind of the wise is uncovered (*arum*) and open to everything like the eye.⁹⁹

AND WERE NOT ASHAMED. *Yitboshashu* (ashamed) is related to the word *boshet* (shame). It is an *ayin, vav*.¹⁰⁰ The last letter of the root is doubled.¹⁰¹ It is like the verb *yitbonen* (he will consider) (Job 11:11).¹⁰² A *kamatz* is placed beneath the first *shin* because the word ends a verse.¹⁰³

⁹⁷ Man and woman were originally one flesh.

⁹⁸ Animals also produce offspring, yet they are not said to be "one flesh."

⁹⁹ In other words, a wise man is called *arum* because his mind is open (naked) to everything (Weiser).

¹⁰⁰ The root of the word is *bet, vav, shin*.

¹⁰¹ The last letter of an *ayin, vav* root is doubled when conjugated in the *hitpa'el*.

¹⁰² From the root *bet, yod, nun*. The *nun* is doubled.

¹⁰³ The first *shin* is usually vocalized with a *sheva*, viz., *yitbosheshu*.

CHAPTER 3

1. NOW THE SERPENT. Some say that the woman understood and knew the language of the animals. They interpret *And the serpent said* as meaning, that the serpent spoke through signs.¹ Others say that the serpent was in reality Satan.² Now why don't they look at what Scripture states at the close of this chapter (v. 14 and 15)? How is Satan to crawl upon his belly or eat the dust of the ground?³ Furthermore, what meaning is there to the curse *they shall bruise thy head* if the reference is to Satan?⁴

Many err and inquire why the serpent was cursed. They ask, was the serpent fully intelligent?⁵ Was he commanded by God to refrain from beguiling the woman?⁶ Rabbi Saadiah Gaon says since we know that only humans are intelligent and capable of speaking, we must conclude that neither the serpent nor Balaam's ass spoke. He argues that in reality an angel spoke for them. However, Rabbi Samuel ben Hofni took issue with him.⁷ On the other hand, Rabbi Solomon ibn Gabirol, the great Spanish scholar and poet who wrote metered verse, arose and disagreed

¹ That is, the serpent did not actually speak. He conveyed his intentions through signs; i.e., he went to the tree and pantomimed the eating of the fruit thereof.

² Satan took the form of the serpent.

³ Satan is incorporeal and consequently cannot crawl on the ground or eat dust.

⁴ Man does not bruise Satan's head. Hence the reference must be to a real serpent.

⁵ God would not punish a dumb animal.

⁶ There is a Rabbinic dictum, "One who is not warned is not punished."

⁷ Rabbi Samuel ben Hofni held that the serpent actually spoke. Some editions read: "with them," i.e., with Saadiah and the others who do not interpret that the serpent actually spoke.

with Rabbi Samuel ben Hofni. It appears to me that we are to interpret the account of the serpent literally. The serpent spoke and walked in an upright position. The One who gave intelligence to man also gave it to the serpent. Scripture itself bears witness that the serpent, although not as intelligent as man, *was more subtle* (arum) *than any beast of the field*.⁸ The meaning of *arum* (subtle) is wise, i.e., one who conducts his affairs intelligently. Now do not be surprised that Scripture uses the term *arum* (subtle, in v.1) after *arummim* (naked in Gen. 2:25) when each of these words has a different meaning. Scripture is being poetic. Similarly, *With the jawbone of an ass* (ha-chamor), *heaps upon heaps* (chamor chamoratayim) (Judges 15:16), and *on thirty ass colts* (ayarim), *and they had thirty cities* (ayarim) (Jud. 10:4).

Furthermore, if an angel spoke via the mouth of the serpent, then the serpent did not sin.⁹ This angel could not be God's messenger.¹⁰ Neither does an angel rebel against God.¹¹

Those who ask, how did the serpent find the woman,¹² are not asking a valid question.¹³

The use of the term *af ki* (yea) shows that the serpent spoke other things to the woman and that at the end of his conversation with her said,

⁸ Verse 1. Hence the serpent was responsible for his actions.

⁹ Why, then, was the serpent punished? I.E. now offers arguments against Saadiah's interpretation.

¹⁰ God would not send an angel to induce Adam and Eve to sin.

¹¹ The angel would not beguile the woman on his own accord, for angels do not rebel against God.

¹² There were no animals in the garden. See I.E.'s comment on 2:15.

¹³ The serpent may have encountered the woman at the gate of the garden and engaged her in conversation there (Krinsky), or she may have left the garden briefly and met the serpent outside.

"yea much more so (*af ki*)¹⁴ now that God said: *Ye shall not eat of any tree of the garden* (v. 1)."

The serpent did not mention the revered and feared name of God¹⁵ because he did not know it. The woman also added to God's commandment, *neither shall ye touch it*.¹⁶ The wife of Manoah did the same when she quoted the angel as saying, *for the child shall be a Nazirite unto God from the womb to the day of his death* (Jud. 13:7).¹⁷

5. AND YE SHALL BE AS GOD. As angels.¹⁸

6. AND WHEN THE WOMAN SAW. In her heart.

AND THAT THE TREE WAS TO BE DESIRED. Because it had the power to make one wise, and her eyes would "open."¹⁹

[UNTO HER HUSBAND WITH HER.] The meaning of *with her* is that they ate together of the fruit and that she disclosed to him the secret that the serpent had revealed to her. Adam thus did not sin unwittingly and was therefore punished for violating God's command.

Many commentators say that the tree of knowledge was a fig tree. They base their assertion on *and they sewed fig-leaves together, and made themselves girdles* (v. 7).²⁰ However, if this interpretation were

¹⁴ I.E. argues that *af ki* (yea) is a technical term used in a *kal ve-chomer*, an argument from a minor to a major premise. Cf. Job 25:6. Hence a conversation had to precede this final point. See Rashi.

¹⁵ The Tetragrammaton. The serpent employed Elohim when referring to God.

¹⁶ God said, *thou shalt not eat of it*, (Gen. 2:17). The woman said, *God hath said: Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die*.

¹⁷ The angel had told her: *For the child shall be a Nazirite unto God from the womb* (Jud. 13:5). He did not mention *to the day of his death*.

¹⁸ See I.E.'s comment on Gen. 1:1.

¹⁹ The *lamed* of *le-haskil* has the meaning of because. Therefore *le-haskil* (to make one wise) is to be interpreted "because it made one wise" (Krinsky). Her eyes would open is to be interpreted metaphorically. See verses 5 and 7.

²⁰ See *Sanhedrin* 70b, *By the very thing with which they sinned were they rectified*.

correct, the Bible would say, "And they sewed leaves of the tree of the knowledge." Many others say that it was a wheat plant.²¹ However, in my opinion the two trees in the midst of the garden were unique species not found anywhere else on the face of the earth. One of them, the tree of knowledge, possessed the power to instill sexual desire. Therefore the man and woman covered their nakedness. The meaning of *va-yitperu* (sewed) is well-known.²² *Tafarti* in *I have sewed (tafarti) sackcloth upon my skin* (Job 16:15) is similar. Those who ask where Adam and Eve got a needle (to sew their girdle) emit hot air. Adam and Eve could have used a sharp piece of wood. Upon eating of the tree of knowledge, Adam knew (*yada*) his wife. *Yada* (knew) is a euphemism for sexual intercourse. Sexual intercourse is called "knowledge" because sexual desire came from the tree of knowledge. Moreover, a young man begins to have sexual desire at the age at which he begins to "know" good and evil.²³

The *tree of life* extended life so that by partaking of it man would live for many years. *Le-olam* (v. 22) does not mean forever. We find this to be the case with the term *olam* in *and he shall serve him for ever* (*le-olam*) (Ex. 21:6),²⁴ and in *and there abide for ever* (I Sam. 1:22)²⁵ and in many other verses.

Some commentators insist that the verse *for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die* (Gen. 2:17) indicates that man was created immortal and that he became mortal as a punishment for his sin. Many ask, what sin did Adam's children commit that they were punished

²¹ *Berakhot* 40a and *Sanhedrin* 70b.

²² It means sewn.

²³ Hence the tree that implanted this new knowledge is called "the tree of knowledge of good and evil."

²⁴ According to the Talmud it means until the jubilee. Cf. *Kiddushin* 15a.

²⁵ It can only mean for us as long as he lives. Therefore *va-chai le-olam* (and live forever, v. 22) is to be rendered, "and he will live for a very long time."

with death? Now this is absurd. Man and beast both share a common spirit (life force) through which they live and experience sensations in this world. As animals are destined to die, so must man die. The advantage of man over beast lies in the portion from above (the soul) which man has been granted. A Greek physician has proved beyond a shadow of a doubt that it is impossible for man to live forever.²⁶

8. AND THEY HEARD THE VOICE OF THE LORD GOD WALKING. They heard the voice of God walking toward evening, at the time of the day when the breeze blows. Scripture employs the term *holekh* (walking) when referring to a voice as seen in *The sound thereof shall go (yelekh) like the serpent's* (Jer. 46:22), and *And when the voice of the horn waxed (holekh) louder and louder* (Ex. 19:19). However, the Spanish grammarian, Rabbi Jonah ibn Janah, says that this verse is to be interpreted as follows: And they heard the voice of God as man was walking in the garden. He also interprets *the day* referred to in *for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die* (Gen. 2:17)²⁷ as meaning a thousand years, as the Midrash does.²⁸ Others say that Adam was created on a Friday and died on a Friday.²⁹ Others say that the meaning of *for in the day...thou shalt surely die* is that on that day you will incur the death penalty. Still others say that die at times means punishment, as seen in the verse *the man that hath done this deserveth to die* (II Sam. 12:5).³⁰ Still others say the meaning of this verse is that on the day you eat of this tree you will begin to die. They bring proof from

²⁶ Galen, *Third section of the use of limbs* as quoted by Maimonides, *Guide to the Perplexed*, Part III, Chap. XII. I.E. maintains that man was not originally created immortal.

²⁷ The problem with this verse is that Adam did not die on the day that he ate of the tree of knowledge.

²⁸ The Midrash states that a day of God is a thousand years. Thus what God was telling Adam was, "If you eat of the tree of knowledge you will die at the end of a thousand years." Cf. *Bereshit Rabbah* 19:14.

²⁹ Thus he actually did die on the day that he ate of the tree of knowledge.

³⁰ The man who took his neighbor's sheep did not commit a capital crime.

a child.³¹ According to my thinking the correct interpretation of this verse is to be found in the words of the Rabbinic sages who said that Adam repented.³² Their interpretation is in keeping with the words of Jeremiah who says, *At one instant I may speak concerning a nation...to destroy it, but if that nation turn from their evil...I repent of the evil that I thought to do unto it* (Jer. 18:7, 8).

9. AND THE LORD GOD CALLED. *Where art thou* was a means of starting a conversation. Similarly, *Where is Abel thy brother?* (Gen. 4:9).³³ Behold, Cain denied his brother's whereabouts, but God responded, *the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto Me from the ground* (Gen. 4:10).

11. SHOULDEST NOT. *Bilti* with a *lamed* prefixed to it (*le-vilti*) means "not to." Without this *lamed* (*bilti*) it means "only."

EAT. *Akhol* (eat) is an infinitive. It is like *shemor* (keep) in³⁴ *in not keeping* (*shemor*) *His commandments* (Deut. 8:11).

12. WHOM THOU GAVEST TO BE WITH ME. Thou gavest to me one who gave me the fruit to eat. The word *immadi* (to be with me) means the same as *immi* (with me). Its meaning is: to be with me in the

³¹ A cryptic comment. It is suggested that I.E. draws a parallel to a child who grows to sexual maturity and then begins to decline in physical strength (Krinsky). Filwarg rejects this interpretation by noting that physical decline does not set in with sexual maturity. However, it should be noted that medieval man believed that the emission of semen weakened the body and hastened its decline (see Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Hilkhoh De'ot*, Chap. 4). Thus man's decline sets in with his sexual maturity. Since, according to I.E., man's sexual maturity came with the eating of the fruit of the tree of knowledge, his decline, too, started at this time.

³² Had Adam not repented, he would have died on the day he ate of the tree of knowledge. But he repented and thus was spared.

³³ God thus knew what happened to Abel. Hence *Where is Abel thy brother* was a means of starting a conversation. Similarly God knew where Adam was, and *Where art thou* was a means of starting a conversation.

³⁴ *Shemor* also is an infinitive.

garden. However, *immadi*, in contradistinction to *immi*, is found only in the first person singular.

AND I DID EAT. The *alef* of *va-okhel* (and I did eat) is a first person imperfect prefix. Its vowel (a *cholam*) takes the place of the *alef* of the root that has been dropped. The *khaf* is vocalized with a *tzere* because *and I did eat* comes at the end of a verse. A *vav* prefixed to a participle is always vocalized with a *sheva*, and never with a *kamatz*.³⁵

13. BEGUILED ME. Persuaded me.

14. CURSED. The serpent was cursed with a short life.³⁶ However, the correct interpretation is that the serpent was cursed in manner of locomotion.³⁷

UPON THY BELLY. *Gechonekha* (thy belly) means thy chest. We cannot determine if the *nun* of *gakhon* (thy belly) is part of the root of this word, as the *nun* of *adon* (lord) is, or if it is a paradigm *nun* like the *nun* of *zadon* (insolence).³⁸ Those who say that *gakhon* is so called because of the air that rushes forth from it³⁹ are indulging in homiletics.

³⁵ I.E.'s point is that *va-okhel* is a first person perfect and not a participle. I.E. makes this point because a participle is vocalized with a *cholam* over the first radical and a *tzere* beneath the second radical. Hence *va-okhel* at first glance appears to be a participle. I.E. points out that this is not so. As a participle it would not have a *vav* with a *kamatz* affixed to it since a connective *vav* is vocalized with a *sheva*. Since the *vav* of *va-okhel* has a *kamatz* beneath it, it must be a *vav* conversive, changing *okhal*, an imperfect, to *va-okhal*, a perfect. However, because *va-okhal* comes at the end of a sentence it is vocalized *va-okhel*.

³⁶ Just as blessing is an addition of the good (see I.E. on Gen. 2:3), curse is a diminution of the good. According to this interpretation *cursed art thou* refers to the serpent's life span.

³⁷ He lost his legs and consequently could no longer walk erect. According to this interpretation *cursed art thou* refers to the serpent's means of locomotion.

³⁸ *Zadon* (insolence) comes from the root *zayin*, *vav*, *dalet*; therefore the *nun* of *zadon* is not part of its root.

³⁹ From the root *gimel*, *vav*, *chet*, meaning to burst forth. They explained Gihon to mean the dashing river, Perat as the river whose waters are fruitful and multiply, and Pishon as the gamboling river.

They similarly explain Gihon (Gen. 2:13). They also say that Pishon (Gen. 2:11) comes from the same root as *tafushu* (ye gambol) in *Because ye gambol (tafushu) as a heifer* (Jer. 50:11). Also, they say that Perat (the Euphrates, Gen. 2:14) comes from the same roots as *Be fruitful* (peru), and *multiply* (u-revu) (Gen. 1:28). But they are unable to cross the great river, the Chiddeckel (the Tigris) (Gen. 1:28), which stood before them.⁴⁰ They decided that it is made up of two words, *chad* (swift) and *kal* (light), and means the river whose waters are swift and light.

15. AND I WILL PUT ENMITY...THEY SHALL BRUISE THY HEAD. Her children shall smite thee upon thy head. *Yeshufeni* (bruise) in *He that would break me (yeshufeni) with a tempest* (Job 9:17) is similar to *yeshufekha* (shall bruise thee). Look at what follows and you will see that it is so.⁴¹ A *bet* has been omitted from the word *rosh* (head) in *they shall bruise thy head*.⁴² We find the same in *into the house* (bet) of the Lord⁴³ (II Kings 12:17).

HEEL. *Ekev* means the foot. If the head symbolizes the first, then the heel symbolizes the last. *Akevo* in *their rear* (akevo) *lying in wait on the west* (Josh. 8:13), is similar.

16. I WILL GREATLY MULTIPLY. *Harbah* (multiply) is an infinitive.

⁴⁰ They were unable to derive it from one root.

⁴¹ The second part of the verse quoted from Job reads, *And multiply my wounds without cause*. This proves that the verb *yeshufeni* means he will bruise me, or smite me. Since *yeshufekha* and *yeshufeni* come from one root, they have one meaning. Hence *yeshufekha* means shall bruise thee.

⁴² The verse literally reads, *They shall bruise thee head*. With a *bet* it reads, *They shall bruise thee upon the head*. The *bet* is to be supplied by the reader.

⁴³ The verse should read, *be-vet Adonai*. However, it reads, *bet Adonai*.

THY PAIN. The pain a woman suffers when she is deflowered.⁴⁴

AND THY TRAVAIL. The *nun* of *ve-heronekh* (and thy travail) is not a root letter.⁴⁵ Pregnancy is considered by our verse to be a punishment because it and childbirth are a burden to women.⁴⁶

THY DESIRE. Thy obedience.⁴⁷ This means you will obey whatever your husband commands you for you are under his authority to do his will.

17. AND UNTO ADAM...CURSED IS THE GROUND. It will not yield much produce.

IN TOIL THOU SHALT EAT OF IT. This is short for thou shalt eat of its produce.⁴⁸ *And let them be of those that eat at thy table* (I Kings 2:7)⁴⁹ is similar.

18. THORNS ALSO AND THISTLES. *Kotz* refers to large thorns. *Dardar* (thistles) are smaller than thorns. Its root is *dalet*, *resh* (*dar*). The other two letters of the word are not root letters.⁵⁰

⁴⁴ See I.E.'s comment on Gen. 34:12. The Bible speaks of pain and conception rather than conception and pain. Hence the pain spoken of by Scripture precedes the conception.

⁴⁵ The root of conceive is *heh*, *resh*, *heh*. *Herayon* refers to pregnancy and childbirth.

⁴⁶ Elsewhere in Scripture pregnancy is considered to be a blessing, as seen in the verse *Blessings...of the womb* (Gen. 49:25).

⁴⁷ Perhaps I.E. understood *thy desire* to mean your husband's desire will be your desire. Weiser suggests that the woman's desire for her husband will be so strong that she will listen to everything that he commands her.

⁴⁸ The verse literally reads, *thou shalt eat it (the ground)*. However, man does not eat the ground. Therefore I.E. says that our verse is abridged (Weiser).

⁴⁹ The verse literally reads, *and let them be of those who eat thy table*. The words "the food of" must be supplied by the reader.

⁵⁰ They indicate that the word is a diminutive, i.e., *dar* a thistle, *dardar* a small thistle (Filwarg). For alternate interpretations see Weiser. I.E. literally reads, *He lives* (*dar*) *alone, for his brother is missing* (*ne'dar*).

[IN TOIL.] Thou shalt toil in opening, harrowing and sowing.⁵¹ In addition to this, man will also suffer the sick evil of finding thorns growing amidst the produce of the field.

[THE HERB OF THE FIELD.] Bread. For prior to this, man sustained himself with the fruits of the Garden of Eden.

[19. IN THE SWEAT OF THY FACE SHALT THOU EAT BREAD]. Unlike the animals, you will have to work at winnowing, grinding, kneading and cooking before you can eat.

The meaning of *ze'at* (sweat of) can be ascertained from Rabbinic sources.⁵² It follows the paradigm of *shenah* (sleep). Its root is *yod*, *zayin*, *ayin*. *Ba-yazah* in *they shall not gird themselves with anything that causeth sweat* (*ba-yazah*) (Ezek. 44:18) is similar. The meaning of the verse is, they shall not come to sweat.

We know that man is created out of the four elements. What, then, does Scripture mean by *for out of it (dust) was thou taken?*⁵³ The answer is that man's skeletal frame is created out of earth (dust). Hence the bones are heavy⁵⁴ and lack sensation. The skeletal frame is the foundation of the body. Look, Scripture states, *and the bones came together, bone to its bone* (Ezek. 37:7). The bones are like the frame of a house. Thus after the bones came together *and, lo, there were sinews upon them, and flesh came up, and skin covered them above* (Ezek. 37:8). Similarly Scripture states, *and ye shall carry up my bones from hence* (Gen. 50:25).

⁵¹ Cf. Is. 28:24.

⁵² The rabbis often employ the term *ze'ah* for sweat.

⁵³ The four elements are: fire, air, water and earth. Why does Scripture only mention dust (earth)? At man's death his body decomposes into all four elements (Krinsky).

⁵⁴ Earth is the heaviest element. The Bible refers to the body as bones (Gen. 50:25) because they form man's frame. Man is said to come from the earth because his bones are created out of dust.

20. EVE. The *yod* and *vav* are interchangeable.⁵⁵ We thus find *hoyah* and *hoveh* interchanged in *behold, the hand of the Lord is upon* (*hoyah*) *thy cattle* (Ex. 9:3), and in *and thou wouldst be* (*hoveh*) *be their king* (Neh. 6:6). The reason she was called Chavvah and not Chayyah is to distinguish her name from the noun meaning animal (*chayyah*).

THE MOTHER OF ALL LIVING. Humans.

21. GARMENTS OF SKIN. Some say that Adam and Eve originally consisted of bone and flesh, and God now covered them with skin.⁵⁶ Others say *garments of skin* means garments for their skin.⁵⁷ Still others say that there exists an animal which has a form similar to that of man, and God commanded that it shed its skin.⁵⁸ However, one should in reality not bother to inquire into this matter. We ought to believe that God made garments of skin for Adam and Eve. Who can recount all of God's mighty acts? Who can tell of all of his wonders? There is no end to God's greatness.

22. AND THE LORD GOD SAID...AS ONE OF US. When one (*echad*) is in the absolute, it has a cantillical note which indicates the foregoing and it is vocalized with a *segol* beneath the *alef*. However, when it is vocalized with a *pattach* beneath the *alef* (*achad*) it is in the construct. Similarly, *As one of* (*ke-achad*) *the tribes of Israel* (Gen. 49:16). Hence, according to the rules of grammar, the word *ke-achad* (as

⁵⁵ The Bible says that the woman was called *Chavvah* because she was the mother of all *chai*. If this is the case then she should have been called *chayyah*. Thus I.E. points out that the *vav* and *yod* interchange and that *chayyah* and *chavvah* are one and the same.

⁵⁶ The problem which the commentaries found in this verse is, where did the skins to cover them come from? No animal was yet killed or had died so that its skin would be available for use as material for clothes (Filwarg).

⁵⁷ The garments were not made out of skin. They were garments for their skin. These commentators interpret as if written *le-or*.

⁵⁸ Hence the skin. The skin garments thus fitted man perfectly.

one of) cannot have the meaning of as one.⁵⁹ Additionally, if *ke-achad* is in the absolute, then it is meaningless.⁶⁰ Furthermore, if *ke-achad* is in the absolute, the notes should have connected *mi-mennu* (of us) to *la-da'at* (to know).⁶¹

Mi-mennu is a plural,⁶² as in *ish mi-mennu* (none of us) (Gen. 23:6). I have already explained in *The Book of Foundation* why the *nun* of *mi-mennu* receives a *dagesh* when in the plural.⁶³ The Babylonian grammarians who do not place a *dagesh* in it are in error.⁶⁴ The meaning of the verse (v. 22) is the same as *ye shall be as God, knowing good and evil* (v. 5).⁶⁵ On the other hand, God might be saying what was in Adam's mind.⁶⁶ The use of the term of *us* presents no problem. It is similar to *Let us make man in our image* (Gen. 1:26) and *Come, let us go down* (Gen. 11:7). God in all these cases is addressing the angels.

23. THEREFORE THE LORD GOD SENT HIM FORTH. When the word *shelach* (sent forth) is followed by a *mem*, it has a negative connotation and means banished, as in *cast them out* (*shalach*) of *My*

⁵⁹ Onkelos interpreted *ke-achad* in this way: "Man has become one on earth." Cf. Rashi. Man is one on earth as I am one in heaven. I.E. disagrees, for *ke-achad* is in the construct.

⁶⁰ If *ke-achad* is in the absolute, then Scripture reads, man is like one. This is a meaningless statement.

⁶¹ Not to *ke-achad*. A word in the absolute is not connected by a cantilical note to the word that follows. Since *ke-achad* is connected to *mi-mennu* it must be in the construct.

⁶² Onkelos translates *mi-mennu* as a singular. The word *mi-mennu* can be rendered of *us* or of *him*.

⁶³ The word *mi-mennu* should have been spelled with two *nuns*. The *dagesh* makes up for the missing *nun* (Weiser). I.E. makes this point here because the word *mi-mennu* has a *dagesh*. He does not want one to think mistakenly that it is a singular because of this *dagesh*. See next note.

⁶⁴ The Babylonian grammarians, in contradistinction to the Palestinian grammarians, place a *dagesh* in *mi-mennu* when it is singular and omit the *dagesh* when it is plural. I.E. says that the Palestinians who place a *dagesh* in both instances are correct.

⁶⁵ Man has become like an angel. See I.E.'s comments on verse 5.

⁶⁶ Adam now thinks that he has become as one of us.

sight (Jer. 15:1). The great Spanish scholar who interpreted *sent him forth* in our verse in a positive way, as in *and Abraham went with them to bring them* (le-shallecham) *on the way* (Gen. 18:16), and in *and he hath sent him away* (va-yeshallechehu), *and he is gone in peace* (II Sam. 3:23), erred. For if he was right then the place Adam was going to was a better place than the Garden of Eden. If this sage should ask, if the meaning of *sent him forth* is he banished him, then why does Scripture go on to say, *So He drove out the man* (v. 24)?⁶⁷ The answer is that when man was driven from the garden (v. 4), God placed the cherubim at the east of the Garden of Eden.⁶⁸

[THE CHERUBIM.] Some say that cherubim means like images of youths,⁶⁹ which is the translation of the Aramaic *ke-ravyah*. However, I believe that the word is a general term for any image. Ezekiel, who first says that he saw the image of an ox (Ezek. 1:10) and later speaks of a cherub (Ezek. 10:14), refers to one and the same image. The image was not changed from that of an ox to that of a cherub because an ox would be a reminder of the sin of the golden calf, as this sin was not committed in Ezekiel's day.⁷⁰ When Ezekiel speaks of *the* cherub (10:14) he has in mind the image he had mentioned previously (the image of an ox in 1:10). Therefore every image of an ox is a cherub, but not every cherub is an image of an ox. Proof of this is that Ezekiel refers to all images that he had seen as cherubim (10:20).⁷¹ Our verse speaks of *the cherubim*,

⁶⁷ If *sent forth* means *drove out*, then Scripture is being redundant.

⁶⁸ It does not relate that man was driven out, but rather tells that when man was driven out God did the following. It thus does not repeat verse 24.

⁶⁹ See *Hagigah* 13b. The Talmud says that the Hebrew word *keruv* is like the Aramaic *ke-ravyah*, *ke* (like), *ravyah* (a child).

⁷⁰ *Hagigah* 13b states, "One verse says...*and they had the face of an ox* (Ezek. 1:10). Elsewhere it is written...*the face of a cherub* (Ezek. 10:14). Resh Lakish said: Ezekiel entreated concerning it and changed it into a cherub. He said before Him, Lord of the Universe, shall an accuser become an advocate." I.E. notes that the Talmudic interpretation is not in keeping with the literal meaning of the Bible.

⁷¹ The image of a man, lion, ox and eagle

which implies the cherubim known to all, i.e., angels.⁷² They had a flaming two-edged sword in their hands. The meaning of *which turned every way* is that the sword had two edges. Those who say that the flaming sword refers to the sun are incorrect.⁷³

24. AT THE EAST. *Mi-kedem* means at the east.⁷⁴ Note, the story of the garden of Eden is to be interpreted literally. There is no doubt that it happened exactly as described in Scripture. Nevertheless, it also has a secret meaning.⁷⁵ It alludes to the following: Intellect (the Garden of Eden)⁷⁶ gave birth to desire (the tree of knowledge). Desire gave birth to man's actions. It is via his actions that man can elevate himself, for the force that propels his desire is in front of him.⁷⁷ The fig leaves prove this.⁷⁸ Man's actions are also called the testing ground, for by them man is tried. Intellect and desire are only potential.⁷⁹ The one who understands the secrets of the tree of knowledge will understand the

⁷² The form of the cherubim was known to Biblical man (Krinsky).

⁷³ Those who put forward this interpretation hold that the phrase refers to the great heat of the sun which guarded the garden (Weiser).

⁷⁴ The entrance to the garden was at the east (Weiser).

⁷⁵ This comment of I.E. is cryptic in the extreme. Our translation follows Weiser's interpretation. Levine puts this comment of I.E. in the context of the latter's philosophy. He writes that according to I.E., "wise persons recognize that their mission is to fulfill their soul's will to return to the heavenly realm. Thus the will of a man controls the future of his soul. The will is not perfectly pure. Although man's well being is contingent upon his making the correct choices, volition (*chefetz*, desire) frequently acts contrary to the intellect, due to the paradox of various faculties within man struggling for control. Volition (desire) is animated by the intellectual faculty but it is opposed by lust which originates from the appetitive and sensitive dimensions (Gen. 3:24)." Man's goal in life is thus to seek "knowledge of God" and to subdue "all interfering passions" (p. 14).

⁷⁶ Man's intellect is his Garden of Eden (Kaputa).

⁷⁷ The sexual organs, the source of man's desire, is in front of man (Weiser). Perhaps what I.E. means by "his desire is in front of him" is that man can control himself.

⁷⁸ They cover man's sexual organs.

⁷⁹ Man's actions are actual. They show whether man is guided by his desires or by his intellect.

secret of the four rivers that divided into four parts (Gen. 2:10).⁸⁰ This is the secret of the Garden of Eden and the garments of skin.⁸¹ There is also an allusion in all of this to man's potential immortality (the tree of life). The intelligent will understand that this is the ultimate purpose of man's life on earth.⁸²

⁸⁰ According to some medieval philosophers, man's brain is divided into four parts, each governing a different aspect of man's mental life, i.e., sensation, imagination, judgment and memory. According to Kaputa, I.E. held similar ideas. What he is saying is that all these functions have one source, man's intellect, his Garden of Eden.

⁸¹ Man must control his desires.

⁸² Man is to live a life guided by his intellect so that he will attain immortality.

CHAPTER 4

1. AND THE MAN. When Adam realized that he would not live forever he saw the need of perpetuating the human race. Eve concurred and therefore exclaimed, upon giving birth to a child, *I have gotten a man with the help of the Lord*.¹ Eve used the Tetragrammaton, and not the term *Elohim*, because the Lord's spirit now rested upon the earth via the human race even as it does on the heavenly bodies.²

The term good³ refers to creation as a whole. We thus read, *And God saw everything that He had made, and, behold, it was very good* (Gen. 1:31). Evil is found only in a part of creation.⁴

3. AND IN PROCESS OF TIME. That Cain tilled the soil, he brought an offering to the place that he had set aside for his devotions. I disagree with those who say that he brought an offering to his father.⁵

¹ God wanted the human race to go on. By producing a child Eve was doing God's will, hence her remark (Krinsky).

² Man is the only being on earth upon whom the Tetragrammaton rests. See I.E.'s comments on Gen. 1:26 and 2:12. The continuity of the human species insured that God's spirit would rest upon the earth.

³ I.E.'s comment "the term good" is difficult. According to Krinsky, I.E. refers to Gen. 3:22, "To know good and evil." Meijler emends *millat* (term or word) to *milleh* (filled). This would give: God filled the whole with good.

⁴ According to Netter, Krinsky, Cherez and Weiser, I.E.'s point is to tell us that good refers only to the species; i.e., the species is eternal; however, the individual must die. Cf. Maimonides, *Guide for the Perplexed*, Part III, Chap. 10, and I.E.'s introduction to Ecclesiastes. In the latter I.E. maintains that the little evil found in the world is overshadowed by the preponderance of good in creation.

⁵ Adam had the status of a high priest, and bringing him a gift was equivalent to bringing an offering to God (Krinsky).

There is support for the notion that Cain did not bring his offering from the first of the fruits of the ground in Scripture's stating that *And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof*.⁶

4. AND THE LORD HAD RESPECT. *Va-yisha* (and he had respect) follows the paradigm of *va-yichar* (and he was wroth) in *And Cain was very wroth* (*va-yichar*).⁷ *Va-yisha* means, and he accepted. *She'u* in *Look away* (*she'u*) *from me* (Is. 22:4) is close in meaning to it. They brought offerings in keeping with the secret meaning of the sacrificial ritual.⁸ It is possible that a fire came down from heaven and consumed Abel's sacrifice but not Cain's.

I believe that *yamim* (time) (v. 3) means a full year. Scripture similarly states, *for a full year* (*yamim*) *shall he have the right of redemption* (Lev. 25:29). A year is called *yamim* (days) because it indicates that the full cycle of days, both long and short, has been completed. *From year to year* (*mi-yamim yamimah*) (Ex. 13:10) is similar. The meaning of *shenatayim yamim* (two full years) (Gen. 41:1) is two complete years from day to day. Had Scripture read *shenatayim* (two years), then it would possibly not have meant two full years from day to day.⁹ Similarly *ad chodesh yamim* (but a whole month) (Num. 11:20) refers to a complete cycle of the moon. I therefore maintain that when the prophet Daniel prophesied *a thousand, two hundred and ninety*

⁶ Scripture does not mention the same with regard to Cain. Cf. Rashi's comment on this verse.

⁷ They are both shortened forms of the verb. The final *heh* of the root is dropped and the first root letter is vocalized with a *pattach* because it precedes a root letter (*Filwarg*). See notes to 3:22.

⁸ Cf. I.E.'s comment on Lev. 1:1. Weiser explains that I.E. believed that sacrifices were offered to gain some benefit. Cf. I.E. on Ex. 12:7.

⁹ It could have meant close to two years, two years being a round number.

days (*yamim*) (Dan. 12:11), he meant days and not years. I say this because the days (*yamim*) are enumerated.¹⁰

7. SHALL IT NOT. Many commentators explain *se'et* (be lifted up) to mean thy sins will be forgiven.¹¹ However, it appears to me that *se'et* means thy face will be lifted up. For it is previously written, *and his countenance fell* (v. 5). *And his countenance fell* indicates shame, as in *how then should I hold up my face* (*esah panai*) (II Sam. 2:22).¹² The meaning of our verse is: if you will do good, then you will lift up your face. *Surely then shalt thou lift up thy face* (*tissa fanekha*) *without spot* (Job 11:15) is similar.

SIN COUCHETH. Some say that *chattat* (sin) is used here in place of *avon* (iniquity).¹³ There are also those who explain this clause to mean that thy iniquity (sin) will couch over thy grave at the day of judgment. They further explain the pronominal suffix of *teshukato* (its desire) as referring to Abel. Its meaning is, why are you wroth that I accepted Abel's sacrifice since he is obligated to obey thee (*ve-elekha teshukato*), and thou art a ruler over him?¹⁴

Others say that the pronominal suffix of *teshukato* (its desire) refers to the impulse (*yetzer*) even though this impulse (*yetzer*) is not

¹⁰ When the word *yamim* stands by itself, it means a complete year (all the days). When numbers are given it refers to days. Otherwise one could not know whether *sheloshah yamim* means three years or three days (Filwarg).

¹¹ *Se'et* means forgiveness as in *noseh avon* (forgiving iniquity) (Ex. 34:7). Cf. Onkelos and Kimchi.

¹² Which shows that one who is ashamed cannot hold his face up.

¹³ Scripture writes, *Sin coucheth* (*chattat rovetz*). The problem is that sin is a feminine noun and *rovetz* is a masculine verb. The phrase should read *chattat rovetzet*, hence the comment that *chattat* has been substituted for *avon*. They mean the same thing (Krinsky). The printed texts have *chet*. However, the Bible has *chattat*, *Vat. Ebr.* 38 has *chattat*, and we have followed suit.

¹⁴ I.E. explains *teshukah* as meaning obedience. See his comment on Gen. 3:16. Cain was a "ruler" over Abel because he was the older brother. One cannot explain *and unto thee is its desire* as referring to iniquity since iniquity is not a person.

mentioned in this verse. These commentators explain *sin coucheth at the door* as meaning that your sin lies in wait at the door of your house and is always with you. Others interpret door (*petach*) as referring to the door of the mouth, as in *Keep the doors (pitche) of thy mouth* (Micah 7:5).¹⁵ However, in my opinion the word *chattat* (sin) in *sin coucheth at the door* is in the construct, and it is the impulse of man's heart that "coucheth" with him.¹⁶

AND UNTO THEE IS ITS DESIRE. If you will it, then your impulse (*yetzer*) will obey you.¹⁷ Additionally, you have the power to rule over it.

8. AND CAIN SPOKE. It appears to me that Cain related to Abel the full account of the rebuke with which God had reproached him.

Those born on a dark day ask, how did Cain kill Abel since no swords were yet in existence? This is a foolish question. He could have choked him or killed him with a stone or a piece of wood inasmuch as there were thousands of stones and chunks of wood around.

[9. WHERE.] Ay(where) means the same as *ayeh*. The word *ayfo* (where) is a combination of two words.¹⁸

10. CRIETH UNTO ME. *Crieth unto Me* is not connected to voice of (*kol*).¹⁹ Similarly in *Hark, my beloved* (*kol dodi*)! *behold, he cometh*,

¹⁵ Man can sin even with his mouth (Filwarg).

¹⁶ *Chattat* is in the construct with *yetzer* (impulse). However, the word *yetzer* is not in the text and has to be supplied by the reader. In other words, *chattat* is short for *chattat ha-yetzer*. This eliminates the problem of a feminine noun (*chattat*) having a masculine verb (*rovetz*). The clause should thus be understood: the sin of the impulse of your heart coucheth at the door; that is, it is always with you.

¹⁷ I.E. explains *teshukah* (desire) as obedience (see note 14). Hence *its desire* means its obedience, the "it" referring to *yetzer* (impulse).

¹⁸ Where (*ayeh*) and here (*poh*), i.e., in what place.

¹⁹ It is connected to *thy brother's blood*. *Kol* (voice) is singular, *tzo'akim* (crieth out) is a plural; thus *tzo'akim* cannot refer to *kol*. It is thus connected to *blood of*, which is a plural (Krinsky).

(Cant. 2:8), *he cometh* is connected to *my beloved*,²⁰ as I have pointed out in my commentary on Canticles. The meaning of our verse is: I have heard the cry of your brother's blood that was poured out upon the ground. However, Onkelos interprets *thy brother's blood* as referring to the potential descendants of Abel.²¹

11. AND NOW CURSED ART THOU FROM THE GROUND. Cain, a tiller of the soil, suffered a loss with regard to the ground.²² He sowed and planted but the earth no longer yielded fruits or harvest. Cain was forced to wander far from the dwelling place of his father, Adam, who lived close to the Garden of Eden. He was never to find rest in one place but was constantly to be on the move.

12. [AND A WANDERER.] Some explain *nad* (wanderer) to mean a mourner, as in *to bemoan* (la-nud) *him* (Job 2:11). However, my opinion is that *nad* is a synonym for *na* (fugitive). *Nedod* (wander) in *Lo, then would I wander* (nedod) *far off* (Ps. 55:8) is analogous.

13. [MY PUNISHMENT²³ IS GREATER THAN I CAN BEAR.] All the commentaries explain this to mean that Cain confessed his sin. They say that the meaning of *neso* (bear) is forgiveness, as in *forgiving iniquity* (noseh avon) (Ex. 34:7).²⁴ However, I disagree. In Hebrew reward is called *ekev* (heel), and the harsh punishment which comes as a result of iniquity is occasionally referred to as "sin." Similarly we find,

²⁰ Rather than to voice of (*kol*). *Cometh* is connected to *my beloved* because it is the beloved who leaps and skips, not the voice; the voice neither leaps nor skips (Krinsky). *Hinne zeh ba* can be translated as, behold, he cometh, or behold it cometh.

²¹ Hence the plural *deme* (blood of). Cf. Rashi.

²² I.E. interprets curse to mean a diminution of the good. See his comment on 3:14.

²³ Literally, *avoni* (my sin).

²⁴ These commentators translate *avon* literally and render our clause as: my iniquity (*avon*) is beyond (*gadol*) forgiveness (*mi-neso*).

*for the iniquity (avon) of the Amorite is not yet full*²⁵ (Gen. 15:16); *there shall no punishment (avon) happen to thee* (I Sam. 28:10); *For the iniquity (avon) of the daughter of my people is greater than the sin of Sodom* (Lamentations 4:6).²⁶ The meaning of our verse thus is: my punishment (*avon*) is greater than I can bear (*mi-neso*). The next verse substantiates this interpretation.²⁷

Patzetah (v.11) is to be rendered opened. *Yiftzeh* (doth open) in *But Job doth open* (*yiftzeh*) *his mouth in vanity* (Job 35:16) is similar.

14. [AND FROM THY FACE SHALL I BE HID.] All the world is full of God's glory. Nevertheless, there are places more receptive to God's power, and His might is seen there.

15. SEVENFOLD. Until seven generations, for *shivatayim* (sevenfold) does not mean fourteen,²⁸ nor does it mean three hundred and forty-three.²⁹ Proof that *shivatayim* means sevenfold is that the prophet states, *And the light of the sun shall be sevenfold* (*shivatayim*) and then explains his words, viz., *as the light of the seven days* (Is. 30:26).³⁰

[VENGEANCE SHALL BE TAKEN ON HIM.] The meaning of *yukkam* (vengeance shall be taken on him) is that vengeance shall be exacted from him. *He shall not be punished* (*yukkam*) (Ex. 21:21) is

²⁵ The time of their punishment has not arrived.

²⁶ According to I.E. *avon* (iniquity) should be rendered punishment. The verse thus means: the punishment of my people is severer than the punishment of Sodom (Krinsky).

²⁷ Cain in verse 14 complains of his unfortunate plight. This shows that verse 13 is to be similarly interpreted.

²⁸ Some render *shivatayim* as seven multiplied by two. They consider it a dual form like *shenatayim*, (two years) which is *shanah* (a year) multiplied by two.

²⁹ Some render *shivatayim* as seven multiplied by seven, multiplied by seven.

³⁰ Thus *shivatayim* means seven days or seven times as much.

similar.³¹ The meaning of our verse is that God held back his anger and waited seven generations before punishing Cain.³² Don't ask, how could Cain's life span extend for seven generations? Behold, his brother Seth lived many years with Noah.³³ It is also possible that Cain's descendants are called Cain after their patriarch in the same way that Jews are called Israel.³⁴

Some say that the sign the Lord set for Cain was a horn. Others say God removed fear from Cain's heart and gave him courage to face the world. It appears to me that God gave Cain a sign that no harm would befall him.³⁵ Cain finally believed God because of the sign.³⁶ Scripture, however, does not tell us what the sign was.

16. IN THE LAND OF NOD. The land of Nod is so called because it was in that land that Cain was a wanderer and a fugitive.³⁷

ON THE EAST SIDE OF EDEN. East of Eden and north of the garden.³⁸

[17. ENOCH.] The city was called after Enoch, the son of Cain. Similarly the city of Samaria was called after Shemer (I Kings 16:24) and Egypt (*mitzraim*) was named for Mitzraim, son of Ham.³⁹

³¹ Literally, vengeance shall not be taken on him.

³² The verse is to be understood as follows: Cain shall be punished after seven generations.

³³ Noah was the tenth generation from Adam. Thus Seth lived for more than seven generations.

³⁴ The meaning of the verse being: Cain's descendants would bear his guilt.

³⁵ As he did to Gideon. Cf. Jud. 6.

³⁶ As Gideon did.

³⁷ See verse 12.

³⁸ Ibn Ezra held that the inhabited world developed north of Eden. See Chap. II, note 37.

³⁹ Cf. Gen. 10:6. This is not explicitly stated in Scripture. I.E. assumes that it was so (Weiser).

Lamech was the seventh generation from Adam and the sixth from Cain.⁴⁰

[19. ADAH AND...ZILLAH.] Do not pay attention to Saadiah Gaon's interpretation of Biblical names. Even if we knew Hebrew perfectly, how would we be able to ascertain the events which they commemorate? If the Bible did not state why Moses was named Moses, or Issaschar, Issaschar, would we be able to surmise the meaning of these names?⁴¹

[20. THE FATHER OF SUCH AS DWELL IN TENTS.] The meaning of *avi* (father of) is first. The same is true of the word *av* (father)⁴² and the word (*aviv*) (spring).⁴³ When the word for father is in the construct it always has a *yod* suffixed to it. The same is true with the word for brother.⁴⁴

21. THE HARP AND PIPE. Harp and pipe (*kinnor ve-ugav*) are types of musical instruments. The ability to play these instruments requires great wisdom.⁴⁵

22. THE FORGER. *Lotesh* (the forger) means the sharpener. *Li-litosh* in *to sharpen* (li-litosh) *every man his plowshare* (I Sam. 13:20) is similar.

⁴⁰ Hence it was from Lamech's children that vengeance would be exacted for Abel's murder.

⁴¹ A literal translation of a Biblical name does not reveal its meaning.

⁴² The father (*av*) is first, i.e., is born before his son.

⁴³ The first fruits appear in *aviv* (spring).

⁴⁴ Singulars in the construct usually do not have a *yod* suffixed to them, hence I.E.'s comment that father of is *avi*, brother of is *achi*.

⁴⁵ The ancients considered music not only a skill but a wisdom, or what we would call an art.

[23. AND LAMECH SAID...] Note, this ⁴⁶ should have appeared earlier. I have already noted two similar examples of this in my earlier comments.⁴⁷ Three additional examples are: *that the man took a golden ring* (Gen. 24:22);⁴⁸ *And the Lord said unto Moses, say unto the children of Israel: Ye are a stiff-necked people* (Ex. 33:5);⁴⁹ and *And I besought the Lord at that time* (Deut. 3:23).⁵⁰

As to our verse, it is to be interpreted as our sages did. The rabbis tell us that Adah and Zillah were afraid to bear children because they feared that their offspring, who were the seventh generation from Cain, would die or be killed as punishment for Cain's sin. Therefore Lamech said to them, "I am in truth the seventh generation⁵¹ and if a man would wound me or a child bruise me, then I would kill them." *I have slain* is used in place of *I will slay*.⁵² Similar examples are: *I will give* (natati)⁵³ *the price of the field* (Gen. 23:13), and *which I took out*⁵⁴ *of the hand of*

⁴⁶ Verses 23 and 24. The reason is that I.E. understands verses 23 and 24 to be an attempt by Lamech to induce his wives to cohabit with him. However, verses 20 through 22 tell us that they in fact did so. Hence verses 23 and 24 must describe what happened before verses 20-22. Its meaning is that Lamech had already said to Adah and Zillah. *Va-yomer* is thus a pluperfect (Krinsky).

⁴⁷ See I.E.'s comment on Gen. 1:9.

⁴⁸ This is followed by: *and said: Whose daughter art thou* (Gen. 24:23). Now, would the servant give a golden ring to the girl before asking her who she was? Therefore Gen. 24:23 must be rendered: And he already said, Whose daughter art thou (Krinsky).

⁴⁹ This is preceded by: *And when the people heard these evil tidings* (v. 4). However, the evil tidings are reported in verse 5. Thus verse 5 should precede verse 4. Hence the meaning of *And when the people heard* (v. 4) is: and when the people had heard; i.e., when they heard the following, namely what is reported in the next verse (Meijler).

⁵⁰ Cf. I.E.'s comment on Deut. 3:23. What is reported in this verse took place before Deut. 3:21, viz., *And I commanded Joshua*, etc. Moses besought God before he commanded Joshua not to fear the kings of Canaan. Hence Deut. 3:23 is to be rendered as *And I had besought the Lord*. Ibid. I. E.'s commentary.

⁵¹ From Cain. However, in truth Lamech lied to them. He was the sixth and not the seventh generation from Cain (Filwarg).

⁵² *Haragti* is a perfect.

⁵³ Literally, I gave.

⁵⁴ According to I.E., I took (*lakachti*) means I will take.

the Amorite (Gen. 48:22). There are many similar instances.⁵⁵ Lamech said to his wives, *If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold, Truly Lamech seventy and sevenfold* because Cain deliberately murdered and he, Lamech, did not.⁵⁶ In other words, Lamech told his wives that the decree upon Cain was annulled. However, the fact of the matter is that Lamech's children and all his seed perished in the deluge. Thus Cain's name was wiped out because he murdered his brother.

[25. INSTEAD OF ABEL.] That is, in place of Abel.

[26. BEGAN TO CALL.] *Huchal* (began) belongs to those verbs whose second and third root letters are identical.⁵⁷ If the *chet* were not a guttural, it would receive a *dagesh*. *Huchal* comes from the same root as *techil'ah* (first). The meaning of the clause *then began (huchal) men to call upon the name of the Lord* is: then men first started praying. If *huchal* were derived from *chillul* (profane),⁵⁸ then *the name of the Lord* would follow profane.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ The point is that the Bible occasionally uses a perfect in place of an imperfect.

⁵⁶ If Cain, who committed willful murder, had his punishment deferred for seven generations, I who did not kill anyone shall not be punished for a very long time (Krinsky). Hence you have nothing to fear from having children with me.

⁵⁷ Its root is *chet*, *lamed*, *lamed*.

⁵⁸ Cf. Rashi: "*Huchal* is an expression of profaneness."

⁵⁹ If *huchal* means to profane, the verse reads as follows: then was it profaned to call the name of God. An impossible sentence. If *huchal* means profaned, the verse should read: then was God's name profaned.

CHAPTER 5

1. THIS IS THE BOOK OF THE GENERATIONS OF ADAM. The children and grandchildren that he begot.¹ Adam and only Adam had no human parents, for he was created by God in the likeness of God. Scripture notes that Adam *begat a son in his own likeness, after his image* (v. 3)³ to teach us that God implanted in Adam the power to reproduce his God like image so that his work would be like that of God.⁴ Scripture does not say the same with regard to Cain and Abel, nor does it state how long Cain lived or how old Cain was when he begot his son Enoch. It omits the above clause because the former was murdered and the latter's descendants perished in the deluge.⁵ The Torah tells the story of the murderer Cain to stress God's righteousness. God was long-suffering with Cain but he ultimately punished him. This is in keeping with *and that (God) will by no means clear the guilty* (Ex. 34:7).

22. ENOCH. Son of Jared. Scripture says about Enoch, *And Enoch walked with God*. The meaning of this is the same as the meaning of

¹ *Toledot* (generations) comes from the root *yod, lamed, dalet*. In the *hifil* it means to give birth to.

² I.E. explains that *in the likeness of God made He him* (Adam) indicates that in contrast to his descendants Adam had no human parents but was created directly by God.

³ All living creatures produce offspring that resemble them. Therefore, why mention that Adam produced offspring resembling him?

⁴ The image and likeness spoken of in the verse refer not to man's physical image but to his God-like image. The Bible notes that Adam, like God, was able to produce children in the image of God.

⁵ The lines of both Cain and Abel were wiped out. But the Bible notes these things with regard to Seth because Noah was descended from him.

After the Lord your God shall ye walk (Deut. 13:5).⁶ The same thing is stated concerning Noah, namely, *Noah walked with God* (Gen. 6:9). Others say that *Noah walked with God* means he trained himself to walk with God.⁷

24. AND HE WAS NOT; FOR GOD TOOK HIM. That is, he died. So, too, *take, I beseech Thee, my life from me* (Jonah 4:3). Scripture similarly states, *I take away from thee the desire of thine eyes* (Ezek. 24:16) and then explains its meaning, namely, his wife died (Ezek. 24:18).

The Bible does not state with regard to Enoch's being taken that Enoch died, nor is there any reference to a plague causing his death. The meaning of *took him* in our verse is similar to *take me* in the psalm of Asaph, *And afterward take me with glory* (Ps. 73:24), and *He shall take me*, in the psalm of the sons of Korach, *But God will redeem my soul from the power of the netherworld; For He shall take me* (Ps. 49:16). The intelligent will understand this.⁸

29. [THIS SAME SHALL COMFORT US.] Lamech was informed by Adam, who was a prophet, that through his newborn child the land would live. Or perhaps they learned the aforementioned through astrology. And so it was, for it was through Noah that the world was preserved. Furthermore, Noah was, as the Bible explicitly states, an

⁶ Live righteously. Similarly Enoch lived righteously.

⁷ Walked (*hithal'ekh*) is in the *hitpa'el*. The latter is a reflexive; thus *hithal'ekh* means he made himself walk; i.e., he trained himself to walk. These commentaries say the same with regard to Enoch (I.E.'s fragmentary commentary on Genesis).

⁸ God gave immortality to Enoch. Cf. I.E.'s comments on Ps. 49:16: "taking...refers to the union of the soul of the pious with the heavenly beings who are incorporeal and immortal."

expert in agriculture (Gen. 9:20).⁹ It is also possible that he got this name after¹⁰ his agricultural successes. We find the same with Jerubbaal.¹¹

Noah (rest) is the opposite of toil (*etzavon*). The meaning of our verse is, this one will comfort us and we will rest (*nanu'ach*) from the toil of our hands. Moreover, comfort is a relaxation of the heart's pain.¹² The Hebrews are more concerned with the idea expressed by a word than with its etymology. Proof of the above is the fact that Jerubbaal is referred to as Jerubbesheth.¹³

Those who ask whom Cain and Seth married raise a worthless question. Scripture tells us that Adam begot sons and daughters. The same is true of all of them.¹⁴

⁹ This is I.E.'s explanation of *ish ha'adamah* (a husbandman). Cf. his comments on Gen. 9:20. Krinsky explains that Noah introduced agricultural implements and other advances in working the soil. This is an additional example of Noah giving "life" to the land

¹⁰ He originally had another name.

¹¹ His original name was Gideon but he was subsequently called Jerubbaal after breaking the altar of Baal (Jud. 6:32).

¹² The Bible tells us that Noah was so called because Lamech said, *This one should comfort us*. However, if this was the case he should have named his son Menachem or Nahum which comes from the root *nun, chet, mem*, meaning to comfort. Noah comes from the root *nun, vav, chet*, meaning rest, hence I.E.'s comment that he was called Noah because comfort and rest are related.

¹³ Gideon was called Jerubbaal, meaning "Let Baal contend against him" (Jud. 6:32). In II Sam. 11:21 he is called Jerubbesheth. *Boshet* is Hebrew for shame. This was an undignified way of referring to Baal. Nevertheless, Jerubbaal and Jerubbesheth express the same idea. In the same way Noah expresses the same idea as Menachem.

¹⁴ The antediluvian patriarchs prior to Lamech all married their sisters.

CHAPTER 6

1. [BEGAN.] *Hechel* (began) is a *hifil*. It is a denominative of *techillah* (beginning).

TO MULTIPLY. *La-rov* (to multiply) is an infinitive.

2. THE SONS OF GOD. The term *bene Elohim* (the sons of god) refers to the sons of the judges who dispensed God's (*Elohim*) justice.¹ Others say that *Elohim* refers to God Himself and the sons of God are holy ones (saints) living on earth. They are called *sons of God* in the sense of *Ye are the children of the Lord your God* (Deut. 14:1). Others say that *the sons of God* refers to the children of Seth² and that *the daughters of man* refers to women of Cain's family.³ However, it appears to me that *the sons of God* refers to those who know the will of the most High. These men chose women who matched them astrologically and physically. Hence they produced mighty men. It is possible that they took women even against their will.⁴

3. MY SPIRIT SHALL NOT ABIDE. Some say that *yadon* (shall abide) is like the word *nedanah* (sheath thereof), as in *and he put up his sword back into the sheath thereof* (*nedanah*) (I Chron. 21:27), for the

¹ See I.E.'s comment on Gen. 1:1.

² Concerning whom it is written that he was created in God's image. See I.E.'s comment on Gen. 5:1.

³ Concerning whom it was not written that he was created in the image of God. See previous note.

⁴ *And they took them wives* implies they took women against their will. If, according to astrology, a given women was fit for a man, he took her even against her will (Krinsky).

body serves as a sheath for the spirit.⁵ Proof of this is found in *my spirit was pained in the midst of my body* (nidneh) (Dan. 7:15). Nevertheless *nadan* and *yadon* come from different roots.⁶ We find the same with the words *nasah* (lifted) and *si'ot* (his excellency). We read, *Though his excellency (si'ot) mount up to the heavens* (Job 20:6). The root of *si'ot* is *sin, vav, alef*. Nevertheless, a word derived from *nasah* (lifted) (whose root is *nun, sin, alef*) would have a similar meaning. There are many examples of this.

Others say that *yadon* follows the paradigm of *ve-yashov* (returneth), as in *And the dust returneth (ve-yashov) to the earth as it was* (Eccles. 12:7).⁷ They say that *yadon* comes from the same root as *din* (to judge) because the spirit judges the body.⁸

FOR THAT HE IS ALSO. In the word *be-shaggam* (for that also) the *shin* placed before *gam* (also) has the same meaning as the *shin* placed before *kakhah* (thus).⁹

⁵ The meaning of the phrase is: my spirit will not forever be in its sheath (the human body); i.e., man will die (Kimchi).

⁶ *Yadon* (shall abide) comes from the root *dalet, vav, nun*. *Nadan* comes from the root *nun, dalet, nun*.

⁷ An *ayin, vav* is usually vocalized with a *shuruk*, as in *yakum* (he will arise). *Yadon* is vocalized with a *cholam*. I.E. points out that the same is true with *returneth*. It, too, is vocalized *ve-yashov*, rather than *ve-yashuv*. *Ve-yashov* comes from the root *shin, vav, bet*. It, too, is an *ayin, vav*.

⁸ Man's spirit (*ru'ach*) ultimately determines how man will act. God said that this "judge" will not remain united with the body; i.e., man would die. Krinsky explains it differently. He says the meaning of the verse is: my spirit (the spirit which I placed in man) will not judge man; i.e., man follows his evil inclinations. He acts without discernment. He follows the way of the flesh rather than that of the spirit. It appears that he will continually do so, therefore... Cherez explains, God's spirit judges man. The meaning of the verse is: my spirit will not judge men forever; i.e., I have decided on their punishment.

⁹ It means that. The *shin* of *be-shaggam* is a particle of relation, short for *asher*. In other words, there is no such word as *shaggam*. I.E. makes this point because the *shin* which means *that* is usually vocalized with a *segol*, while the *shin* of *shaggam* is vocalized with a *patach*.

The term *My spirit refers to God's spirit, for man's spirit comes from God*. Similarly, *And the spirit returneth unto God who gave it* (Eccles. 12:7). The spirit spoken of by Ecclesiastes refers only to the spirit in man. The meaning of the verse is: My spirit shall not abide in man because of his violent ways and because he is (*be-shaggem*) made of flesh, grows until he achieves maturity, and then due to his sexual activity begins his decline.¹⁰

THEREFORE SHALL HIS DAYS BE A HUNDRED AND TWENTY YEARS. Some explain that this refers to man's life span.¹¹ If we find some living longer than this,¹² they are but a few. Our verse speaks of most people. However, this interpretation is not correct. Behold, Shem lived for six hundred years. Also, the generations that followed him lived many, many years beyond a hundred and twenty. It was only in the days of Peleg (Gen. 10:25) that the life span was shortened. From the days of King David onward it has been limited to seventy or eighty years. The correct meaning of *therefore shall his days be a hundred and twenty years* is as Onkelos explained, namely, that God set a time for mankind to repent. We see the same idea in *Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown* (Jonah 3:4). God gave them one hundred and twenty years in which to repent and save themselves, or to remain unrepentant and perish.

Scripture's statement, *And Noah was five hundred years old, and Noah begot Shem, Ham and Japheth* (Gen. 5:32), should not disturb

¹⁰ Krinsky and Weiser. This is the second time I.E. has noted that the man begins his decline with sexual maturity (cf. Gen. 3:8). Perhaps I.E. held to the medieval belief that emission of semen weakens the body.

¹¹ Henceforth man's life span will be limited to 120 years.

¹² Chap. 11 lists the descendants of Noah. All of them lived more than 120 years and were born subsequent to this decree (Cherez).

you,¹³ because the Bible is not in chronological sequence.¹⁴ Note, the Torah states, *and Terah died in Haran* (Gen. 11:32), then goes on to say, *Now the Lord said unto Abram: Get thee out of thy country* (Gen. 12:1). However, we know that Terah did not die until Isaac was thirty-five years old.¹⁵ There are many other similar instances in Scripture.

4. [THE NEPHILIM.] They were so named because anyone who saw them lost heart at their huge stature.¹⁶

[AFTER THAT.] After the flood. Behold, the sons of Anak (Num. 13:33) were originally from the family of *the sons of God*.¹⁷

6. AND IT REPENTED THE LORD. The Torah spoke in the language of men,¹⁸ for we know that God is not a man that he should repent. This term is used because if a human being acted in the way God did, destroying his creation, it would be said of him that he repented.¹⁹

¹³ Gen. 5:32 tells us that Noah was 500 years old when he had his children. Gen. 6:3 tells us, according to I.E., that man has 120 years in which to repent. Gen. 7:6 tells us that the flood came in the 600th year of Noah's life. Thus between the statement in Gen. 6:3 and the flood there is at the very most 100 years (cf. Rashi), hence I.E.'s interpretation that Gen. 6:3 occurred before Gen. 5:32.

¹⁴ In other words, Gen. 6:3 deals with events that came before those dealt with in Gen. 5:32.

¹⁵ Many years after Abraham left his country. Terah, who lived to be 205 years, was 70 when Abraham was born (Gen. 11:26). Abraham was a hundred when Isaac was born (Gen. 21:5). Thus Terah was 170 when Isaac was born, and 205 when Isaac was 35.

¹⁶ From the root *nun, feh, lamed*, meaning to fall.

¹⁷ Thus we see that the descendants of the *nephilim* lived on after the flood.

¹⁸ In other words, *And it repented* is an anthropomorphism.

¹⁹ Maimonides terms this an attribute of action. Cf. *Guide To the Perplexed*, Part I, Chap. 52.

[AND IT GRIEVED HIM AT HIS HEART.] This verse is the opposite of *Let the Lord rejoice in His works* (Ps. 104:31). God is said to be happy when his creatures benefit from his acts of kindness.²⁰

Others say that *va-yinnachem* (and it repented) should be rendered as set a time,²¹ as in *doth comfort* (mitnachem) *himself, purposing to kill thee* (Gen. 27:42).²² They also say that *His heart* does not refer to the heart of God but to the heart of the prophet.²³ However, if this were the case Scripture should not have read: and it grieved "at" (*el*) His heart.²⁴ Secondly, where do we find a prophet called a heart?

7. AND THE LORD SAID. In His heart, or to the angels; others say, to Noah. However, it appears to me that *And the Lord said* is connected to *His heart* of the previous verse.²⁵

8. GRACE. *Chen* (grace) means mercy. From it we get the word *techinnah* (supplication).²⁶ *Chen* follows the paradigm of *ketz* (end); both have roots whose second and third letters are the same.²⁷ The

²⁰ And is described as being grieved when He must punish them. In other words, happy and sad are anthropomorphisms.

²¹ Ibn Ezra uses an Arabic term which Krinsky translates as setting a time. This eliminates the anthropomorphism in the verse. However, this interpretation is problematic. For the problems inherent in it see Weiser.

²² Which should be rendered: Esau has set a time to kill you. See I.E.'s comment on Gen. 27:42.

²³ They felt uncomfortable with a verse that speaks of God's heart. Hence they interpreted this verse to mean God told the prophet that he wanted to destroy mankind and the prophet was grieved.

²⁴ It should have read, and it grieved His heart, i.e., His prophet.

²⁵ I.E. argues that the meaning of *And the Lord said* is the Lord said in his heart. However, in his heart is missing in this verse, hence I.E.'s comment.

²⁶ The supplicant seeks mercy. Also, the word *techinnah* is used in the sense of mercy in Ezra 9:8. Grace usually implies beauty, hence I.E.'s comment.

²⁷ *Ketz* (end) comes from a three letter double root (*kefulim*), *kaf*, *tzadi*, *tzadi*. *Chen* (grace) similarly comes from a double root, *chet*, *nun*, *nun*. Both *ketz* and *chen* drop the final letter of the root.

meaning of *found grace (mercy or pity) in the eyes of the Lord* is like *eye pitied thee* (Ezek. 16:5).²⁸

NOAH

9. THESE ARE THE GENERATIONS. *Toledot* (generation means the events that transpired during his lifetime, as in *what a day me bring forth* (yeled) (Prov. 27:1). *These are the generations of Jacob* (Gen. 37:2) is similar.

A MAN RIGHTEOUS. In his deeds.

AND WHOLE-HEARTED. In his heart. *Tamim* (wholehearted) is an adjective. It belongs to those roots whose second and third letters are the same. All three letters of the root remain in this word.²⁹

[IN HIS GENERATIONS.] At the time of the flood, and in the generations after the flood. For Noah lived till the fifty-eighth year of Abraham.³⁰ Let this be a mnemonic device, our father Abraham was the age of Noah (58)³¹ when Noah died.

²⁸ Finding grace in God's eyes means that God took pity on a person (Filwarg). I.E. shows that the Bible connects mercy with the eye. The eye is said to take or not to take pity.

²⁹ The root of wholehearted is *taf, mem, mem*. This root gives birth both to *tam* (wholehearted) and *tamim* (wholehearted). In the former, a *mem* is dropped. In the latter, the whole root is found in the word. I.E. employs a pun. He says *tamim* is *tamim*. According to I.E. *tamim* is an adjective modifying man (Filwarg, Krinsky and Cherez).

³⁰ *Seder Olam*, Chap. I. Noah was 600 at the time of the flood. Shem begat Arpachshad two years after the flood. From Arpachshad's birth to Abraham's birth was 290 years. Noah lived to be 950. Thus Abraham was 58 when Noah died.

³¹ A play on words. *Noah* (*nun, chet*) is numerically equivalent to 58. Hence *ben Noah* means 58 years old. Abraham was the age Noah (58) when Noah died.

11. AND THE EARTH WAS CORRUPT. The people of the earth were corrupt. Similarly, *when a land sinneth against Me* (Ezek. 14:13), and *And all countries came into Egypt* (Gen. 41:57).

[BEFORE GOD.] Some say this means they sinned in public. Others say it means people were privately corrupt with regard to secret affairs so that only God was aware of their sins. In my opinion, the Torah speaks the language of men so that people will understand what is being said. The meaning of *before God* is that they acted like a servant, who in the presence of his master, disobeys him and thereby shows that he does not fear him.

Those who say that *Elohim* (God) does not refer to the Almighty are speaking nonsense.³²

VIOLENCE. Theft, oppression and taking women against their will. Our sages are correct in interpreting *for all flesh had corrupted their way* to mean that all flesh engaged in unnatural and perverted sexual acts. Indeed, how precious is their interpretation to the effect that they corrupted with water³³ and were punished by God with water. Just as they placed their waters above and below,³⁴ so God punished them by a flood whose waters came from above and below.

13. AND GOD SAID UNTO NOAH: THE END OF ALL FLESH. All bodies.

[IS COME BEFORE ME.] The time of their calamity has arrived.

WITH THE EARTH. *Et ha'aretz* (with the earth) means from the earth. Similarly, *As soon as I am gone out of the city* (*et ha'ir*) (Ex.

³² They say that *Elohim* refers to judges.

³³ An allusion to semen. Cf. *Sanhedrin* 108b.

³⁴ An allusion to homosexuality (Krinsky).

9:29). It may also be rendered, with the earth, as in *with Jacob* (et Yaakov) *every man came with his household* (Ex. 1:1).³⁵

It appears to me that *mashchitam* (I will destroy them) stands for two words. Similarly, the word *God* in *O God of hosts* (Ps. 80:8) and *thy throne* in *thy throne God* (Ps. 45:7).³⁶ The meaning of our verse is: And, behold, I will destroy them and destroy the earth.

14. GOPHER. Gopher is the name of a wood that rides lightly upon the water. It is mentioned nowhere else in Scripture.

ROOMS. So that each animal, cattle and fowl would be alone with its mate.

[ARK.] The Bible uses the term ark and not ship, for it did not have the shape of a ship nor did it have oars.

AND SHALT PITCH IT. Some say that *ve-khafarta* (and shalt pitch) comes from the same root as *kapporet* (cover) (Ex. 25:17), the meaning of *and shalt pitch it* being you shall cover it by coating it.

[PITCH.] Some say that *kofer* is a pitch-like substance. Others say that a certain clay with pitch-like qualities is found in the ground and is to be identified with the *kofer* in our verse. Others identify it with a substance similarly called in Arabic while noting that in Arabic it is spelled with a *kof* rather than a *caf*. In reality, *ve-khafarta* (and shalt pitch) is a denominative of *kofer*.³⁷

³⁵ *Et* is usually the sign of the accusative. Thus this clause should be rendered: I will destroy them, the earth. This translation is impossible, hence I.E.'s comment.

³⁶ See above, Gen. 2:19, *mosekh atzmo*, etc. Ps. 80:8 reads, *Elohim Tzeva'ot* (literally, God hosts). It should read, *Elohe Tzeva'ot* (God of hosts). Hence *Elohim* is to be read as if written twice, *Elohim Elohe Tzeva'ot* (God, God of hosts). Similarly *kisakha Elohim* (Ps. 45:7) is ungrammatical. It must be read, *kisakhakha kisse Elohim* (Thy throne, God's throne).

³⁷ Hebrew has many such verbs. According to I.E., *ve-khafarta* does not mean to merely cover (as claimed by the earlier opinion who connected it to *kapporet*) but to cover with *kofer*, whatever it is.

WITHIN. On the inside.

15. AND THIS IS HOW THOU SHALT MAKE IT. These are the dimensions which you shall make it. Its height was a tenth of its length, so that it would be able to float on the water and not be overturned by the wind.

16. A LIGHT. *Tzohar* (a light) means an opening through which light would enter. It comes from the same root as *tzohorayim* (noon).³⁸ The opening was made in the usual place, on top of the ark.³⁹

Scripture tells us that the top of the ark was a cubit in length.⁴⁰ We gather from this that it was a sixth of a cubit wide.⁴¹ The ark was triangular in shape.⁴² Its top came to a point, and so did its corners. Therefore it did not overturn. The door was on one side⁴³ and was reached by climbing a ladder.⁴⁴ Now, we know that the ark was very large.⁴⁵ Furthermore, it is possible that Noah was much taller than we, for the cubits mentioned with regard to the ark are Noah's cubits.⁴⁶ It is also possible, since the ark was divided into three stories, that the bottom

³⁸ The time of the day when light is at its fullest.

³⁹ Hence Scripture does not tell us where it was placed.

⁴⁰ According to I.E. *and to a cubit shalt thou finish it upward* applies to the top of the roof of the ark. See Rashi.

⁴¹ The width of the ark was one-sixth the length.

⁴² According to Luzzato, this applies only to the roof of the ark. See Luzzato's commentary on the Pentateuch, p. 42. However, a literal reading of I.E. does not support this view.

⁴³ Unlike other ships which are entered through the deck (Krinsky).

⁴⁴ The door was on the third top of the ark (Krinsky).

⁴⁵ Hence it was able to contain representatives of all species.

⁴⁶ A cubit is the span from shoulder to fingertips. Since Noah was taller than we, his cubits were longer. The ark was thus even larger than a superficial reading of Scripture indicates.

story was ten cubits high.⁴⁷ Some say that the ark had many stories and that Scripture abridged the number.

LOWER, SECOND AND THIRD. These are all adjectives. Those who ask why *shelishim* (third) is not written *selishiyyim* have eyes but do not see.⁴⁸ Can't they see that forgiving, archer and thief are adjectives,⁴⁹ as are prince, deputy, pious,⁵⁰ wise⁵¹ and understanding?⁵² Nevertheless, each of these words is vocalized according to its own pattern and form. *Shelishim* (third) follows the paradigm of *negidim* (princes) and *chasidim* (pious). This is so because the singular of *shelishim* is *shalish*, as the singular of *chasidim* is *chasid*.⁵³ It is also possible that the *dagesh* in the *yod* of *sheniyyim* (second) also⁵⁴ applies to the *yod* of *shelishim* (third).⁵⁵ Perhaps this will satisfy those who raised the question.

17. AND I. Some say that the *dagesh* in *mabbul* (flood) is in place of a missing *nun*,⁵⁶ as in the word *mabbua* (fountain).⁵⁷ They note that the

⁴⁷ And similarly each of the other two stories (Weiser).

⁴⁸ *Tachtiyyim* (lower) and *sheniyyim* (second) are written with a *dagesh* in the *yod*; *shelishim* is not. The question arises, why not? The *dagesh forte* doubles the letter.

⁴⁹ *Sallach* (forgiving), *kashat* (archer) and *gannav* (thief) follow the paradigm of *pattach*, *kamatz*. For a comment on I.E.'s grammatical usage, see Chap. 1, note 33.

⁵⁰ *Nagid* (prince), *pakid* (deputy) and *chasid* (pious) follow the paradigm of *kamatz*, *chirik*.

⁵¹ *Chacham* (wise) follows the paradigm of *kamatz*, *kamatz*.

⁵² *Navon* (understanding) follows the paradigm of *kamatz*, *cholan*.

⁵³ Thus *shalish* belongs to the same group as *chasid* and *nagid* and its plural takes their form. Hence *shalish* follows a different paradigm than does *tachat* and *sheni* and this is why it does not have a *dagesh* in the *yod*.

⁵⁴ See above note 48.

⁵⁵ It now has a *dagesh*. It is thus to be pronounced *shelishiyyim*.

⁵⁶ The root of *mabbul* is *nun*, *bet*, *lamed*. The *nun* is thus missing.

⁵⁷ The root of *mabbu'a* (fountain) is *nun*, *bet*, *ayn*. The *dagesh* is in place of the missing *nun*.

word *mabbul* comes from the same root as *navelah* (fadeth)⁵⁸ in *The earth fainteth and fadeth* (navelah) away (Is. 24:4).

Others say that *mabbul* comes from the same root as *balul* (mingled) in *mingled* (belulah) *with oil*,⁵⁹ and that it should have followed the paradigm of *maslul* (highway) (Is. 35:8).⁶⁰ The word *massor* (saw) (Is.10:15)⁶¹ with a *shuruk* and a *cholam*⁶² interchanging is analogous.

[THE FLOOD OF WATERS.] This is an abridged phrase. It should be read as follows: The flood, a flood of waters.⁶³ Similarly the meaning of *since the day it was founded* (Ex. 9:18) is: since the day, the day it was founded.⁶⁴

18. BUT I WILL ESTABLISH MY COVENANT. This indicates, although not previously mentioned, that God had sworn earlier to Noah that he and his children would not die in the flood.⁶⁵ We find a similar instance in Deuteronomy, viz., *Let us send men before us, that they may search the land for us* (Deut. 1:22).⁶⁶

⁵⁸ *Naval* means to fade, wither or fall. According to this, *mabbul* comes from the root *nun, bet, lamed* and means a destruction.

⁵⁹ In other words the root of flood is *bet, lamed, lamed*. The word *mabbul* thus means a mixing or confounding.

⁶⁰ The root of *maslul* (highway) is *samekh, lamed, lamed*. Similarly the word for flood should be *mavlul*.

⁶¹ Which comes from the root *sin, resh, resh* (cf. Is. 15:10) and does not follow the paradigm of *maslul*. Hence *mabbul* is similar to *massor* (Cherez). For alternate interpretations see Weiser and Krinsky.

⁶² If *mabbul* and *massor* are alike then both should be vocalized either with a *cholam* or a *shuruk*.

⁶³ The Hebrew reads *ha-mabbul mayim*. *Ila-mabbul* cannot be in the construct with waters because a word with a definite article cannot be in the construct, hence I.E.'s comment.

⁶⁴ Here, too, *ha-yom* (the day), which has a definite article, cannot be in the construct with *hivvasedah* (it was founded).

⁶⁵ *But I will establish my covenant* means I will keep my promise. Hence a promise was already made.

⁶⁶ Of Scripture omitting a fact and then mentioning it later, see Num. 13:2.

But I will establish means I will keep my oath. However, it appears to me that the covenant alludes to the covenant that would be made at the time God set the rainbow in the sky.⁶⁷ Covenant means an agreement and a thing which two sides choose. It comes from the same root as *beru* (choose) in *choose (beru) you a man for you* (I Sam. 17:8).⁶⁸ The word for covenant (*brit*) has this form and vocalization both in the absolute and in the construct. We find the same thing with the word *shevit* (captivity). We thus read, *Thou hast turned the captivity of Jacob* (*shevit Yaakov*) (Ps. 85:2), and *And his daughters into captivity* (*ba-shevit*) (Num. 21:29).

Others say that a *brit* (covenant) is a cut boundary.⁶⁹

[19. TWO OF EVERY SORT.] After stating two, Scripture goes on to explain that this refers to male and female.⁷⁰ After stating generally, *And of every living thing of all flesh*, the Bible then explains that this refers to *Of the fowl after their kind, and of the cattle after their kind, of every creeping thing of the ground after its kind* (v. 20). This includes⁷¹ all animals of the field and all large and small animals that are born via sexual intercourse. It excludes living things not born⁷² by coupling, and

⁶⁷ In contradistinction to what I.E. had just noted, he now suggests that the covenant does not refer to a previous covenant but to one yet to be made.

⁶⁸ *Brit* (covenant) comes from the root *bet, resh, resh*, meaning to choose.

⁶⁹ A *brit* is an agreement with conditions (boundaries) which cannot be violated. *Brit* has the letters *bet, resh, tav*. These letters can be rearranged *bet, tav, resh*, meaning to cut (see Gen. 15:10) (Weiser). Others say it comes from *bara* (to cut), the *tav* taking the place of the *alef* (Cherez). According to this opinion *brit* comes from the word cut and not from choose.

⁷⁰ *Two of every sort* can be taken to mean any two of every sort, two males or two females.

⁷¹ A general statement followed by particulars is qualified by the particulars. Thus fish cannot be included in *And of every living thing of all flesh* because the particulars include only land animals.

⁷² Medieval man believed that certain animals are born through spontaneous generation; i.e., they do not couple. Noah did not have to bring these types of animals to the ark because the verse tells us that that he was to bring *male and female*, that is, animals that couple.

marine animals. Fish are excluded although they are considered "flesh."⁷³ Proof of this can be seen in the words of Moses: *and yet Thou hast said, I will give them flesh, that they may eat a whole month. If flocks and herds be slain for them...or if all the fish of the sea be gathered for them, will they suffice them* (Num. 11:21,22).

[SHALT THOU BRING INTO THE ARK.] This is a command to Noah not to desert these creatures but to bring them into the ark with him in order to preserve the seed of each species.

[20. SHALL COME UNTO THEE.] They will come by themselves. Noah therefore did not have to search for them on islands; neither did he have to hunt for all sorts of fowl.

God commanded Noah to prepare food for all the animals in the ark. Foolish ones ask, what did birds of prey eat? What did carnivorous animals such as lions who live on meat eat? Their questions are invalid. One who cannot find meat will eat grass or fruit when hungry. The saying found in Rabbinic literature that there exists a large animal that consumes the grazing of one thousand mountains daily is a good story.⁷⁴ Similarly the tradition concerning a bird that blocks out the sun with its wings has a secret meaning to it and is not to be taken literally.⁷⁵

God commanded Noah to make the ark many years before the flood. When the flood approached, God the glorious commanded Noah and his family to go to the ark. God the glorious commanded Noah to take seven males and seven females from every clean animal and fowl because they were needed for sacrifices.

⁷³ Since fish are considered "flesh" the command *And of every living thing of all flesh* would apply to them. However, since the Bible goes on to say, *of every creeping thing of the ground*, fish are excluded.

⁷⁴ Cf. *Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer*, Chap. 11. The problem is, where did Noah get food for this beast? I.E. answers that the statement concerning this beast is not to be taken literally.

⁷⁵ *Va-yikra Rabbah*, Chap. 22.

CHAPTER 7

4. FOR YET SEVEN DAYS. On the seventh day the rain will fall without letup for forty days. The Lord told this to Noah on the tenth day of the second month.¹ At the end of the forty days from the start of the flood the sun returned to its proper place vis-a-vis the moon.² The latter is a secret.³

[LIVING SUBSTANCE.] The word *yekum* (living substance) is found in the Bible only in our chapter.⁴ It is a *peh*, *yod* and follows the paradigm of the word *keruv* (cherub).⁵ Others say that *yekum* is an inverted *ayin*, *vav*.⁶ It is like the word *yerivai* in *Strive* (riv) *O Lord, with them that strive with me* (yerivai) (Ps. 35:1).⁷

Living substance is a general term for every living thing that is upon the face of the earth.

¹ The flood began on the 17th of the second month. Therefore God's command (to go into the ark) was given to Noah on the 10th, seven days prior to the fall of the rain.

² And the flood ceased. I.E., who believed in astrology, held that the flood came about as a result of an impropitious conjunction of the sun and moon (Weiser).

³ The uninitiated might suspect that I.E. denies divine providence by giving an astrological explanation to the flood (Krinsky).

⁴ In our verse and in verse 23. Filwarg points out that it is found in Deut. 11:6. Weiser suggests that I.E. means, it is not found having the same meaning as here. Krinsky claims that I.E. simply erred.

⁵ Its root is *yod*, *kof*, *mem*, and like the word *keruv* it is vocalized with a *sheva* beneath the first letter and a *shuruk* following the second letter.

⁶ Its root is *kof*, *vav*, *mem*. The *vav* becomes a *yod* and the *yod* is placed before the *kof*. Thus *kof*, *vav*, *mem* equals *yod*, *kof*, *mem*. Hence the *ayin vav* becomes a *peh yod* (Weiser).

⁷ The root of *strive* is *resh*, *vav*, *bet*. The root of *yervai* appears to be *yod*, *resh*, *bet*. However, it is *resh*, *vav*, *bet* transformed into a *peh yod*.

5. AND NOAH DID. As he was commanded. He and his family came to the vicinity of the ark.

7. BECAUSE OF THE WATERS OF THE FLOOD. Because of fear of the waters of the flood. In these seven days many of the clean animals and fowl came of their own volition to the vicinity of the ark. From the others and from everything that creeps, a pair consisting of a male and female of each kind came to the ark.

11. WERE ALL THE FOUNTAINS OF THE GREAT DEEP BROKEN UP. *Mayenot* (fountains of) is in the construct. In *When there were no fountains* (*mayanot*) (Prov. 8:24), *mayanot* is in the absolute.⁸

DEEP. The word *tehom* (deep) may be either masculine or feminine.⁹ Similarly *tehom* in *The deep* (*tehom*) *made it grow* (Ezek. 31:4), is in the feminine. The Bible does not mention the streams because their waters come from the fountains. When the fountains of the deep broke up, their waters gushed upward and the windows of the heavenly storehouse of water were opened and their contents poured down upon the earth. The earth was confounded; there was no way of telling day from night. Proof of the latter is God's promise to Noah after the flood that *and day and night shall not cease* (Gen. 8:22). When the rain ceased falling from the heavens, Noah knew that forty days and forty nights had passed, for God revealed to him this secret.¹⁰

AND THE WINDOWS OF HEAVEN. The word *arubbot* (windows) has the same meaning as *arubbot* (window) in *Behold, if the Lord should make windows* (*arubbot*) *in heaven* (II Kings 7:2). The term window or storehouse (Deut. 28:12) when referring to heaven is in

⁸*Mayenot* in our verse has a *sheva* beneath the *yod*. *Mayanot* in Prov. 8:24 has a *kamatz* beneath the *yod*.

⁹*Tehom* in our verse is in the feminine (*tehom rabbah*). Elsewhere (Habakkuk 3:10) *natan tehom kolo* is in the masculine, hence I.E.'s comment.

¹⁰ How long it would rain (verse 4).

keeping with human language and practice.¹¹ Some say that the *alef* of *arubbot* (windows) is a root letter¹² and that *arubbot* is similar to *kevudot* (riches).¹³ Others say that the *alef* of *arubbot* is not a root letter. It is similar to the *alef* in *agorat* (piece of) (I Sam. 2:36).¹⁴ Both *arubbot* and *agorat* come from roots whose last two letters are the same.¹⁵ On the seventeenth day of the second month, the day the flood started, Noah and his family entered the ark. At that time Noah brought into the ark the animals, cattle and the creeping things and fowl. *Bird* is a general term for a winged creature.¹⁶ The great miracle was that they all came two by two of their own volition.

16. AND THEY THAT WENT IN, WENT IN MALE AND FEMALE. The meaning of *And they that went in* is: and they that went into the ark.

[AND THE LORD SHUT HIM IN.] The term *shut him in* in our verse has a positive connotation. It has to be so interpreted because being shut in at that time was preferable to not being shut in. However, elsewhere it has a negative implication. Thus we read, *He shutteth up a man* (Job 12:14), and *And whom God hath hedged in* (Job 3:23). That it has a negative connotation is obvious from the first half of the verse.¹⁷ Noah closed the door of the ark and God helped him in that no part of

¹¹ See above. Gen. 1:26.

¹² The root being *alef, resh, bet*.

¹³ Cf. Ps. 45:14. That is, it follows a paradigm where the first root letter is vocalized with a *sheva*, in our case a *chataf patach* because of the *alef*, and the second with a *shuruk* or a *kubbutz*.

¹⁴ *Agorat* (a piece) comes from the root *gimel, resh, resh*. The *alef* is added to the root. Similarly *arubbot* (windows) comes from the root *resh, bet, bet*.

¹⁵ See note 14.

¹⁶ The Hebrew reads, all birds (*kol tzippor*), all wings (*kol kanaf*). I.E. notes that *kol kanaf* explains *kol tzippor*; i.e., a *tzippor* is a being with a *kanaf* (Weiser).

¹⁷ Job 3:23 opens with *To a man whose way is hid*; similarly Job 12:14 opens with *Behold, He breaketh down*.

the ark cracked open, for had any part opened, then all would have immediately died.

Why state, *and the flood was forty days upon the earth* (v. 17), after having said, *And the rain was upon the earth forty days and forty nights* (v. 12)? The way to read the verse (v. 17) is as follows: After the flood was forty days upon the earth, *the waters increased and bore up the ark, and it was lifted up above the earth*.¹⁸ This verse shows that for the first forty days the ark did not move.

19. EXCEEDINGLY. The word *me'od* (exceedingly) is repeated in the text in order to stress that the waters prevailed to their maximum potential.

Why state, *and the mountains were covered* (v. 20), after having said, *and all the high mountains that were under the whole heaven were covered* (v. 19)? Its meaning is: All the high mountains were covered with water (v. 19), and these mountains were covered by fifteen cubits of water (v. 20).¹⁹ There are those who maintain that there is a very tall mountain in Greece that the waters did not cover.²⁰ However, we believe the words of our God and we put aside the foolish nonsense of man.

[21. AND ALL FLESH PERISHED.] The meaning of *And all flesh perished* is: and all flesh had perished.²¹ There are many such instances in Scripture, such as *And I besought the Lord* (Deut. 3:23), and the true

¹⁸ Verse 17 does not intend to teach us that there was a flood upon the earth; verse 12 does that. Verse 17 teaches that after 40 days of flood...the ark was lifted up above the earth.

¹⁹ Verse 20 should be understood as follows: 15 cubits did the waters prevail, so that the mountains (mentioned in v. 19) were covered (by 15 cubits of water).

²⁰ Krinsky.

²¹ Perished is a pluperfect. All flesh obviously perished before the mountains were covered by 15 cubits of water.

meaning of *And He caused manna to rain upon them for food* (Ps. 78:24).²²

[PERISHED.] *Va-yigva* (perished) means died. I will explain the exact meaning of this term when I comment on *And Abraham expired* (*va-yigva*), *and died* (Gen. 25:8).

It is clear²³ that *remes* (creeping thing) is a general term that includes fowl, cattle, animals, small thin swarming things and man. It is possible that *all in whose nostrils was the breath of the spirit of life* (v. 22) refers to *every man* (v. 21),²⁴ as we do not find the expression *neshamah* (breath)²⁵ used in reference to any creature except man. Many say that the soul is termed *neshamah* because it comes from the heaven (*shamayim*). The fact that *shamayim* and *neshamah* have differing roots does not refute the latter interpretation because there are other similar instances.²⁶

23. AND THEY WERE BLOTTED OUT. Their names were erased from the earth because they left no descendants.

²² Although *va-yamter* (and he caused to rain) does not appear to be a pluperfect, it is, (and he had caused to rain). Similarly *va-etchannan* is to be read: and I had besought it.

²³ From verse 21. I.E.'s point is that *ha-romes* is a general term. The verse then goes on to enumerate exactly what *ha-romes* includes.

²⁴ Verse 22 thus explains only *every man*, i.e., those who had a *neshamat ru'ach chayyim*. According to Cherez, this interpretation postulates that *remes* does not include man.

²⁵ *Neshamah* is the term for soul.

²⁶ *Neshamah* comes from the root *nun, shin, mem*. *Shamayim* comes from the root *shin, mem, mem* (Weiser).

[AND NOAH ONLY WAS LEFT.] Only Noah and those with him were left. This verse proves how wrong are some of our ignorant brethren who maintain that the flood did not cover the entire earth.²⁷

24. AND THE WATERS PREVAILED UPON THE EARTH A HUNDRED AND FIFTY DAYS. This was so because the fountains were broken up (v. 11) and it rained for a day and stopped for a day for, *and I will cause it to rain upon the earth forty days and forty nights* (v. 4) means it will rain for a period of forty days and forty nights without letup. That it did in fact also rain after the first forty days were over is evident from *and the rain from heaven was restrained* (Gen. 8:2).²⁸

²⁷ Some say this alludes to those who maintain that a certain high mountain in Greece was not covered by the flood; others, to the Rabbinic sages who said that the land of Israel was not covered by the flood. See *Zebahim* 113b; *Bereshit Rabbah* 33:9. However, Weiser doubts that I.E. would express himself so strongly against the Rabbinic sages. Others say that I.E. directed his barb against those who take the Rabbinic statement literally.

²⁸ The rain was now fully restrained, which implies that prior to this it was only partially restrained.

CHAPTER 8

1. AND GOD REMEMBERED NOAH. This includes his children and the women. Noah alone is mentioned because he was the most important of them.

AND EVERY LIVING THING. A general term for beasts of the field, fowl that fly, and for everything that swarms upon the earth.

And God remembered means God remembered the oath that he had sworn to Noah.¹

AND GOD MADE A WIND TO PASS OVER THE EARTH. The wind blew continuously.²

AND THE WATERS ASSUAGED. They rested and no longer prevailed. *Then was the king's wrath assuaged* (Esther 7:10) is similar. Assuaged in our verse and in Esther is in the *kal*. However, in our verse the *caf* receives a *dagesh* to make up for the missing middle root letter.³

2. WERE STOPPED. *Va-yissakheru* (were stopped) is synonymous with *va-yissageru* (were closed). Although both of these words mean the same, they come from different roots.⁴ They do not come from one root with the *caf* and *gimel* interchanging, for these two letters do not

¹ See I.E.'s comment on Gen. 6:18.

² Until the earth dried. Cf. Weiser.

³ Its root is *shin, caf, caf*. One *caf* is missing in *va-yashokku* (assuaged) in our verse, unlike in the Book of Esther, where all three radicals are present in assuaged (*shakhakhah*).

⁴ *Va-yissakheru* comes from the root *samekh, caf, resh*; *va-yissageru* comes from the root *samekh, gimel, resh*.

interchange. The only letters that interchange are the *yod*, *heh*, *vav* and *alef*, and the *sin* and *shin*.

AND THE RAIN FROM HEAVEN WAS RESTRAINED. It was restrained in the storehouse of rain.⁵

3. AND THE WATERS RETURNED. The waters returned at the end of one hundred and fifty days to their reservoirs beneath the earth where they are normally stored. Noah knew that it took one hundred and fifty days for this to happen, for he was a prophet.⁶ They err who maintain that since Scripture speaks of one hundred and fifty days making up five months,⁷ it must be referring to solar months, for five solar months come to one hundred and fifty-two days.⁸ Also anyone who maintains that Noah followed a calendar of intercalated⁹ lunar months, with Cheshvan being the second month¹⁰ and the year full, misses the mark.¹¹ Why go to all this trouble? Even if the Bible explicitly stated that Noah employed solar months or that he counted the months from Tishri¹² this would have no effect on Jewish law, for the laws governing the establishment of the seasons were not given by

⁵ See I.E.'s comment on Gen. 7:11.

⁶ There was no way of telling day from night during the flood. Cf. I.E.'s comments on Gen. 7:11.

⁷ The 150 days commenced on the 17th of the second month (when the flood started) and lasted till the 17th of the seventh month, a period of five months.

⁸ Solar months alternate between 30 and 31 days. In a five-month period there must be at least two months of 31 days.

⁹ That is, lunar months alternating between months of 29 and 30 days. (Cheshvan and Kislev can each have 29 or 30 days. See note 36.)

¹⁰ This is the opinion of this commentator. I.E. maintains that Iyyar was the second month. Cf. verse 5.

¹¹ Even if Cheshvan and Kislev had 30 days each, the year being full (*shelemah*), the number of days in the five lunar months comes to 148. The flood started on the 17th of Cheshvan, the five months end on the 17th of Nisan. They include 13 days in Cheshvan, 30 days in Kislev, 29 days in Tevet, 30 in Shevat, 29 in Adar and 17 in Nisan: a total of 148 days (Krinsky).

¹² Making Chesvan the second month as the previously quoted second opinion held.

Noah.¹³ It is also possible to say many things concerning the ark's coming to rest.¹⁴ However, such speculations "cannot profit nor deliver, for they are vain" (I Sam. 12:21).

5. IN THE TENTH MONTH, ON THE FIRST DAY OF THE MONTH, WERE THE TOPS OF THE MOUNTAINS SEEN. Noah established the first day of the month even though he did not see the new moon, for he had not as yet opened the window of the ark.¹⁵

Noah sent out the raven on the tenth day of Shevat. From that day on the raven continuously went to and fro until Noah left the ark, for Scripture states that *it went forth to and fro, until the waters were dried up from off the earth*. On the day that the earth dried, Noah and all that were with him left the ark. Seven days after sending the raven, Noah sent the dove. The latter event took place on the seventeenth day of Shevat, which was the tenth month from the start of the flood. Noah observed the quarterly watch.¹⁶ *And he stayed yet other seven days; and again he sent forth the dove* (v. 10) is proof of the above.¹⁷

[10. AND HE STAYED.] *Va-yachel* (and he stayed) is, I believe, derived from the word *techillah* (beginning).¹⁸ For if it came from the

¹³ But by Moses. He established the Jewish calendar and taught the Jews to use a lunar calendar and count the months from Nisan.

¹⁴ Contra Rashi, verse 4 (Krinsky). Rashi calculates by exactly how much the waters receded each day until the ark finally rested on *terra firma*. For other interpretations see Weiser, Cherez and Netter.

¹⁵ Hence he could not see the new moon. Kimchi suggests that Noah had instruments by which he determined the date.

¹⁶ The month is divided into quarters (watches). At the end of each watch, that day signifies a change in nature and fate (Weiser). Hence Noah waited seven days (a watch) between the raven and the dove; similarly with the dove itself.

¹⁷ That Noah waited seven days before sending the dove the first time (Krinsky).

¹⁸ From the root *chet*, *lamed*, *lamed*. Cf. *Targum Yerushalmi*, *And he began to count*.



same root as *tochelet* (hope),¹⁹ it should have been vocalized *va-yichel*, as is the case with *va-yiketz*²⁰ (and he awoke), or vocalized *va-yechel*, as in the case of *va-yeshev* (and he dwelt).²¹ However, it is possible it is an irregular verb.²²

AND AGAIN HE SENT FORTH THE DOVE OUT OF THE ARK.
On the twenty-fourth day of Shevat.

11. IN HER MOUTH AN OLIVE-LEAF FRESHLY PLUCKED.
Some say that Scripture employs two words with one meaning,²³ as it does in *the dust of the earth* (Dan. 12:2). They interpret *taraf* (freshly plucked) as leaf. *All its sprouting leaves* (*tarpe tzimchah*) (Ezek. 17:9) is similar. That *taraf* is a noun is evident from the long *kamatz* beneath the *resh*. It is like *zahav* (gold) and *ashan* (smoke).

However, in my opinion the *bet* of *be-fihah* (mouth) is superfluous.²⁴ It is like the *bet* of *be-rucho* (by his breath) in *By His breath the heavens are serene* (Job 26:13)²⁵ and the *bet* of *ve-echad* (at one with Himself) (Job 23:13).²⁶ In this case *taraf* is a verb meaning plucked and is vocalized with a *kamatz* beneath the second radical like

¹⁹ From the root *yod, chet, lamed*. This root connotes waiting with hope, as in *la-meyachalim le-chasdo* (toward them that wait for His mercy) (Ps. 33:18).

²⁰ Gen. 9:24.

²¹ The point is, if *va-yachel* is a *peh yod* then it would be vocalized like a word of this classification, i.e., like *va-yiketz* or *va-yeshev*, both of which are *peh yods*. The vocalization *va-yachel* shows that it belongs to the *kefulim*, those roots whose second and third radicals are identical.

²² It comes from the root *yod, chet, lamed*, meaning to stay, wait with hope, but is vocalized as if it came from the root *chet, lamed, lamed* (Krinsky).

²³ *Aleh* (leaf) and *taraf* (freshly plucked) mean the same. The verse thus reads, an olive-leaf, a frond in its mouth. Similarly in Daniel *adamah* (earth) and *afar* (dust) mean the same and the Bible could have employed only one word.

²⁴ I.E. says that the phrase should read *taraf-pihah* (its mouth had plucked). He thus insists that the *bet* is superfluous. According to this interpretation *taraf* is a verb.

²⁵ The *bet* (by) is superfluous.

²⁶ This should be read *echad*.

taraf (torn) in *For He hath torn* (*taraf*) (Hos. 6:1)²⁷ and *sha'ag* (hath roared) in *The lion hath roared* (*sha'ag*) (Amos 3:8)²⁸ and other similar cases. It is also possible that *taraf* (freshly plucked) is vocalized with a *kamatz* because it is an adjective like *chacham* (wise). It means the same as *taruf* (torn), for an adjective may resemble an active or passive participle.²⁹

12. AND HE STAYED. *Va-yiyyachel* (and he stayed) is a *nifal* and is penultimately accented³⁰ like *va-yillachem* (and he fought) (Num. 21:1) and *va-yitzamed* (and he was joined) (Num. 25:3).³¹ However, there are instances when corresponding *nifals* are accented on the last syllable,³² as in *va-yippaked* (was empty) in *that David's place was empty* (I Sam. 20:27). The entire root appears in *And he stayed*,³³ as it does in *shot through* (*yiyyareh*) (Ex. 19:13).³⁴

[AND SENT FORTH THE DOVE.] Noah sent out the dove on the first day of Adar. This time it no longer returned to him as it was wont to.

ANY MORE. *Od* (anymore) means forever. *Od* in *his uncleanness is yet* (*od*) *upon him* (Num. 19:13) and *While the earth remaineth* (*od kol yeme ha-aretz*) (Gen. 8:22) is similar.

²⁷ *Taraf* (torn) has a *kamatz* beneath the second radical. A third person *kal* perfect usually has a *pattach* beneath the second radical. Hence I.E. points out that there are instances where it has a *kamatz* beneath the second radical.

²⁸ *Sha'ag* has a *kamatz* under the second radical.

²⁹ *Taraf* resembles the active, *taruf* the passive (Krinsky). According to this interpretation *taraf* is an adjective meaning plucked.

³⁰ Because of the *vav* conversive (Weiser).

³¹ Both are *nifal* forms and are penultimately accented because of the *vav* conversive.

³² That is, *nifals* with the *vav* conversive.

³³ There are two *yods* in *va-yiyyachel* (and he stayed); one is the first letter of the root *yod*, *chet*, *lamed*, the other is the sign of the third person future. In such cases the root *yod* usually changes into a *vav*, hence I.E.'s comment (Cherez).

³⁴ *Yiyyareh* from the root *yod*, *resh*, *heh*.

13. THE WATERS WERE DRIED UP FROM OFF THE EARTH. Only the surface of the earth dried; the soil itself was swampy and hence not yet firm enough to walk upon. The earth did not fully dry until later.

Those who insist that Noah used a lunar calendar because Scripture tells us that he spent a year and ten days in the ark and the ten days refer to the excess of the solar year over a lunar year are pressing a point.³⁵ First of all, for this to be so the year had to be "full."³⁶ Furthermore, there is no reason to assume that Noah spent a year in the ark.³⁷ He could equally have been in it for a solar year plus ten days.³⁸

17. BRING FORTH. *Haytze* (bring forth) is written as if it came from a root whose radicals remain unchanged in conjugation.³⁹ *Hayshar* (make straight) in *Make Thy way straight before my face* (Ps. 5:9) is similar.

THAT THEY MAY SWARM. Reproduce.

³⁵ A lunar year plus 10 days equals a solar year. Cf. *Bereshit Rabbah*, Chap. 33:7, and Rashi's commentary, which states that the flood and its aftermath lasted a solar year. Noah entered the ark on the 17th day of the second month and left it on the 27th day of the second month of the following year.

³⁶ A solar year has 365 days; a lunar year may have 353, 354 or 355 days, called, respectively, *shanah chasera* (defective year), *shanah ki-sidra* (regular year), and *shenah shelemah* (a full year). In the first instance Cheshvan and Kislev have 29 days each; in the second Cheshvan has 29 days and Kislev 30; in the third both Cheshvan and Kislev have 30 days each. To make the lunar year equal the solar year, the lunar year had to be "full" plus 10 days.

³⁷ Why say that the year and 10 days that Noah spent in the ark was the equivalent of a solar year and Noah employed a lunar calendar, when it could just as well have been a solar year plus 10 days?

³⁸ The point is that we do not know what sort of calendar Noah used. Elsewhere I.E. comments that Noah could have employed Egyptian or Persian calendars. As to Jewish law, the calendar to be followed is the one legislated by Moses.

³⁹ In reality it is a *peh yod*, and in *hifil* the *yod* should change to a *vav* (Filwarg).

19. AFTER THEIR FAMILIES. After their kind. Some say that the animals bred in the ark.⁴⁰ Each family then left the ark by itself and did not intermingle with any other. This interpretation is not farfetched.

20. EVERY CLEAN BEAST. There are ten kinds of clean beasts.⁴¹ We do not know the number of clean fowl because the Bible lists only the unclean ones since the clean fowl are more numerous than the unclean. Noah built the altar on one of the mountains of Ararat.⁴²

21. SMELLED. *Va-yarach* (smelled) follows the paradigm of *va-yanach* (rested) in *and rested (va-yanach) in all the borders of Egypt* (Ex. 10:14). The *resh* is vocalized with a *pattach* because the *chet* which follows it is a guttural. This is in keeping with the rules of Hebrew grammar.

Heaven forbid that one conclude from our verse that God smells. Neither does He eat, as *Who did eat the fat of their sacrifices* (Deut. 32:38)⁴³ states. The meaning of our verse is that God accepted the burnt offering and it pleased Him. It may be compared to a human being who smells a pleasant scent and enjoys it.

THE SWEET SAVOUR. *Nicho'ach* (sweet savour) comes from the same root as *menuchah* (rest).⁴⁴ The *chet* is doubled in *nicho'ach* as the final *peh* of the root of *ve-na'afufe'ah* (and her adulteries) is doubled

⁴⁰ In contradistinction to the rabbis who said that the animals did not engage in intercourse in the ark. Therefore they had "families," each of which left the ark by itself. According to the first interpretation they did not breed in the ark. Hence they had no "families." Thus they interpret "families" as kinds.

⁴¹ The 10 are mentioned in Deut. 14:4,5.

⁴² He brought an offering of each of the clean animals and fowl before they dispersed (Weiser).

⁴³ The verse is not to be taken literally, for the Torah employed human language (Kaputa).

⁴⁴ From the root *nun, vav, chet*.



(Hos. 2:4). Its meaning is that the sweet odor assuaged God's anger, or that it caused a power from on high to rest on man.⁴⁵

IN HIS HEART. *El libbo* means in His heart.⁴⁶ He then revealed His secret to Noah who was a prophet.

[I WILL NOT AGAIN CURSE THE GROUND.] As I did on account of Adam, as it is written, *cursed is the ground for thy sake* (Gen. 3:17).

THE IMAGINATION. *Yetzer* (the imagination) refers to the nature that man was created with.

NEITHER WILL I AGAIN SMITE. Via a flood.

[AGAIN.] *Od* means forever,⁴⁷ or again. *And wept on his neck a good while* (od) (Gen. 46:29) is similar.⁴⁸

22. WHILE THE EARTH REMAINETH. This indicates that an end has been fixed for the earth. The Rabbinic interpretation of *It shall be eighteen thousand reeds round about* (Ezek. 48:38) is very precious. However, even one in a thousand does not know what it means.⁴⁹

SEED TIME AND HARVEST. The year is divided into two periods⁵⁰ and then into four: cold, the antithesis of heat, and summer, the antithesis of winter, corresponding to the four seasons of the year.⁵¹

⁴⁵ Compare, *to cause a blessing to rest* (le-hani'ach) *on thy house* (Ezek. 44:30).

⁴⁶ The Hebrew literally reads, to his heart, hence I.E.'s comment.

⁴⁷ See I.E.'s comment on verse 12.

⁴⁸ Which should be rendered, according to I.E., "And wept on his neck a second time."

⁴⁹ According to the sage Rava, *it shall be eighteen thousand reeds round about* indicates that the world will come to an end after 18,000 generations. Cf. *Sanhedrin* 97b; *Sukkah* 45b.

⁵⁰ From an agricultural point of view, they are planting time and harvest time.

⁵¹ The Bible does not list the four seasons in order because it wants to stress their antithetical nature (Cherez).

The four periods are all divided into day and night, for when the days are short the nights are long, and as the nights get shorter the days get longer until both are equal.⁵²

⁵² Hence the natural cycles do not cease.

CHAPTER 9

2. AND THE DREAD OF YOU. The root of *ve-chittechem* (and the dread of you) is *chet, tav, tav*. It comes from the same root as *chatat* (terror) in *Ye, see a terror* (*chatat*) (Job 6:21). *Chittechem* is synonymous with *chatattekhem*.¹

AND UPON ALL WHEREWITH THE GROUND TEEMETH. It means everything which creeps upon the ground.² Or, *ha'adamah* (the ground) is the subject.³

INTO YOUR HAND ARE THEY DELIVERED. This is to be read as if written, "because" into your hand are they delivered.

¹ *Chatat* (terror or dread) with the pronominal suffix would read *chatattekhem* (your dread). In *chittekhem* a *tav* is missing; in *chatattechem* the whole root is present.

² Interpreting *tirmos ha'adamah* as *tirmos al ha'adamah*.

³ According to this interpretation *be-khol asher tirmos ha'adamah* means, upon all creeping things which the ground will bring forth (Weiser). In the former, ground (*adamah*) is the object, in the latter the subject. According to the second interpretation, *tirmos* means will give birth to creeping things.

[AND UPON ALL.] Some say that the *bet* of *be-khol* (and upon all) and of *u-ve-khol* (and upon all) are in place of a *vav*.⁴ However, it is more likely that this clause is connected to *And the fear of you*.⁵

3. EVERY MOVING THING. *Remes* (moving thing) is a general term for wild and domesticated animals and for all fowl and fish. Man was now permitted to kill and eat them all.

AS THE GREEN HERB. *Yerek* (green) can be vocalized in two ways.⁶ The same is true with smoke. We thus find, *behold a smoking* (ashan)⁷ *furnace* (Gen. 15:17), and *as the smoke* (ke-eshen)⁸ *of a furnace* (Ex. 19:18).

4. ONLY FLESH WITH THE LIFE THEREOF, WHICH IS THE BLOOD THEREOF, SHALL YE NOT EAT. The meaning of this verse is that you shall not eat flesh with its life (*nefesh*), which is its blood, as in *and thou shalt not eat the life* (*nefesh*, i.e., the blood) *with the flesh* (Deut. 12:23), and *For as to the life* (*nefesh*) *of all flesh, the blood*

⁴ That is, *be-khol*, and *u-ve-khol* should be read as if written *ve-khol* (and all). According to this interpretation the second half of our verse is an independent clause stating: and all wherewith the ground teemeth and all the fish of the sea; into your hand are delivered. According to this interpretation we do not have to add the word "because" before *into your hand are they delivered*. However, it should be noted that this comment is difficult. *U-ve-khol* has a *vav*. Weiser suggests interpreting I.E.: and the *bet* of *u-ve-khol* is superfluous. Cf. Weiser and Cherez.

⁵ According to this interpretation the *bet* has the meaning of on; *be-khol* thus means *upon all* rather than *and all* as in the former interpretation. The same is true for *u-ve-khol* (Weiser). According to this explanation the second half of the verse is a continuation of the first half. The entire verse should be read as follows: And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth... and upon all (*be-khol*) wherewith the ground teemeth, and upon all (*u-ve-khol*) the fish of the sea; because into your hand are they delivered. According to this interpretation "because" has to be added to the text (Cherez).

⁶ It is vocalized either with two *segolim* (*yerek*) or two *kematzim*. The point is that green and smoke can follow either of two paradigms, *pe'el* (two *segolim*) or *pa'al* (two *kematzim*).

⁷ Vocalized with two *kematzim* (*ashan*).

⁸ Vocalized with two *segolim* (*eshen*).

*thereof is all one with the life (nefesh) thereof (Lev. 17:14). The nefesh (life) which moves and feels is the body.*⁹

5. AND SURELY YOUR BLOOD OF YOUR LIVES WILL I REQUIRE. I have permitted you to shed the blood of all living creatures. However, I have prohibited you the spilling of the blood of your lives because you are human. On the contrary, I will avenge that blood (*edreshennu*), as in *For He that avengeth (doresh) blood* (Ps. 9:13). Scripture first lays down a general rule, *And surely your blood of your lives will I require*, and then goes into detail and tells us whom God will punish for taking human life.

AND AT THE HAND OF MAN. If many people kill one person or if one man kills another person (even at the hand of every man's brother), I will avenge that death. I will also punish a beast that kills a man by having another animal kill it.¹⁰ Thus man is permitted to kill animals but animals are prohibited from killing humans.

In my opinion it is farfetched to maintain that *and surely your blood of your lives* refers to suicide.¹¹

[6. WHOSO SHEDDETH MAN'S BLOOD, BY MAN SHALL HIS BLOOD BE SHED.] This is a further elaboration.¹² It may also be taken, and this appears most likely, as a command to the sons of Noah to execute murderers. The term *ba-adam* (by man) can be interpreted in one

⁹ The word *nefesh* does not here refer to soul; it means body. However, by extension it also refers to the blood which gives life to the body. Krinsky has an alternate reading: the *nefesh* spoken of here refers to that which moves and feels within the body, i.e., the blood. According to Cherez, I.E. uses the term body for the blood.

¹⁰ This explains, *at the hand of every beast will I require it*.

¹¹ Cf. *Baba Kama* 91b. This verse teaches that a person is prohibited from harming himself. See also Rabbi B. Epstein, *Torah Temimah* on this verse.

¹² On *at the hand of man, even at the hand of every man's brother, will I require the life of man*. God will see to it that the murderers will somehow be killed by another person (Filwarg).

of three ways: in front of witnesses;¹³ in front of people; or because a man was killed. There are many other such instances.¹⁴

8. AND GOD SPOKE UNTO NOAH, AND TO HIS SONS. God spoke to Noah's sons through Noah. It is also possible that they were all prophets and God addressed all four of them.

9. AND WITH YOUR SEED. *Ve-et zarahem* is to be rendered: and with your seed.¹⁵ The third *with you* (v. 10) is to be interpreted as meaning: that were *with you*.¹⁶ It is also possible that *with you* is repeated for additional explanation.¹⁷

The covenant spoken of is that all flesh not be cut off anymore by the waters of the flood (v. 11).¹⁸

11. [NEITHER SHALL ALL FLESH BE CUT OFF.] Flesh refers to the body. The body is so designated because flesh senses and the bones do not. The covenant is a promise that all bodies will never again be destroyed by a flood. God included in His covenant a pledge not to bring a comparable deluge ever again because the first part of His promise, *neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of the flood*, may be taken to imply that there will be other floods but that God

¹³ The *bet* meaning in front of; *ba-adam*, in front of people, i.e. witnesses or in public. The verse thus reads, *Whoso sheddeth man's blood* before witnesses (or before many people), his blood shall be shed.

¹⁴ Taking the *bet* to mean because (Krinsky). The verse thus reads, *Whoso sheddeth man's blood*, because he killed a man, his blood shall be shed.

¹⁵ In other words, *et* here has the meaning of *im* (with).

¹⁶ *Ittekhem* (with your) appears three times in verses 9 and 10. The third *with you*, i.e., *and every beast of the earth with you*, appears redundant because it follows *and with every living creature that is with you, the fowl, the cattle*. Hence I.E. interprets the former to mean that were with you in the Ark.

¹⁷ The Bible repeats itself in order to further explain itself; i.e., the beasts spoken of are those that are with you.

¹⁸ Verse 11 reads, *And I will establish My covenant with you; neither shall*, etc. Hence it appears that a covenant was made and then God promised *neither shall*, etc. I.E. points out that *neither shall* opens the covenant (Krinsky).

will save humanity. It is concerning this covenant that the prophet says, *For as I have sworn that the waters of Noah Should no more go over the earth* (Is. 54:9).

12. THE TOKEN. *Ot* (token) may be either masculine or feminine.¹⁹

13. MY BOW. Behold, I now set a bow in the clouds. Saadiah Gaon's interpretation that the rainbow was previously in existence is incorrect.²⁰

14. WHEN I BRING CLOUDS OVER THE EARTH. The *nun* of *be-aneni* (when I bring clouds) does not have a *dagesh* even though it is a *pi'el* and therefore should have a *dagesh* in the middle radical of the root, as in *when I speak* (be-dabberi) *with thee* (Ex. 19:9).²¹

AND THE BOW IS SEEN IN THE CLOUDS. If we would believe what the Greek scholars tell us, that the rainbow is produced by the sun's flames, then we must assume that after the flood God strengthened the sun's light.²² This is the way that a person who understands the sciences will interpret this verse.

15. [AND THE WATERS SHALL NO MORE BECOME.] The use of the singular *yiheyeh* (shall become) with *mayim* (waters) does not prove that *mayim* is singular.²³ We find the same word used with a plural in *But there were* (va-yehi)²⁴ *certain men* (Num. 9:6).

¹⁹ Here it is feminine. In Ex. 3:12 it is masculine.

²⁰ The past tense *natai* (I have set) is employed, hence Saadiah's interpretation.

²¹ The *bet* of *dabberi* has a *dagesh*. I.E. reads, *be-dabberi itakh*. However, Ex. 19:9 reads, *be-dabberi immakh*. According to *Vat. Ebr.* 38 the reference is to Ezek. 3:27. However, here, too, the quote is not exact. If not a scribal error, it shows that I.E. quoted verses from memory.

²² According to I.E. the rainbow was created after the flood. Hence he believes that God now strengthened the sun's power so that its rays would produce a rainbow.

²³ See I.E.'s comment on Gen. 1:14.

²⁴ *Va-yehi* is singular.

[16. AND THE BOW SHALL BE IN THE CLOUD.] The bow is always hidden in the cloud and there seen by God.²⁵

17. AND GOD SAID UNTO NOAH. This is *the covenant* that I disclosed to you and this is the oath *which I have established*.²⁶

18. AND HAM IS THE FATHER OF CANAAN. This teaches that both Ham and Canaan were wicked, and as the father does, so do the children. Canaan and not Cush²⁷ is mentioned in this verse because Canaan was going to be cursed. This chapter²⁸ was written to inform us that all Canaanites, both male and female, bear a curse from the time of Noah. Abraham thus commanded his servant, *thou shalt not take a wife for my son of the daughters of the Canaanites* (Gen. 24:3). Rebecca similarly said, *If Jacob takes a wife of the daughters of Heth...what good shall my life do me* (Gen. 27:46). Should someone ask, what sins were the Hittites guilty of, let him open his eyes; the Hittites and the Amorites and the others are all descendants of Canaan.²⁹ We therefore read, *unto the land of Canaan* (Josh. 22:32).³⁰

20. AND NOAH...BEGAN. *Va-yachel* (began) is derived from *techillah* (beginning). It belongs to those roots whose second and third

²⁵ Even when man does not see the bow, God sees it and remembers his covenant. When man does not see the bow it is hidden in the clouds.

²⁶ According to I.E. *which I have established* does not refer to sign because a sign is not established. It is made. Hence he interprets *established* as referring to an oath not to bring a flood (Meijler).

²⁷ Cush was Ham's first-born (Gen. 10:6). Thus he, rather than Canaan, the youngest, should have been mentioned in this verse.

²⁸ Telling of what Canaan did, and that Noah cursed him.

²⁹ Cf. Gen. 10:15,16.

³⁰ It was inhabited by the Hittites, Amorites and other nations. It was known as the land of Canaan because they were all descended from Canaan.

letters are identical.³¹ It is a *hifil*, similar to *va-yasekh* (shut up) in *Or who shut up*³² (*va-yasekh*) *the sea with doors* (Job 38:8).

THE HUSBANDMAN. A skilled agriculturalist, agriculture being a great science.

The Rabbinic statement that Noah drank from his vineyard on the day he planted it is not to be taken literally.³³ There is a secret meaning to it. Similarly *and the woman conceived, and bore a son* (Ex. 2:2) did not take place on one and the same day.³⁴

21. AND HE WAS UNCOVERED. *Va-yitgal* (and he was uncovered) comes from the root *gimel, lamed, heh*, meaning to uncover. It is a *hitpa'el*. *Yital* (lift himself up) in *And let him lift himself up* (*yital*) (Jer. 51:3)³⁵ is similar.

[HIS TENT.] The *heh* of *oholoh* (his tent) is in place of a *vav*.³⁶ The *heh* of *be-re'oh* (as they shouted), in *the noise of the people as they shouted* (*be-re'oh*) (Ex. 32:17), and the *heh* of *fera'oh* (let them loose) in *for Aaron had let them loose* (*fera'oh*) (Ex. 32:25), are similar.

23. UPON BOTH THEIR SHOULDERS. Each one placed an edge of the blanket on his shoulders. *Shekhem* (shoulders) does not come in the plural.³⁷

³¹ Its root is *chet, lamed, lamed*.

³² Its root is *samekh, caf, caf*, and it is also in the *hifil*.

³³ *Bereshit Rabbah* 36:7.

³⁴ The women obviously did not conceive and bear on the same day. Similarly *and he planted a vineyard And he drank* did not take place on the same day.

³⁵ It, too, is a *hitpa'el* and a *lamed heh*. Its root is *ayin, lamed, heh*.

³⁶ The masculine pronominal suffix is usually a *vav*.

³⁷ The word for shoulder is *shekhem*. The plural in the construct would be *shikhme*. The Bible employs the singular (*shekhem*) because the word does not appear in the plural.

BACKWARD. Opposite of the normal way of walking, which is to go forward.

24. AND NOAH AWOKE. Scripture does not reveal what was done to Noah. Be that as it may, Canaan was the culprit. The sequence of events was as follows: Ham saw his father's nakedness and unlike his brothers did not cover him. On the contrary, he revealed what he saw. Canaan heard that Noah was lying naked in his tent and did something to Noah. However, the Bible does not tell us what he did to him.³⁸ The meaning of the verse *and (Noah) knew what his youngest son had done unto him* is proof³⁹ that Canaan was the culprit, for we read, *And the sons of Ham: Cush, and Mizraim, and Put, and Canaan* (Gen. 10:6).⁴⁰ Furthermore, the *his* in *his youngest son* refers to Ham, who is previously mentioned.⁴¹ That is why Noah cursed Canaan. The one who says that Ham was the culprit, and that Canaan was cursed because Noah did not want to curse his son (Ham) because God had blessed Noah's sons, is indulging in Midrash.⁴²

25. A SERVANT OF SERVANTS. *Eved avadim* (a servant of servants) means a servant like all other servants.⁴³ If Scripture meant a servant to servants then it would have read *eved ha-avadim*. Proof of this

³⁸ The sages of the Talmud are divided as to what was done to Noah. Some say that he was castrated. Others say that he was sodomized. Cf. *San.* 70a.

³⁹ Ham was not Noah's youngest son; therefore *his youngest son* cannot refer to him. Canaan was a youngest son and the verse can thus apply to him.

⁴⁰ We thus see that Canaan was Ham's youngest son.

⁴¹ The verse should be understood as follows: And Noah knew what Ham's youngest son had done to him.

⁴² Cf. *Bereshit Rabbah* 31:11.

⁴³ Thus *eved avadim* means a member of the servant class.

is: *it is most holy* (kodesh kodashim) (Lev. 6:18), and *In a most holy place* (be-kodesh ha-kodashim) (Num. 18:10).⁴⁴

[UNTO HIS BRETHREN.] To Cush, Mizraim and Put, the sons of Ham his father. There are some who say that the Cushites are enslaved because Noah cursed Ham. However, they have forgotten that the first king to rule after the flood was a Cushite. Thus it is written, *and Cush begot Nimrod...And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel, and Erech, and Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar* (Gen. 10:8-10).⁴⁵

26. BLESSED BE THE LORD, THE GOD OF SHEM. We are duty-bound to be bountiful in praise of the Lord, who is the God of Shem, for He will make Canaan a servant of God and Shem.⁴⁶ The meaning of our verse is, God will compel Canaan to serve Shem, for *lamo* (their) has the same meaning as *la-hem* (to them).⁴⁷ The *vav* of *lamo* is superfluous and is similar to the *vav* of *tevi'emo* (*Thou bringest them in*) (Ex. 15:17).⁴⁸ Therefore the term "to them" is not encountered in Scripture, spelled either without a *heh* or a *vav*.⁴⁹

The Tetragrammaton is invoked in connection with Shem to honor Shem.⁵⁰ It is not employed with regard to Japheth because he was not his brother's equal.

⁴⁴ See I.E.'s comment to Lev. 6:18 where I.E. points out that *kodesh kodashim* means holy (*kodesh*) as one of the holy objects (*kodashim*). When Scripture wants to say most holy it uses the term *kodesh ha-kodashim*. Similarly had Scripture read *eved ha-avadim*, it would have meant a servant of (to) servants.

⁴⁵ Thus the curse was put on the Canaanites and not on all of Ham's descendants.

⁴⁶ I.E.'s paraphrase of our verse.

⁴⁷ The second half of the verse literally reads, and let Canaan be a servant to them (*lamo*). I.E. points out that *lamo* means to them (*la-hem*) and refers to God and Shem who are mentioned in the first half of the verse.

⁴⁸ The *vav* of *tevi'emo* is also superfluous.

⁴⁹ Since the term for them is either *la-hem* or *lamo*, the term *lam* is not found in Scripture (Netter).

⁵⁰ The ancestor of the Israelites who worshiped the Lord (Krinsky).

Saadia Gaon says that *Cursed be Canaan* is short for cursed be Canaan's father.⁵¹ He says that *In the presence of Hanamel my uncle* (Jer. 32:12) is similar, as Hanamel was really Jeremiah's uncle's son.⁵² However, it is possible that Hanamel was older than Jeremiah and the latter referred to him as "my uncle" because it was an honor for him to be called by his father's title.⁵³ Similarly one's father's brother's wife is called aunt in Scripture.⁵⁴ However, in our case there is no reason to refer to Ham by the name of his son.⁵⁵

[27. ENLARGE.] Saadia also explains the word *yaf*t (enlarge) as coming from the Hebrew word for beautiful (*yafeh*). However, his comment is not beautiful (*yafeh*).⁵⁶ *Yaf*t means he will enlarge.⁵⁷ The Aramaic word for *He shall enlarge* (Deut. 12:20) is similar.⁵⁸ *Yaf*t (enlarge) is a *hifil*. It is like *yard* in *And maketh him rule (yard) over kings* (Is. 41:2).⁵⁹

Both Shem and Japheth were blessed in this verse, for the meaning of *And he shall dwell in the tents of Shem* is: may God dwell in the tents

51 This answers the question: Why was Canaan cursed when it was in fact Ham who allowed his father to lie naked at the doorway of the tent?

52 Cf. Jer. 32:8. We thus see that Scripture employs such abridgments.

53 The point is that Jeremiah wanted to honor his cousin who was older than he. He did so by calling him uncle. Hence Saadia cannot offer proof from this verse that Scripture employs this type of abridgment.

54 An uncle is a *dod*, his wife is a *dodah*. She is so called in order to honor her, because she is married to one's uncle. See I.E. to Lev. 18:14. Similarly Lot is called Abraham's brother, rather than his nephew (Gen. 14:14).

55 What honor is there to Ham if he is referred to as Canaan?

56 A sarcastic pun, telling us that Saadia is wrong.

57 *Yafte*. Compare Deut. 12:20.

58 Onkelos renders *ki yarchiv* as *are yafte* (Deut. 12:20).

59 The point is that *yaf*t, like *yard*, is an abridged word. *Yaf*t is short for *yafteh* and *yard* for *yardeh*.

of Shem. The previous verse (v. 26) relates the blessing with which Noah blessed God.⁶⁰

AND LET CANAAN BE THEIR SERVANT. To Shem, to Japheth and also to his brothers. Thus Canaan was to be a slave to all of the world, for from Shem, Japheth and Canaan's brothers all of humanity is descended. This came to pass many years after the flood.⁶¹

⁶⁰ God rather than Shem is the object of the blessing. Hence in verse 26 Noah blessed God. In verse 27 he blessed Shem and Japheth. Thus the blessing of Shem in verse 27 is not redundant.

⁶¹ According to Krinsky, I.E.'s words apply to the blessing and curse uttered by Noah, namely, that God would dwell in the tents of Shem, that he would enlarge Japheth, and that Canaan would be a slave.

CHAPTER 10

4. KITTIM. *Kittim* is the name of one of Javan's sons.¹ I therefore explain in my comments on the Book of Daniel that Greeks and Romans² constitute one kingdom.³

NIMROD. Do not attempt to ascertain the meaning of any names encountered in the Bible if Scripture itself does not explain them.⁴ Nimrod was the first to display man's power over the wild beasts for he was a mighty hunter. The meaning of *before the Lord* (v. 9) is that Nimrod built altars and offered the animals he hunted as whole offerings to God. This is the literal meaning of the verse. However, its Midrashic interpretation is totally different.⁵

¹ Even though it is in the plural.

² I.E. maintains that the brass sections of the giant statue dreamed of by Nebuchadnezzar allude to the Greek and Roman empires. See Daniel, Chap. 2 and Ibn Ezra's comment there on verse 39. I.E. identifies the Kittim with the Romans. (See his comments on Gen. 27:40). Since Kittim (the Romans) was the son of Javan (the Greeks) one symbol stands for both of them.

³ Nebuchadnezzar dreamed of a statue whose head was of fine gold, its breast and its arms of silver, its belly and its thighs of brass, its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay (Dan. 2:32, 34). Each of these metals symbolizes a kingdom. I.E. identifies the brass with the Greeks and the Romans, whom he considers one kingdom because they are one race.

⁴ The rabbis connect Nimrod with the word *marad* (to rebel). They tell us that Nimrod was so called because he caused people to rebel against God. See *Erubin* 53a.

⁵ Cf. Rashi. He ensnared men with his words and caused them to rebel against God. See also Nahmanides: "Ibn Ezra's words do not appear to be correct, for our rabbis know by tradition of Nimrod's wickedness."

9. WHEREFORE IT IS SAID. This proverb was also used in the days of Moses.⁶

11. [OUT OF THAT LAND WENT FORTH ASSHUR.] Asshur was the son of Japheth.⁷ The events related in this verse took place after the dispersion following the building of the Tower of Babel. Nimrod was the first king over Babel.⁸ According to *Seder Olam*, Nimrod was king over the seventy who built the tower, and it was in his time that the dispersion took place.⁹

12. THE SAME IS THE GREAT CITY. It appears to me that this is connected to *and builded Nineveh*. However, it is also possible that it is connected to Resen or Calah.¹⁰

13. AND MIZRAIM BEGOT LUDIM. In my opinion, these are the names of countries, each of which was populated by a particular family. This is why all the names (in verses 13 and 14) are in the plural. Proof of this is the name *Pathrusim*.¹¹ Additional and definite proof that this

⁶ Hence the use of the present form, *it is said*, that is, we say today, today being the age in which the Torah was written.

⁷ This comment is extremely difficult; Scripture nowhere says this. Indeed, in I.E.'s alternate commentary to Genesis he writes, "We do not know who was the father of Asshur." Some suggest that our text is corrupt, and on the basis of verse 22 emend it to: son of Shem (Weiser).

⁸ There was no Babel before the dispersion. Thus Nimrod's rule over Babel had to be after the dispersion. Hence what Scripture relates about Asshur had to happen after the dispersion (Netter).

⁹ This is not found in our editions of the *Seder Olam*. Krinsky points out that there are many citations quoted in the early sources from this work that are missing in our edition of the *Seder Olam*. From the fact that Nimrod was king during the time of the dispersion we see that what Asshur did happened later.

¹⁰ Three cities are mentioned in the verse. Hence *the same is the great city* may be taken to refer to any one of them.

¹¹ Verse 14. The land itself was called the "country of Pathros" (Jer. 44:1), and its inhabitants called "Pathrusim." The same applies to all the names in verses 13 and 14. Hence, Pathros is the name of a place. Similarly all the names in verses 13 and 14 refer to names of places, their inhabitants taking the name of the place wherein they lived.

interpretation is correct is the phrase *whence went forth* (v. 14), for the word *whence*¹² alludes to a place.

[14. AND CAPHTORIM.] Mizraim also begat the Caphtorim.¹³

The term begat is used in Scripture when referring to the father because the child comes from the strength and power of the father¹⁴ and is in his likeness and image.

19. AS THOU GOEST TOWARD GERAR. The word *gerarah* means to Gerar.¹⁵

20. THESE ARE THE SONS OF HAM, AFTER THEIR FAMILIES, AFTER THEIR TONGUES. Scripture says the same concerning the children of Japheth¹⁶ and the children of Shem.¹⁷

21. [THE FATHER OF ALL THE CHILDREN OF EBER.] Scripture informs us that Shem was the father of the Hebrews for no one was greater than he, and the Lord was his God. Similarly it is written, *Thus saith the Lord, the God of the Hebrews* (ivrim) (Ex. 10:3).¹⁸ On the other hand, the Bible tells us that Ham was the father of Canaan¹⁹ for no one was baser than he. It is unfitting for the holy and profane to

¹² The Hebrew *mi-sham* indicates a place.

¹³ *And Caphtorim* is not to be connected to *whence went forth the Philistines*, but to *And Mizraim begot*.

¹⁴ An allusion to semen. The word *yalad* (begot) actually means to give birth and it is used when referring to the father (*yalad*) as well as the mother (*yaledah*) for the reason noted by I.E. (Netter).

¹⁵ The *heh* at the end of the name of a place is in place of an *el* (to) before it. Hence *gerarah* means *el Gerar*, to Gerar (Krinsky).

¹⁶ Gen. 10:5.

¹⁷ Gen. 10:31.

¹⁸ I.E. identifies the children of Eber (*ever*) with the Hebrews (*ivrim*).

¹⁹ The text reads, Canaan was the father of Ham. The text is obviously corrupt. Ham was the father of Canaan. *Vat. Ebr.* 38 reads, *u-khena'an aviv cham*. The *vav* of *aviv* was dropped in transmission. Thus *aviv* (his father) became *avi* (father of).

intermingle. Scripture notes that Shem was *the brother of Japheth the elder*²⁰ to teach us that Japheth, too, was a worthy person.

The Bible lists Shem, who was the youngest, before Japheth,²¹ who was the elder,²² out of respect to Shem. Proof that Japheth was the elder lies in Scripture's stating that Noah was five hundred years old when he begat his first son.²³ There is no room for argument, for it is clear that Noah had no children prior to reaching the age of five hundred. The flood came when Noah was six hundred years old.²⁴ Therefore if Shem was the eldest he would be one hundred and one years old when Noah and his sons came out of the ark.²⁵ However, Scripture tells us *Shem was a hundred years old, and begot Arpachshad two years after the flood* (Gen. 11:10).²⁶

Others say that Shem was *the elder brother of Japheth*,²⁷ and it is for this reason that Shem is mentioned first. They explain that Shem was born a few days after Noah entered his five hundredth year, for even a day in a year is considered a year.²⁸ They say that Noah was born in

²⁰ This is the literal meaning of *achi yefet ha-gadol*. From the text it is not clear whether Japheth or Shem was the elder; the grammatical construction is such that elder may apply to either. I.E. is trying to explain why Scripture tells us that Shem was Japheth's brother, but does not say the same about Ham.

²¹ The Bible lists Noah's sons as Shem, Ham and Japheth (Gen. 5:32; 6:10). According to I.E. the order of their birth was Japheth, Ham and Shem (Krinsky).

²² Ibn Ezra assumes that elder applies to Japheth (see note 20).

²³ Gen. 5:32.

²⁴ Gen. 7:6.

²⁵ The flood lasted a year.

²⁶ Hence Shem reached the age of 100 two years after the flood and could not have been begotten by Noah when the latter was 500 years old. Therefore Shem was not Noah's eldest son. Japheth was. Thus the elder in verse 21 refers to Japheth.

²⁷ This interpretation explains *achi yefet ha-gadol* to mean the elder brother of Japheth. According to this interpretation Shem is the eldest.

²⁸ Thus 499 years plus a few days is considered 500 years.

Iyyar²⁹ and Shem in Sivan.³⁰ When the flood came Noah was five hundred and ninety-nine plus a number of days old.³¹ Hence Shem was not a full ninety-nine years old when the flood started and was a hundred and one years plus a number of months old when his son Arpachshad was born. The meaning of *two years after the flood* (Gen. 11:10) therefore is to be interpreted as meaning that Arpachshad was born in the second year following the beginning of the flood. There are also those who maintain that the wife of Shem conceived five months after the start of the flood when the waters started decreasing.³² Shem was thus one hundred years old when Arpachshad was born.³³ There are ten similar instances in the Book of Kings.³⁴

²⁹ Noah was 499 years old in Iyyar.

³⁰ Shem was thus born in Noah's 500th year.

³¹ In other words, Noah was in his 600th year when the flood began.

³² Thus Arpachshad was born two years after the flood, i.e., in the second year following the start of the flood.

³³ Those who put forth this interpretation agree with the second interpretation. However, they are bothered by one problem. If Shem was 100 years plus some months when Arpachshad was born, why does Scripture say that Shem was 100 years old at the time? It should consider him to be 101 since part of a year is considered a year. They solve this problem by assuming that Shem's wife conceived in the ark five months after the start of the flood, i.e., in Tishri, and gave birth to Arpachshad the following Sivan, some days before Shem's 100th birthday. Shem, according to this interpretation, was born in Sivan. Scripture thus tells us that Shem was a hundred years old when Arpachshad was born, i.e., 99 years plus. The Bible is thus consistent in listing the years (Cherez).

³⁴ Where part of a year is considered a year. Krinsky lists the 10 places as: I Kings 15:1, 2, 9; 22:52; II Kings 1:17; 3:1; 8:16; 9:29; 13:10; 14:23; 15:1; 17:1.

CHAPTER 11

1. ONE LANGUAGE. When the word one in the feminine is in the absolute it is vocalized with a *segol* beneath the *alef* (*echat*). However, when it is in the construct it is vocalized with a *pattach* beneath the *alef* (*achat*). In my book on grammar I have explained why the *dalet* is missing in the feminine word for one.¹

A logical reading of Scripture indicates that the dispersion took place one hundred years after the flood, and that Peleg, which means divided, was so named because at the time of his birth the earth was divided (Gen. 10:25).² *Peleg* is similar to *palga*, the Aramaic word for half. *Palge* (rivers) in *rivers of water* (*palge mayim*) (Ps. 119:136) is identical. It refers to the branches into which the river divides. The names given to Ichabod (I Sam. 4:21)³ and Immanuel,⁴ who was the son of the prophet Isaiah (Is. 7:14), are similar.

¹ The masculine word for one is *echad*; hence the feminine should be *achdat*.

² People were named for events that occurred at the time of their birth. A careful computation of the years from the flood to the birth of Peleg comes to about 100 years. Arpachshad was born two years after the flood; 35 years later he had Shelah. Shelah was 30 when he begot Eber; Eber was 34 when he begot Peleg. Therefore the dispersion took place about 100 years after the flood (Weiser).

³ *And she named the child Ichabod, saying: 'The glory is departed from Israel,' because the ark of God was taken, and because of her father-in-law and her husband* (I Sam. 4:21).

⁴ *Therefore the Lord Himself shall give you a sign: behold, the young woman shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel (God is with us)* (Is. 7:14).

Nevertheless, the words of the *Seder Olam* are also correct, and we will rely upon them.⁵ If this is so, then Abraham was one of the builders of the tower of Babel.⁶ Do not be amazed at this,⁷ for Noah and Shem were also there.⁸ Indeed, Shem didn't die till Jacob was over fifty.⁹

The meaning of *safah echat* is one language. It appears to me that the one language was Hebrew. Proof of this are the names Adam, Eve, Cain, Seth and Peleg.¹⁰

[AND OF ONE SPEECH.] Unlike today, when there are words which not everybody speaking a given language will understand, the learned and the ignorant in those days spoke alike.

Achadim (one) is the plural of *echad*.¹¹

⁵ To the effect that the dispersion took place at the end of Peleg's life. *Seder Olam*, Chap. 1.

⁶ According to the *Seder Olam*, Abraham was 48 years old when the dispersion took place (Chap. 1). Abraham was a descendant of Peleg. If Peleg was born at the time of the dispersion, this would of course preclude Abraham's being at the tower of Babel. However, if Peleg was so named because the dispersion took place at the end of his life, which consisted of 239 years (v. 18 and 19), then by computing the years listed in verses 18-26 we conclude that Abraham was 48 years old at the time of the building of the tower of Babel. The computation is as follows: Peleg was born 239 years before the dispersion since the latter took place at the end of his life. Peleg was 30 when he begat Reu. Reu was 32 when he begat Serug. Serug was 30 when he begat Nahor. Nahor was 29 when he begat Terah. Terah was 70 when he begat Abraham. We thus have a total of 191. Two hundred thirty-nine minus 191 is 48. Hence Abraham was 48 at the time of the dispersion.

⁷ That is, that Abraham would participate in such a venture. Noah and Shem also took part in it. It is I.E.'s belief that the builders of the Tower did not commit any sin. I.E. will elaborate on this later on in his commentary.

⁸ They, too, were saintly men and yet participated in the building of the tower.

⁹ According to the *Seder Olam*, Chap. 1, Jacob studied Torah with Shem for 50 years.

¹⁰ All of these are derived from Hebrew roots.

¹¹ Sometimes the word *achadim* has the meaning of few. Cf. Gen. 27:44, *yamim achadim* (a few days). I.E. emphasizes that here it means one.

[2. AS THEY JOURNEYED EAST.] This verse shows that the mountains of Ararat are in the east.¹²

[THAT THEY FOUND A PLAIN.] Its meaning is, they searched for a good place to build a state. Eventually they found this plain. The meaning of *bikah* (plain) is a flat area; it is the opposite of *the rough places* (Is. 40:4).¹³ *As the cattle go down into the valley* (Ba-bikah) (Is. 63:14) is similar. *Bikah* possibly refers to a plain between mountains because a valley appears to be a split in the hills.¹⁴

3. LET US MAKE BRICK. *Nilbenah* (let us make brick) comes from the same root as *levenim* (bricks). Even though *levenim* ends in a *mem*, it is a feminine word.¹⁵ Such irregular feminine plural endings are also found in the words *nashim* (women) and *pilagshim* (concubines).

They baked the bricks until they became hard. A building made from such material is very strong and will not dissolve in water or fall apart when burned.

AND THEY HAD BRICK FOR STONE. In place of stone.

AND SLIME. In place of mortar. The meaning of *chemar* (slime) is the same as its Arabic cognate.¹⁶

The builders of the tower were not fools to believe that they could actually ascend the heavens. Neither were they afraid that God would bring another flood, for Noah and his children, to whom the Almighty

¹² The verse literally reads: as they journeyed from the east, i.e., from Mt. Ararat or its vicinity. This shows that Mt. Ararat is in the east (Krinsky).

¹³ Is. 40:4 reads, *And the rough places (shall be made) a plain* (le-vikah). We thus see that *bikah* is the opposite of rough places. Hence it must refer to a level area.

¹⁴ *Baka* means split. Thus *bikah* (valley) means a split in the mountains.

¹⁵ A feminine plural ends in a *vav*, *tav*. The singular of *levenim* is *levenah*, hence the feminine *va-tehi* in conjunction with *ha-levenah*.

¹⁶ *Chamarah* in Arabic is a red earthen substance (Weiser).

swore never to bring another deluge, were there and being descendents of Noah and his children they were subservient to them.¹⁷ Scripture reveals their intention and ultimate goal. They wanted to build a great city to dwell in, and a very tall tower to ensure their fame and glory and to serve as a sign indicating the place of the city to those outside it, such as shepherds. The tower, as long as it stood, would also perpetuate their names after their deaths. This is the meaning of *and let us make us a name*.

The word *havah* (come) means give;¹⁸ its root is *yod, heh, bet*, as is clear from *Cast thy burden (yehavecha) upon the Lord* (Ps. 55:23). Because *haveh* is used often, it remains the same in both the feminine and the plural. Compare, *come* (*havah*),¹⁹ *let us deal wisely with them* (Ex. 1:10), and *Come* (*havah*),²⁰ *I pray thee, let me come in unto thee* (Gen. 38:16).

Do not be surprised at the phrase *with its top in heaven*. Moses similarly said, *the cities are great and fortified up to heaven* (Deut. 1:28).²¹

The builders of the tower hoped that their city and tower would prevent them from dispersing, but this was not God's will. However, they did not know this.²²

¹⁷ If their intention was to rebel against God, then Noah and Shem would have stopped them. I.E. rejects the notion that the builders of the tower wanted to ascend the heavens and wage war with God. Cf. *San.* 109a.

¹⁸ The root *yod, heh, bet* means give. Cf. Rashi on Gen. 38:16: "The expression *havah* denotes preparation except where it is to be rendered giving, and even in those instances where *havah* denotes preparation it is close in meaning to giving."

¹⁹ Strictly speaking, since many are being addressed, *havu* should be used.

²⁰ Since a female is being addressed *havi* should be used.

²¹ The words of Moses are definitely not to be taken literally. Similarly neither is *with its top in heaven*.

²² They did not intend to rebel against God. They were merely ignorant of His will.

5. [AND THE LORD CAME DOWN.] The Bible states this because all things on earth below are dependent upon the powers on high; all actions are arranged from heaven. Therefore God is referred to as the One *Who rideth upon the heaven* (Deut. 33:26) and the One who is *enthroned in the heavens* (Ps. 123:1).²³ The use of the term *And the Lord came down* is an anthropomorphism.

6. AND THE LORD SAID: BEHOLD, THEY ARE ONE PEOPLE. God said this to the angels. This took place before *And the Lord came down*. Its meaning is: And the Lord came down because he said, *Behold, they are one people, and they have all one language, etc.*²⁴

ONE PEOPLE. They have one religion. Different religions create jealousy and hatred among people. The same is true with regard to different languages. That is why the king of Persia and Media commanded *that every man should bear rule in his own house, and speak according to the language of his people* (Es. 1:22).²⁵ The *heh* of *hachillam* (what they begin) is vocalized with a *pattach* because of the *chet* which follows it.²⁶ The *heh* of *hachiloti* (I have begun) (Deut. 2:31) is similarly vocalized.

[WITHHOLDEN.] *Yibbatzer* means will be withholden. *Betzurot* (fortified) in *fortified* (*betzurot*) *cities* (Deut. 3:5)²⁷ is like it.

²³ "God cannot come into contact with the material and changeable" (Husik, p. 191). He rules the lower world via the heavenly beings. "Ibn Ezra holds that the events of the sublunar world are governed by the positions and motions of the heavenly bodies, which in turn are determined by the intelligences or angels" (*Ibid.*, p. 192).

²⁴ It is unlikely that God would first go down and then say, *Come, let us go down* (Filwarg). In other words, verse 5 belongs after verse 7 (Cherez). Our translation follows Filwarg who reads *terem* in place of *ta'am*.

²⁵ The use of only one language per household would prevent strife in that family.

²⁶ The *heh* should have been vocalized with a *chataf pattach* as is the rule concerning all double roots in the *hifil* perfect.

²⁷ Cities so constructed that they hold back any enemy from entering.

The meaning of our verse is: If I permit them to go on, they will think that they can do whatever they wish.

[THEY PURPOSE.] *Yazemu* (they purpose) has the same meaning as *zamemu* (devised).²⁸ However, they come from different roots.

7. COME, LET US GO DOWN. This is what God said to the angels.

[AND THERE CONFOUND THEIR LANGUAGE.] All the grammarians claim that *ve-navelah* (and confound) is a *nifal*.²⁹ They compare it to *ve-navekah* (and shall be made empty) in *And the spirit of Egypt shall be made empty* (*ve-navekah*) (Is. 19:3) and to *navelah* (fadeth) in *The earth fainteth and fadeth away* (*navelah*) (Is. 24:4). However, their interpretation is farfetched. Why would the Bible say: Come, let us go down and their language will be confounded, when their language was not confounded because God and the angels went down?³⁰ *Ve-navelah* can only be interpreted as an active verb.³¹ Proof of this is Scripture's stating at the close of this incident, *because the Lord did there confound the language of all the earth* (v. 9). The following is then the grammatical explanation of *ve-navelah*. It is a *hifil*. Scripture should have employed the entire root and read *ve-navlilah*,³² or *ve-*

²⁸ Cf. Deut. 19:19. *Yazemu* comes from the root *yod, zayin, mem*; *zamemu* from the root, *zayin, mem, mem*.

²⁹ According to this interpretation *ve-navelah sham sefatam* (and there confound their language) means, and their language will be there confounded, the *nun* of *ve-navelah* being the *nun* of the *nifal*.

³⁰ God's going down did not in itself confound their language.

³¹ Meaning, and we will confound, its *nun* not being the sign of the *nifal* but of a first person plural imperfect prefix.

³² This is the way a double root is conjugated in the *hifil*. The root of *ve-navelah* is *bet, lamed, lamed*.

*navellah*³³ if one of the two *lameds* of its double root was swallowed. In the latter case it would have followed the paradigm of *ve-nasebbah* (let us bring back)³⁴ in *and let us bring back (ve-nasebbah) the ark of our God* (I Chron. 13:3). Our word reads *ve-navelah* because one of the *lameds* of the root was dropped without the remaining *lamed* receiving a *dagesh forte* to make up for it. The sages who translated the Torah into Greek correctly rendered *ve-navelah* as I will confound,³⁵ rather than we will confound.³⁶ If the above mentioned grammarians are correct, why did the sages omit the *nun*?³⁷

Some say that the people building the tower started hating each other and each one invented a new language. Others say that the One who grants knowledge to man caused them to forget their language. In my opinion, they were first scattered. After their dispersion Nimrod ruled over Babel and other kings arose. With the passage of time and the death of the first generation to be scattered, the original language was forgotten.³⁸

God scattered the people for their own benefit. He similarly said, *and replenish the earth* (Gen. 1:28).³⁹

³³ This is the way a double root is conjugated in the *hifil* when one of the letters of the double root is dropped (swallowed) in the conjugation. In this case *ve-navelah* has a *tzere* beneath the *bet* and a *dagesh forte* in the *lamed*. The *dagesh* doubles the *lamed* and thus compensates for the missing *lamed*.

³⁴ The root of which is *samekh, bet, bet*

³⁵ The sages thus understood *ve-navelah* as an active form, *we will confound*.

³⁶ They did this so that the readers of their translation would not think there are many gods. Cf. *Megillah* 9a.

³⁷ If *ve-navelah* is passive (*nifal*), meaning it will be confounded, why did the sages who translated the Bible into Greek change *ve-navelah* to *ve-avelah*? Obviously the sages saw it as active, meaning we will confound, hence the change from the plural to the singular.

³⁸ According to I.E. the confounding of the language did not take place at one time; it was a slow process. God first dispersed them. This led to the eventual confounding of the original language.

³⁹ That is, populate all of the earth, not merely one area of it.

8. [AND THEY LEFT OFF TO BUILD THE CITY.] Its meaning is: they left off from completing the city because part of the city and the tower had by this time been built. This is so for Scripture reads, *the city and the tower, which the children of men builded* (v. 5).⁴⁰ It is also possible that the meaning of *which the children of men builded* is: which the children of men intended to build.⁴¹ *Then Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, arose and fought against Israel* (Josh. 24:9)⁴² is similar. The first of these interpretations appeals to me.

9. BABEL. *Bavel* (Babel) is made up of the words *ba* (came) and *bel* (confusion),⁴³ with the *alef* missing. *Bagad*⁴⁴ (Fortune is come) (Gen. 30:11) and *Bamah* (high place) (Ezek. 20:29)⁴⁵ are similar.

10. [TWO YEARS AFTER THE FLOOD.] I have already explained the meaning of this in the verse *the elder brother of Japheth* (Gen. 10:21).⁴⁶ It is possible that Peleg was given this name on the day of his death, the reason for this being as follows: Shem lived for five hundred years following the flood, Arpachshad lived for four hundred and thirty-eight years, his son Shelah lived four hundred and thirty-three years, and his son Eber four hundred and sixty-four years. Now Peleg lived two hundred and thirty-nine years. Thus Peleg's life span was half that of his

⁴⁰ Verse 5 tells us that God *came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded*. This indicates that some part of the tower and city had already been completed.

⁴¹ According to this interpretation verse 5 should be interpreted to mean: God came down to see the tower and city which the children of men intended to build. He stopped them before they commenced building.

⁴² Balak never fought Israel. The meaning of the verse is: then Balak...arose and intended to fight Israel.

⁴³ According to I.E. *bel* is a noun from the root *bet, lamed, lamed* (Weiser). *Bavel* thus means a confusion came.

⁴⁴ The *alef* of *ba* in *bagad* is missing. *Bagad* is a compound of *ba* and *gad*.

⁴⁵ Ezek. 20:29 explains the word *bamah* (a high place) as coming from the word *ba* (visit) and *mah* (what). Thus the *alef* is missing.

⁴⁶ In his comments on Gen. 10:32, I.E. explains that two years after the flood means a year and some days into the second year following the flood.

ancestors. Reu, the son of Peleg, similarly lived to the same age as Peleg. Reu's son Serug also lived about the same number of years as Peleg and Reu.⁴⁷ This, then, is the general rule: no one after Peleg, aside from his son, ever lived to be two hundred and thirty-nine years.⁴⁸

Some say that those who built the tower numbered seventy and hence were divided into seventy languages upon their dispersion.⁴⁹ If you count the sons of Shem, Japheth and Ham you will find them to be seventy.⁵⁰ However, they are incorrect. First of all *Pathrusim* and *Casluhim*⁵¹ are not the names of two individuals.⁵² Furthermore, they neglect to include in the seventy Noah and his sons.⁵³ According to the *Seder Olam* the builders of the tower numbered thousands and ten thousands.⁵⁴

[26. AND BEGOT ABRAM.] Abraham was born in a place called Ur of the Chaldees. *Therefore glorify ye the Lord in the regions of light* (be-urim) (Is. 24:15)⁵⁵ is like it. It appears to me that at the time of

⁴⁷ For textual proof of these life spans see verses 11-23.

⁴⁸ I.E. suggests that Peleg was so called at his death because in his time the life span of man was cut in half. Peleg, as I.E. notes above (Gen. 10:25), means half. He now interprets *for in his days was the earth divided* (10:25) to mean in his days was the life span of the earth's inhabitants cut in half.

⁴⁹ According to Rabbinic tradition there are 70 primary languages.

⁵⁰ Listed in Chap. 10 of Genesis. Those who put forward this interpretation did this.

⁵¹ Listed among the descendants of Ham in Gen. 10:14.

⁵² They are the names of nations. Hence they can't count as two people. Thus we already have more than 70.

⁵³ Who were alive at the time of the building of the tower. Again we have more than 70.

⁵⁴ According to the *Seder Olam* the dispersion took place when Abraham was 48 years old. By then the world's population had grown to the number indicated by I.E. (Weiser).

⁵⁵ In Isaiah, I.E. offers two definitions of the word *urim*: (a) boundaries, i.e., countries or regions; (b) valleys. According to (a) the verse reads: in the regions, honor God. According to (b) the verse should read: In the valleys honor God. The same apparently applies to the term *Ur Chasdim*. Hence *Ur Chasdim* means the land of the Chaldees, or the valley of the Chaldees. In Isaiah, I.E. prefers interpretation (a).

Abraham's birth Ur of the Chaldees had another name since the Chaldees are descended from Nahor, the brother of Abraham,⁵⁶ and that in writing the Torah Moses used the name in vogue in his time when he cited Ur of the Chaldees. Proof that Abraham was born in Ur of the Chaldees can be found in the fact that Haran died there and Scripture says, *And Haran died...in the land of his nativity, in Ur of the Chaldees* (v. 20).⁵⁷

It is also possible that the Chaldees made a flame (altar) and the place thereof was called Ur (the flame, altar) of the Chaldees. In this instance Ur has the meaning of fire, as in *whose fire (ur) is in Zion* (Is. 31:9).⁵⁸

[28. IN THE PRESENCE OF.] In front of his father; i.e., Terah witnessed his death. *In the presence of Aaron their father* (Num. 3:4)⁵⁹ is analogous.

[29. AND THE NAME OF NAHOR'S WIFE, MILCAH.] The Bible gives the name of Nahor's wife in order to let us know the pedigree of Rebekah, Rachel and Leah.⁶⁰ Our sages, of blessed memory, identified Iscah with Sarah.⁶¹ If this is a tradition we will accept it.⁶²

Those who say that Abraham rather than Sarah was sterile are saying the opposite of what Scripture says.⁶³ Additional proof that they are

⁵⁶ Via his son Chesed. Cf. Gen. 22:22.

⁵⁷ I.E. interprets *his nativity* as referring to the entire family of Terah (Krinsky).

⁵⁸ I.E. earlier explains *Ur* as meaning a region or valley (see note 55). He now interprets it to mean a fire (altar).

⁵⁹ The texts literally state: before the face of. I.E. interprets this to mean in the presence of. Thus Haran died in the presence of Terah. Similarly Aaron witnessed the death of Nadab and Abihu (Krinsky).

⁶⁰ See Gen. 22:20-23.

⁶¹ *Sanhedrin* 69b.

⁶² There is no proof from Scripture that it is so; hence if it is an exegetical point we may dispute it. However, if it is a tradition passed on to the Talmudic sages, we must accept it.

⁶³ Scripture explicitly states in verse 30, *And Sarai was barren*.

wrong is the fact that Abraham sired Ishmael and had children with Keturah.

I do not find the explanation of those who say that Sarah was Abraham's sister to be acceptable.⁶⁴ If Sarah was really Abraham's sister, Scripture would have stated,⁶⁵ And Terah took Abram his son, and Sarai his daughter, the wife of Abram his son. Similarly if Sarah was the sister of Lot⁶⁶ the Bible would have stated, "and Sarai the daughter of his son," as it does in the case of Lot.⁶⁷

It is possible that Terah's son Nahor left for Haran before his father. On the other hand he may have left for Haran after his father went there.⁶⁸

It appears to me that the portion containing the command, *Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto the land that I will show thee* (Gen. 12:1), was conveyed to Abraham before what is recorded in the verse reading, *And Terah took Abram...Lot...Sarai...to go into the land of Canaan.*⁶⁹ Similarly elsewhere the Pentateuch states, *And the Lord spoke unto Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the tent of meeting, on the first day of the second month, in the second year after they were come out of the land of Egypt* (Num. 1:1); and then, *And it came to pass in the first month in the*

⁶⁴ They base themselves on Abraham's statement: *And moreover she (Sarai) is indeed my sister, the daughter of my father* (Gen. 20:12). I.E. in his comment on Gen. 20:12 argues that Abraham invented a fact in order to excuse his actions.

⁶⁵ In verse 31.

⁶⁶ If we identify Sarai with Iscah, then Sarai is Lot's sister, since Haran was the father of both Lot and Iscah (v. 29 and 31) (Cherez).

⁶⁷ The Bible states with regard to Lot, *And Terah took...Lot the son of Haran, his son's son* (v. 31). It does not say the same with regard to Sarai. It merely says, *and Sarai his daughter-in-law*.

⁶⁸ The Bible doesn't mention that Terah took Nahor as it does with regard to Abraham. However, we find Nahor's children living in Haran. Thus it appears that he, too, journeyed there, hence I.E.'s comment.

⁶⁹ Gen. 12:1 occurred before Gen. 11:31.

second year (Ex. 40:17).⁷⁰ Proof of the above⁷¹ is found in *And they went forth...to go into the land of Canaan* (v. 31). When Terah came to Haran, the place found favor in his eyes. He settled there and eventually died there. The general rule thus is that the Bible does not always list events in chronological order.

⁷⁰ *Prima facie* this is a difficult comment. Num. 1:1 follows Ex. 40:17; hence the verses are in chronological sequence. I.E. probably intended to cite Num. 9:1, rather than Ex. 40:17. The former literally reads: In the second year...in the first month. He apparently cited from memory and misquoted. Perhaps he wanted to note that Num. 7 records the setting up of the Tabernacle and the sacrifices then offered by the princes of the tribes. However, Ex. 40:17 tells us that the tabernacle was erected on the first day of the first month in the second year following the Exodus. We thus see that what is described in Num. 1 occurred after what is described in Num. 7 (Krinsky).

⁷¹ That *Get thee out*, etc., was told to Abraham before *And Terah took*, etc. If God had not yet told Abraham to go to Canaan, why did Terah take his family there? I.E. apparently believes that the impetus behind Terah's journey to Canaan was God's command to Abraham, recorded in Gen. 12:1 (Weiser).

CHAPTER 12

LEKH LEKHA

1. GET THEE OUT. God commanded Abraham while he was yet in Ur of the Chaldees to leave his country, his place of birth and also his father's house. The reason God told Abraham to leave his father's house is that the Lord knew that, although he set out for Canaan, Terah would settle in Haran.¹

Terah did not die until sixty years after Abraham left his father's house in Haran.² However, the Bible does not tell us how old he was when he left Ur of the Chaldees.³

After telling Abraham to go *unto the land that I will show thee*, God revealed his secret to him,⁴ for we read: *and they went forth to go into*

¹ Ibn Ezra implies that had Terah gone to Canaan then God would not have commanded Abraham to separate himself from his father.

² Terah was 70 when Abraham was born (Gen. 11:26). Abraham was 75 when he left Haran (Gen. 12:4). Terah was thus 145 when Abraham left him. Terah lived 205 years (Gen. 11:32). Hence Terah lived another 60 years after Abraham left Haran. Thus the command "Get thee out" could not have come after Terah's death, as a cursory reading of Scripture would indicate (Krinsky).

³ *He* refers to Abraham (Cherez). The Bible tells us how old Abraham was when he left Haran (v. 4) but does not tell us his age when he left Ur of the Chaldees. Had the Bible told us this, we would then know how long Abraham dwelt in Haran. Weiser explains *he* as referring to Terah. I.E.'s point remains the same.

⁴ He told him which land He had in mind.

the land of Canaan (v. 5). It is also possible that *I will show thee* refers to *for all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it* (Gen. 13:15).⁵

3. THEM THAT BLESS THEE. This word is in the plural.

AND HIM THAT CURSETH THEE. This word is in the singular.

5. THEIR SUBSTANCE. Their cattle.⁶ *Rekhusham* (their substance) in *And the land was not able to bear them...for their* (rekhusham) *substance* (i.e., their cattle) *was great* (Gen. 13:6) is similar.

AND THE SOULS THAT THEY HAD GOTTEN IN HARAN. Servants born into their household.⁷ It is also possible that *had gotten* means bought.⁸ *Hath gotten* in *My power and the might of my hand hath gotten me this wealth* (Deut. 8:17) is similar. Others say that *the souls that they had gotten in Haran* refers to the people to whom Abraham showed the truth, to worship God.⁹

[AND THEY WENT FORTH TO GO.] To the place that God had told them to go.

⁵ The meaning of the phrase is: the land which I will show thee will I give to thee (Cohen). Abraham went from place to place. When he came to Canaan God then told him, this is the land that I have chosen for you (Cherez). According to this interpretation God did not at this point reveal to Abraham his ultimate destination.

⁶ The term used by Ibn Ezra is *mikneh*, which includes cows, sheep, asses and camels.

⁷ *Had gotten* thus means: were born to them (Weiser).

⁸ Previously Ibn Ezra explained *gotten* as meaning born. He now explains it to mean bought (Weiser).

⁹ *Bereshit Rabbah* 39:14. Cf. Rashi.

[6. SHECHEM.] Shechem¹⁰ was the name used by Moses because it was the name by which the city was known in his time. Shechem was not yet born in Abraham's day.¹¹

TEREBINTH. *Elon* (terebinth) has the same meaning as *elah* (terebinth).¹² They are trees. Others say that *elon* means a field,¹³ as in *unto El paran* (Gen. 14:6).

MOREH. Some identify him with Mamre, the confederate of Abraham. However, it is possible they are not to be so identified and Elon Moreh is the name of a place.

AND THE CANAANITE WAS THEN IN THE LAND. It is possible that the Canaanites seized the land of Canaan from some other tribe at that time.¹⁴ Should this interpretation be incorrect, then there is a secret meaning to the text. Let the one who understands it remain silent.¹⁵

7. AND THE LORD APPEARED. In a prophetic vision. *Va-yera* (appeared) is a *nifal*. It is vocalized with a *tzere* to make up for the

¹⁰ Like Ur of the Chaldees.

¹¹ According to Ibn Ezra, Shechem was named after Shechem son of Hamor. Cf. Gen. 34:2.

¹² Cf. Is. 6:13 and Hos. 4:13. *Elon* is a type of *elah* (Krinsky).

¹³ That is, the field of Paran, as seen from Gen. 14:6. See also Onkelos on this verse.

¹⁴ The Canaanite was then, not before this, in the land. Cf. Rashi: "The Canaanite was then engaged in conquering the land of Israel from the seed of Shem."

¹⁵ The verse implies that the Canaanite was in the land then but not now (Krinsky). Since the Canaanite was in the land during the days of Moses, this clause would appear to be post-Mosaic.

dagesh which should have been placed in the *resh* as compensation for the missing *nun* of the *nifal* conjugation.¹⁶

WHO APPEARED UNTO HIM. *Nireh* is a participle belonging to the above-mentioned conjugation (*nifal*). *Na'aseh* (prepared) in *Now that which was prepared* (*na'aseh*) for one day (Neh. 5:18) is similar.

8. AND HE REMOVED. *Va-yatek* (and he removed) is a transitive verb, in the *hifil*. However, *ve-yetak* (removed) in *Or shall the rock be removed* (*ve-yetak*) out of its place (Job 18:4) is intransitive. The object of *And he removed* is *his tent*.¹⁷ *His tent* is also the object of *he pitched*. The meaning (of *va-yatek*) is: he caused to move. *Va-yet* (he pitched) is vocalized with a *tzere* to make up for the missing *nun* which is the first root letter of *va-yet* (he pitched).¹⁸ *Ve-yez* (is dashed) in *And their lifeblood is dashed* (*ve-yez*) (Is. 63:3) is similar.¹⁹ Both are transitive verbs.²⁰

[ON THE WEST.] The word *mi-yam* means on the west. *Yam* (sea) means west because the great Spanish Sea (*yam*, i.e., the Mediterranean) is the western border of the land of Israel. The latter sea is not the Atlantic, the Atlantic being far from the aforementioned country.

¹⁶ The *nun* of the *nifal* is omitted in the imperfect. Hence all imperfect *nifal* forms have a *dagesh* in the first letter of the root, i.e., *yikkatev*, rather than *yikhatev*. However, the *resh* of *ra'ah* (saw), from the root *resh*, *alef*, *heh*, cannot receive a *dagesh*. Hence it is preceded by a *tzere*, rather than a *chirik*. *Va-yera* is an imperfect changed into a perfect by the *vav* converse.

¹⁷ Since *va-yatek* (and he removed) is transitive, it does not mean he removed himself but he removed his tent.

¹⁸ The root of *va-yet* (pitched) is *nun*, *tet*, *ayin*. We would have expected the word to be vocalized with a *chirik*. Compare, *va-yitteh*, hence I.E.'s comment.

¹⁹ The root of *ve-yez* (is dashed) is *nun*, *zayin*, *heh*.

²⁰ *Va-yatek* and *va-yet* (Krinsky) or *va-yet* and *ve-yez* (Cherez).



Abraham journeyed from east of Beth-el westward until Ai was east of his camp.²¹

[AND CALLED UPON THE NAME OF THE LORD.] This means he prayed there. It may also mean that he called upon men to worship the Lord.

9. TOWARD THE SOUTH. *Negev* means south and it means the same in Aramaic.²² *Negev* in Aramaic means dry as we see from Onkelos, who renders *the waters were dried up* (Gen. 8:13) as *negivu mayya*. The south is called *Negev* (dry) because it is hot there, and the heat parches the land. This is the way *for that thou hast set me in the Southlands* (eretz ha-negev)²³ *give me therefore springs of water* (Josh. 15:19) should be understood.

10. AND THERE WAS A FAMINE IN THE LAND. In the land of Canaan.

11. WHEN HE WAS COME NEAR. When he caused his camp to come near.²⁴ On the other hand, *hikriv* (when he came near) may be intransitive.²⁵ These two interpretations are possible because there are verbs which can be transitive and intransitive.

21 I.E. assumes that Abraham journeyed from east to west. He crossed over Ai but stopped before Beth-el. Thus Beth-el was on his west and Ai on his east. However, the interpretation presents a problem. Shechem lies north of Beth-el and Ai. Thus Abraham traveled south not west.

22 I.E.'s point is that *negev* is an Aramaic word.

23 That is, *eretz ha-negev* means a dry land.

24 I.E. takes *hikriv* (he came near) to be a transitive verb, its meaning being: when he caused to come near, i.e., when he caused his camp to come near.

25 In this case *hikriv* is to be rendered, when he came near.

[NOW.] *Na* means now. *Na* in *Behold now* (na), *I am old* (Gen. 27:2), and *Woe* (na) *unto us* (Lam. 5:16)²⁶ are similar. The reverse of Hebrew is the case in Arabic.²⁷

[BEHOLD NOW, I KNOW.] There were women as beautiful as Sarah in her native country,²⁸ but in Egypt and the southern land there was none as beautiful. The reason for this is that people's appearance is shaped by the climate.²⁹

[BUT THEE THEY WILL KEEP ALIVE.] They will provide for all of your needs. Abraham said this because those were days of famine.

13. [THOU ART MY SISTER.] *Achoti* (my sister) is penultimately accented³⁰ because the word which follows it, *at* (thou), is accented on the first letter. *Kara laylah* (he called night) (Gen. 1:5) is similar.³¹ The preceding is a general rule in Hebrew grammar.³²

The *tav* of *at* (thou) receives a *dagesh* to make up for the missing *nun*, for the word *at* (thou) comes from the same root as *ani* (I).³³

²⁶ According to Ibn Ezra this should be rendered: woe now unto us.

²⁷ The Arabic word for now is *malan*, rather than *malna* (Weiser).

²⁸ Scripture emphasizes *now I know*, i.e., before I didn't. This is so because in the country from which she came there were other beautiful women. In Egypt Sarah's beauty stood out.

²⁹ According to I.E. the climate of southern countries is not conducive to the development of beautiful women.

³⁰ Ordinarily the accent would be placed on the last syllable.

³¹ Ordinarily the accent would be placed on the last syllable of *kara*.

³² When the cantillical notes connect two words and the second word is penultimately accented, so is the first word even though it is ordinarily ultimately accented.

³³ Hence thou in the feminine should be *ant*, in the masculine *antah* (Netter). The printed editions read, the word *attah* comes from the same root as *ani*. *Vat. Ebr.* 38 reads, the word *at* comes from the same root as *ani*. Since I.E. deals with the feminine, the reading of *Vat. Ebr.* 38 is to be preferred.

BECAUSE OF THEE. *Bi-glalekh* (because of thee) and *ba-avurekh* (for thy sake) always have a *bet* prefixed to each.³⁴ The poet who omits this *bet* errs.³⁵

[THAT IT MAY BE WELL WITH ME.] They will give me gifts and presents. And so it is written, *And he dealt well with Abram for her sake; and he had sheep, and oxen, and he-asses, and men-servants, and maid-servant, and she-asses, and camels* (v. 16).

[15.] AND PRAISED. The *dagesh* which should have been placed in the first *lamed* of *va-yehalelu*³⁶ (and praised) is omitted in order to simplify the word's pronunciation.³⁷ *Va-etpalelah* (and I prayed) (Dan. 9:4) is identical.³⁸

AND THE WOMAN WAS TAKEN. *Va-tukkach* (and she was taken) is a *hofal*. This is so even though it is not found in the *hifil*.³⁹ *Va-*

³⁴ The forms *gelalekh* (*gelal*) or *avurekh* (*avur*) are not used.

³⁵ Literally, turns aside from discretion. Ibn Ezra uses a term from Prov. 11:22, *As a ring of gold in a swine's snout, So is a fair woman that turneth aside from discretion*. He implies that the poet who deliberately misuses language is like a fair woman who turns aside from discretion. The reference might be to Rabbi Simon ben Isaac of Mayence, an eleventh century liturgical poet who wrote, *avur ki fanah yom* (now that the day has declined). He should have written *ba-avur fanah yom*. Rabbi Simon's composition is found in the concluding service of the Day of Atonement (Cherez). It should be noted that I.E. employs a pun. *Shar* is a poet. *Sar* means turneth aside, hence *ha-shar sar*, the poet turneth aside.

³⁶ *Va-yehalelu* (they praised) is a *pi'el*. According to the rules of Hebrew grammar a *dagesh* is placed in the middle letter of the root in a verb conjugated in the *pi'el*.

³⁷ *Va-yehalelu* is, as noted above, a *pi'el* and should thus have a *dagesh* in its middle root letter. However, a *dagesh* would double the *lamed*. Thus the word would read as if there were three *lameds* in it, viz., *va-yehallelu*, and complicate its pronunciation.

³⁸ *Va-etpalelah* is in the *hitpa'el*. Here, too, a *dagesh* is placed in the middle root letter. However, it is omitted in our word for the reasons indicated in note 37.

³⁹ *Hofal* is the passive form of *hifil*. If a word is found in the passive voice we would expect it to be found in the active voice as well. However, this is not the case with the root *lamed*, *kof*, *chet*, which is found in the *hofal* and not in the *hifil*.

tushlekhi (but thou wast cast out) (Ezek. 16:5) is an example of a *hofal* wherein the entire root is present.⁴⁰

17. AND THE LORD PLAGUED PHARAOH...BECAUSE OF SARAI. The term *al devar* means because. *Al devar*'s meaning is *al zeh ha-davar* (on account of this thing).⁴¹

[18. THOU TELL ME.] The root of *higgadta* (thou tell) is *nun, gimel, dalet*.

[19. SO I TOOK HER TO BE MY WIFE.] This indicates that Pharaoh took her to be his wife, to sleep with her. God brought plagues upon him to prevent him from touching her. The Lord sent these plagues to protect the wife of the one whom he loved. The plagues were so severe that Pharaoh was unable to touch Sarah. The following is analogous: *When thou goest forth to battle against thine enemies...and seest among the captives a woman of goodly form, and thou hast a desire unto her, and takest her to thee to wife*. The Bible then says, *then thou shalt bring her home to thy house; and she shall shave her head*. It then concludes, *and after that thou mayest go in unto her* (Deut. 21:10-13).⁴²

⁴⁰ In the root *lamed, kof, chet* (take) the *lamed* drops out in the imperfect. In *shin, lamed, caf* (cast) no letter drops out. It belongs to those verbs classified as *shelemim*, whole roots.

⁴¹ Hence *al devar* means because. According to the Midrash *al devar Sarai* means according to Sarah's word. (Cf. Rashi.) Hence I.E.'s comment.

⁴² Ibn Ezra argues that wife here has the meaning of a sexual partner as it does in Deuteronomy. For it first says, "and takest her to thee to wife" and concludes with "thou mayest go into her" (Weiser). Krinsky and Cherez argue that I.E. was disturbed by the term *took her* which implies that Pharaoh had intercourse with Sarah. Hence I.E. points out that Scripture is merely relating Pharaoh's intentions; i.e., he *took her* to be his wife but God intervened before he had a chance to sleep with her. I.E. quotes Deut. 21:10 where "and thou takest her to wife" similarly does not mean "and sleeps with her" because one cannot have intercourse with a captive woman until certain procedures described in Deut. 21 are first undergone.

[AND GO THY WAY.] The *vav* of *va-lekh* (and go thy way) is vocalized with a *kamatz*⁴³ because it is prefixed to a word with a cantilical note that ends a phrase. The *vav* of *va-yayin* (and wine) in *bread and wine* (Gen. 14:18) is similar.

20. AND THEY BROUGHT HIM ON THE WAY. They honorably escorted him.⁴⁴ *And Abraham went with them*⁴⁵ *to bring them on the way* (Gen. 18:16) is similar.

[AND PHARAOH GAVE MEN CHARGE CONCERNING HIM.] It appears to me that this clause indicates that Pharaoh issued a command to his people concerning Abraham. He warned and charged that it be announced that no one harm Abraham and his wife.⁴⁶

⁴³ The *vav* would ordinarily be vocalized with a *sheva*.

⁴⁴ *Va-yeshallechu oto* (and they brought him on the way) might conceivably be translated as they sent him away; i.e., they expelled him, hence I.E.'s comment.

⁴⁵ Abraham obviously did not expel the angels, he accompanied them out of respect.

⁴⁶ In other words, *gave men charge concerning him* is not to be connected to *and they brought him on the way*. *Gave men charge*, etc., means he issued commands that Abraham not be molested; *and they brought him on the way* means they escorted him. I.E. interprets this verse thus because he believes that the word *tzivvah* (commanded, charged) with the preposition *al* (on) involves a prohibition. Cf. I.E.'s comments on Gen. 2:16 (Filwarg).

CHAPTER 13

[1. AND ABRAM WENT UP.] I have grammatically explained the word *va-ya'al* (and went up) in my *Book of Foundation*.¹

2. AND ABRAM WAS VERY RICH. *Ve-avram kaved me'od* (literally, Abram was very heavy) means that Abraham had great wealth. Whoever is laden with riches moves heavily (with difficulty).² Don't you see that the Hebrew word for honor (*kavod*) comes from the same root as the word for heavy (*koved*) in *A stone is heavy* (*koved even*) (Prov. 27:3). Conversely, the word for shame (*kalon*) comes from the same root as the word for light (*kal*). Compare, *light of foot* (*kal be-raglav*) (II Sam. 2:18).³ Abraham possessed herds of cattle and a large amount of gold and silver.⁴

3. ON HIS JOURNEYS. Abraham made many stops on his journey from the south to Beth-el which is in the north. He came *unto the place of the altar* (v. 4) to give thanks to God for ensuring his safe return.

5. AND TENTS. I believe that *ohel* (tent), in the singular, follows the paradigm of *kodesh* (holy). It is always found in Scripture following

¹ *Va-ya'al* (and he went up) is short for *va-ya'aleh*.

² Hence the use of the term *kaved* (heavy) for rich.

³ We thus see that the root *caf, bet, dalet* in its various forms means heavy. *Kavod* (honor) really means heavy with glory. Similarly *kaved* means heavy with possessions. Conversely, *kalon* comes from "light," i.e., not burdened with glory.

⁴ Hence the Bible describes Abraham as being *kaved*, heavy because of his possessions (Krinsky).

this form.⁵ In the plural, its *alef* is vocalized with a *chataf kamatz*, as in the verse *ye shall dwell in tents* (Jer. 35:7).⁶ It is vocalized like the word *kodashim* in *he shall not eat of the holy things* (ba-kodashim) (Lev. 22:4). However, when the *alef* of the Hebrew plural for tents is vocalized with a *cholam*, the singular is vocalized like *goral* (lot).⁷ The latter is so even though this form for tent (*ohal*) is not found in Scripture.⁸

6. TOGETHER. *Yachdav* (together) can refer to two (as in our verse) or to many, as in *And all the people answered together* (*yachdav*) (Ex. 19:8). This word does not follow the rules of Hebrew grammar.⁹ *Yachdav* is not synonymous with *yachad* (together). *Yachdav* means acting like one person.¹⁰

[7. AND THE CANAANITE AND THE PERIZZITE DWELT THEN IN THE LAND.] This is to be understood as its counterpart (Gen. 12:6).¹¹ It is possible that Perizzi was a son of Canaan and was

⁵ *Kodesh* is vocalized *cholam, segol*. Similarly, *ohel*. The latter is the term used in the Bible for tent.

⁶ The plural of *kodesh* is similarly vocalized with a *chataf kamatz* beneath the *kof*.

⁷ Vocalized *cholam kamatz*. In our verse tents (*ohalim*) is vocalized with a *cholam*. Hence its singular cannot be *ohel*, for the singular of *ohalim* is *ohal* (*cholam kamatz*). I. E.'s point is that the Hebrew word for tent can come in two forms, *ohel* or *ohal*.

⁸ If this is so, we would expect to find the form *ohal* in Scripture. However, it does not appear there. Nevertheless, I.E. insists that what he says is so.

⁹ It does not have a *yod* between the *chet* and the *vav* as do all other similar plural forms (Weiser).

¹⁰ That is, their individuality is blended, as in *And all the people answered together* (*yachdav*) (Ex. 19:8), which means that all the people answered as if they were one person. *Yachad* implies two people acting at the same time, but each one by himself (Weiser).

¹¹ That is, I.E.'s comments on *And the Canaanite was then in the land* (Gen. 12:6) also apply here.

included in the list of Canaan's sons under a different name. He, like the prophet Samuel's son¹² and grandfather,¹³ had two names.¹⁴

9. THEN I WILL GO TO THE RIGHT. *Ve-e'minah* (I will go to the right) comes from the same root as *yamin* (right).

[THEN I WILL GO TO THE LEFT.] The *alef* of the noun *semol* (left) is enunciated in the verb *ve-asme'ilah* (then I will go to the left). Now this *alef* is missing in the word *hasmili* (direct thyself to the left) in *Go thee one way to the right, or direct thyself to the left* (Ezek. 21:21). Thus, we cannot determine whether the *alef* is part of the root of *semol* or not.

10. THE PLAIN OF THE JORDAN. *Kikkar* (plain) means an area with plants. The *caf* is doubled in *kikkar*.¹⁵ On the other hand, it is possible that one *caf* has been dropped in *kar nirchav* (large pastures) (Is. 30:23).¹⁶ Similarly *bat* (apple of) in *bat ayin* (the apple of the eye) (Ps. 17:8) is short for *bavat* in *bavat eno* (the apple of his eye) (Zechariah 2:12).¹⁷

¹² I Sam. 8:2 states, *Now the name of his (Samuel's) first-born was Joel*. However, I Chron. 6:13 states, *And the sons of Samuel: the first-born Vashni*. Thus Samuel's first-born had two names.

¹³ The name of Samuel's great grandfather is given as Elihu (I Sam. 1:1), Eliab (I Chron. 6:12) and Eliel (I Chron. 6:19). Thus he had three names. All these sources agree that Samuel's grandfather's name was Jeroham. Therefore I.E. must have meant Samuel's great-grandfather rather than his grandfather. Krinsky and Weiser suggest that grandfather is short for great-grandfather.

¹⁴ Gen. 10:15-18 lists the 10 sons of Canaan. The Perizzites are not mentioned. I.E. surmises that he is mentioned under a different name.

¹⁵ The word for an area with plants being *kar*, as in Is. 30:23. Our word reads *kikkar* because the *caf* is doubled.

¹⁶ The basic word being *kikkar*.

¹⁷ A *bet* has been dropped in *bat*, for the full word is *bavat*, with two *bets* (Krinsky). Others interpret: "Similarly we do not know whether a *bet* has been dropped out in *bat*, or a *bet* is doubled in *bavat*" (Weiser, Chercz). The text supports Krinsky.

WELL WATERED. *Mashkeh* (watered) is masculine; *khullah* (well) is feminine.¹⁸ *A fire not blown by man shall consume him* (Job 20:26)¹⁹ is similar.

BEFORE THE LORD DESTROYED SODOM AND GOMORRAH. *Shachet* (destroyed) is an infinitive in the *pi'el*. The meaning of *li-fene shachet* is: before the Lord destroyed.

11. AND LOT JOURNEYED. From the east,²⁰ for Sodom is west of Beth-el.

12. AND MOVED HIS TENT. Pitched his tent.

13. NOW THE MEN OF SODOM WERE WICKED. To their fellow man. This is stated in Ezekiel, viz., *neither did she (Sodom) strengthen the hand of the poor and needy* (Ezek. 16:49).

15. FOR ALL THE LAND WHICH THOU SEEST, TO THEE WILL I GIVE IT. By word.²¹ *And he shall put them (Israel's sins and transgressions) upon the head of the goat* (Lev. 16:21) is similar.²²

¹⁸ If Scripture were consistent the phrase would have read *khullah mashkah*.

¹⁹ *Te'okhlehu* (shall consume him) is feminine; *nuppach* (blown) is masculine. Hence Scripture uses both a masculine and feminine word in reference to the same thing (fire). It does the same in our verse with regard to *kikkar*.

²⁰ This is I.E.'s translation of *va-yissa lot mi-kedem* (and Lot journeyed east). According to I.E., Lot journeyed west to Sodom, away from Abraham who was in Beth-el. The problem with I.E.'s interpretation is that Sodom lies east, not west of Beth-el. Because of this difficulty the Midrash homiletically interprets the clause to mean: He removed himself from the ancient one (*mi-kedem*) of the universe saying, I desire neither Abraham or his God (*Bereshit Rabbah* 41:7). As to the problem raised by Sodom lying east of Beth-el, Weiser suggests that in order to reach Sodom from Beth-el one had to journey westward first and then eastward. However, this interpretation is forced. M.S. Siegal in his commentary on Genesis suggests that *mi-kedem* here has the meaning of eastward, or that *mi-kedem* is short for *mi-kedem levet-el*; i.e., Lot journeyed east of Beth-el, where Abram had pitched his tent. As to I.E., he most probably was not aware that Sodom lies east and not west of Beth-el.

²¹ Abraham did not take actual possession of Canaan.

²² We thus see that the term "give" can be applied to a verbal statement (Weiser).

In this chapter Scripture informs us that the terebinths of Mamre are located in Hebron.

CHAPTER 14

1. KING OF GOIIM. Goiim like Elam¹ is the name of a state. Elam must be the name of a state because *shushan ha-birah*, which means *Shushan the palace*, was located in it.² On the other hand, *king of Goiim*³ may be rendered as king of nations, Scripture not stating their names. The meaning of the verse is that Tidal was king over nations other than Shinar, Ellasar and Elam.

3. ALL THESE CAME AS ALLIES. *Chaveru* (came as allies) is in the *kal*.

THE VALE OF SIDDIM. *Siddim* means the same⁴ as *sid* (plaster) in *and plaster them with plaster* (ba-sid)⁵ (Deut. 27:2) and *sad* (plaster) in

¹ Which is also mentioned in our verse.

² Dan 8:2 reads: *I was in shushan the castle* (shushan ha-birah) *which is in the province of Elam*. We thus see that Elam was the name of the state and Shushan the name of the palace.

³ *Goy* in Hebrew means a nation.

⁴ *Sid* means lime, whitewash or plaster. Hence the valley of Siddim means the valley of plaster. It was so called because of the plaster pits found there.

⁵ Spelled *sin*, *yod*, *dalet*. I.E.'s point is that *siddim* means the same as *sid*. However, they come from different roots. *Sid* in Deut. 27:2 comes from the root *sin*, *vav*, *dalet*. *Siddim* comes from *sin*, *dalet*, *dalet*, which is also the root of the word *sad* in Job 13:27. *Siddim* cannot be the plural of *sid* (Deut. 27:2) because it is spelled without a *yod* and has a *dagesh* in its *dalet*. I.E.'s point is that *sad* and *sid* mean the same although they come from different roots (Weiser).

Thou putttest my feet also in the plaster (ba-sad)⁶ (Job 13:27). *Sad*, *siddim*, is like *pat* (morsel of bread), *pittim*.⁷

VALE. The word vale is to be understood as if written twice. It is like the word *al* (not) in *O Lord, rebuke me not (al) in Thine anger; Neither (ve-al) chasten me in Thy wrath* (Ps. 6:2).⁸ Our verse should be read as follows: All these came as allies unto the vale of Siddim, the same is the vale of the Salt Sea.⁹

4. [AND IN THE THIRTEENTH YEAR THEY REBELLED.] *U-shelosh esreh* (and the thirteenth) should be interpreted *u-ve-shelosh esreh* (and in the thirteenth).¹⁰ It is similar to the word *sheshet* (six) in *for in six (sheshet) days the Lord made the heaven and earth* (Ex. 20:11).¹¹

However, the author of the *Seder Olam* did not interpret it this way. He combined the years mentioned in our verse.¹² His mind was greater than ours.

⁶ This is I.E.'s interpretation of the verse. In Job he explains the verse to mean God had plastered Job's feet with whitewash so that He could follow Job's every step. I.E. points out that *siddim* is the plural of *sad* in Job. The *sin* and *samach* interchange.

⁷ We would expect the plural of *sad* (Job. 13:27) to be *saddim*. I.E. points out that this is not necessarily so. Thus the plural of *pat* is *pittim* and not *pattim*. Similarly the plural of *sad* is *siddim* and not *saddim* (Krinsky and Cherez).

⁸ Here, too, the word *al* is to be read as if written twice. It should be noted that the word *al* does appear twice in our verse. I.E. probably had Ps. 38:2 in mind. There the text literally reads, *O, Lord, rebuke me not (al) in Thine anger, chasten me in Thy wrath*. I.E. says that the verse should be read, *O Lord rebuke me not (al) in Thine anger, chasten me not (al) in Thy wrath*. I.E. probably cited from memory and misquoted.

⁹ The text literally reads: *the vale of Siddim, the same is the Salt Sea*.

¹⁰ The verse literally reads: *U-shelosh esreh shanah* (and thirteen years). I.E. says, *u-shelosh esreh* should be read as if a *bet* were prefixed to *shelosh*, i.e., *u-ve-shelosh esreh*.

¹¹ The verse literally reads: *for six days the Lord made heaven and earth*. Thus *sheshet* is to be read as if written *ve-sheshet* (in six).

¹² Cf. *Seder Olam* I. The *Seder Olam* interprets *u-shelosh esreh shanah* to mean, and 13 years; i.e., they rebelled 13 years. It adds these 13 years to the 12 years mentioned previously in our verse and claims that the Bible deals with a 25-year period, 12 of service and 13 years of rebellion.

5. THE REPHAIM. They were called *Rephaim* (ghosts) because their appearance was so terrifying that whoever saw them died and was considered to be one of the *Rephaim*, one of the dead.¹³

THE EMIM. They were so called because they were frightening.¹⁴

6. IN THEIR MOUNT SEIR. *Be-hareram* (in their mount) is in the *pi'el*. Its meaning is: when they went up to Mount Seir.¹⁵ It is like the word *be-dabberam* (when they spoke) (Ex. 7:7).¹⁶

9. AGAINST CHEDORLAOMER. With Chedorlaomer.¹⁷

10. PITS. *Be'er* (pit) in the Bible means a bubbling well. Its (pits) vocalization is exceptional because it is in the construct.¹⁸

AND THEY FELL THERE. They deliberately fell there, in their desire to escape.¹⁹ *And when Moses heard it, he fell upon his face* (Num. 16:4) is similar.²⁰

FLED TO THE MOUNTAIN. The phrase *herah nasu* is to be rendered: fled to the mountain. The word *herah* (to the mountain) is an irregular form.²¹

¹³ Rephaim has the meaning of dead, shades or ghosts. Cf. Is. 14:9. They were called *Rephaim* because those who saw them were frightened to death. *Rephaim* were thus considered to be death-inducing.

¹⁴ *Emah* means fear.

¹⁵ I.E. explains that *be-hareram* is not a noun with a pronominal suffix meaning their mountain. He holds that it is a verb with the pronominal suffix.

¹⁶ Which is a *pi'el* verb with a pronominal suffix.

¹⁷ The Hebrew has *et Chedorlaomer*. *Et* usually indicates the object, hence I.E.'s comment that *et* here has the meaning of *im* (with).

¹⁸ With *chemar* (slime). *Be'er* is vocalized *sheva tzere*. In our verse it is vocalized *segol*, *chataf segol*. I.E. points out that this is so because the word is in the construct with *chemar* (slime). In other words, when *be'er* refers to live wells it is vocalized *sheva tzere*; when it refers to pits it is vocalized *segol*, *chataf segol* (Krinsky, Netter, Cherez). Or what I.E. means is that the word's vowels change because it is in the construct (Filwarg).

¹⁹ That is, they hid themselves.

²⁰ Moses willingly fell on his face.

²¹ We would expect *he-harah* (Weiser).

12. WHO DWELT IN SODOM. Lot was dwelling in Sodom on that day.²²

[13. AND THERE CAME ONE THAT HAD ESCAPED.] *Palit* (one that had escaped) refers to a Sodomite who escaped and saved himself. *Palit in one that had escaped (palit) out of Jerusalem came unto me* (Ezek. 33:21) is similar.

There is a Midrashic interpretation concerning the escapee.²³

14. HE LED FORTH HIS TRAINED MEN. He armed them.²⁴ Compare, *ve-harek* (arm) in, *Arm (ve-harek) with the spear* (Ps. 35:3).²⁵ Others say that *va-yarek* refers to the unsheathing of the sword. Compare, *They empty themselves (yariku) upon the earth* (Eccles. 11:3), and *emptied (merikim) their sacks* (Gen. 42:35).²⁶ A spear also has a sheath.²⁷

HIS TRAINED MEN. Abraham had trained them many times for battle. This is the meaning of the term *chanikhav* (his trained men) even though Scripture does not previously note that Abraham trained young men for war. Those who identify Abraham's trained men with his servant Eliezer on the basis of the numerical value of the latter's name are indulging in Midrash,²⁸ as Scripture does not speak in *gematria* (numericals). With this type of interpretation one can interpret any name

²² His tent was usually outside of Sodom, cf. Gen. 13:12 (Weiser). Krinsky suggests that I.E. intends to say that Lot's tent was close to Sodom on that day, or by that day he had become a dweller in Sodom. On the other hand, Filwarg suggests that I.E. is trying to explain why *yoshev* (dwelt; literally, dwells) is in the present when all the verbs pertaining to this incident are in the past. I.E.'s point is that "dwelling" is to be understood as: was dwelling.

²³ The Midrash identifies the escapee as Og, King of Bashan, the same individual who escaped the flood by hanging on to Noah's ark. Cf. *Bereshit Rabbah* 42:8.

²⁴ Thus *va-yarek* (he led forth) means he armed.

²⁵ I.E.'s translation of this verse.

²⁶ According to this interpretation *va-yarek et chanikhav* (he led forth his trained men) means, he gave his trained men unsheathed swords (Krinsky).

²⁷ Hence *ve-harek chanit* (Ps. 35:3) may be rendered as unsheath the spear.

²⁸ Interpreted numerically, Eliezer comes to 318. Hence the Midrash identifies him with the 318 men mentioned in our verse. Cf. *Bereshit Rabbah* 43:2, 44:9.

as he wishes, both in a positive and a negative manner. Eliezer is to be taken literally.²⁹

18. AND MELCHIZEDEK. He was so called because he was king (*melech*) over a righteous (*tzedek*) place.³⁰ Some identify Melchizedek with Shem.³¹

SALEM. This is Jerusalem. *In Salem also is set His tabernacle, And His dwelling place in Zion* (Ps. 76:3) is proof of this.

AND HE WAS PRIEST. This is rendered as Onkelos does.³² Similarly, every time the word "priest" (*kohen*) is found in Scripture.³³ *That they may minister unto Me* (ve-khihanu li) (Ex. 28:41) is proof of this.

The meaning of *al divrati Malkitzedek* (after the manner of Melchizedek) (Ps. 110:4) will be found in my commentary on Psalms.³⁴ Melchizedek spoke properly and did the right thing in first blessing Abraham³⁵ because he volunteered to rescue the captives.³⁶ He then blessed God for aiding Abraham and delivering Abraham's adversaries into his hands.

20. HATH DELIVERED. *Miggen* (hath delivered) means handed over. *Temaggeneka* (will she bestow on thee) in *A crown of glory will*

²⁹ It is a proper name and not to be interpreted numerically.

³⁰ Salem is Jerusalem. Jerusalem is known as *the city of righteousness* (Is. 1:26).

³¹ *Bereshit Rabbah* 56; *Nedarim* 32b.

³² He ministered.

³³ It means ministers (Cherez).

³⁴ Ibn Ezra in Ps. 110:4 explains that God promised David that Israel would wage war and David would receive a tithe of the spoils as Melchizedek did (i.e., after the manner of Melchizedek).

³⁵ Before blessing God.

³⁶ According to the Talmud *Nedarim* 32b, Melchizedek acted improperly in blessing Abraham before God and was punished for it by having the priesthood taken away from his descendants. The Talmud derives this from *al divrati Melchizedek*, which it interprets to mean because of the improper words spoken by Melchizedek. I.E. hints that the latter phrase cannot be explained this way because Melchizedek spoke and acted properly.

she bestow on thee (temaggeneka) (Prov. 4:9) is similar. The *mem* of *miggen* is a root letter.

Abraham gave a tithe out of respect for God. He found no one worthier than Melchizedek to bestow his tithe on.

22. I HAVE LIFTED UP MY HAND. This indicates an oath. It is like, *For I lift up my hand to heaven*, etc. (Deut. 32:40).

[GOD MOST HIGH.] For behold, I have used the same name for God in my oath as this priest (Melchizedek) when he blessed me.³⁷

23. THAT I WILL NOT TAKE A THREAD. That with which garments are sewn.

A SHOE-LATCHET. A strap used to tie a shoe.

24. SAVE ONLY. Save only that which the young men took. This refers to what Abraham's servants ate.³⁸

³⁷ Ibn Ezra explains why Abraham referred to the Lord as *God Most High* (El Elyon). He did this out of respect for Melchizedek, who used the term *El Elyon* in referring to God.

³⁸ *Young men* thus refers to Abraham's servants (Weiser).

CHAPTER 15

1. IN A VISION. A prophetic vision.

[I AM THY SHIELD.] I was your shield and saved you from the kings. I will also reward you because, of your own free will, leading a small force and relying on Me, you saved your nephew.

[2. CHILDLESS.] The *yod* of *ariri* (childless) is like the *yod* of *achzari* (cruel).¹ The *yod* is dropped in the plural. Compare, *they shall be childless* (*aririm*)² (Lev. 20:21). Its meaning is as Onkelos explains it.³

HE THAT SHALL BE POSSESSOR OF MY HOUSE. *Meshek* (possessor of) follows the paradigm of *meches* (levy) (Num. 31:28). It has a root whose second and third letters are identical. It comes from the same root as *shokek*⁴ (leap) in *leap upon it* (Is. 33:4). It means the same as the word *devek* (glue)⁵ and is also vocalized with a *segol*.⁶

¹ It indicates a state (Weiser). It is not a root letter (Krinsky).

² The plural is *aririm*, not *aririyyim* (Weiser). The point is, even though childless is always written *ariri* and never *arir*, the second *yod* never appears in the plural (Krinsky).

³ Onkelos translates *ariri* as childless.

⁴ Its root is *shin*, *kof*, *kof*.

⁵ *Meshek* is like *devek*; both indicate attachment and both are vocalized *segol*, *segol*. According to Cherez, I.E. similarly understands *shokek* in Is. 33:4. In Zephaniah 2:9, I.E. explains *ben meshek* as one who never leaves the house.

⁶ It should be noted that *Vat. Ebr.* 38 omits "with a *segol*." It reads: it means the same as glue.

The word *ben* is to be read as if written twice. The verse is to read as follows: *and he that shall be possessor of my house* (*ben meshek beti*) is Eliezer, a native of Damascus (*ben damesek Eliezer*).⁷

4. OF THY OWN BOWELS. A euphemism for the sexual organ. Bowels is used as a euphemism because the male member is close to them.

6. RIGHTEOUSNESS. Compare, *And it shall be righteousness unto us* (Deut. 6:25). *Tzedakah* (righteousness) is a synonym for justice.⁸ However, in Rabbinic literature *tzedakah* has a different meaning.⁹

7. THAT BROUGHT THEE OUT OF UR OF THE CHALDEES. This verse proves what I have earlier noted, that God's command to Abraham, *Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred*, etc., was given in Ur of the Chaldees, not in Haran.¹⁰

Abraham had complete faith in God's word that he would beget a son who would be his heir. It was only with regard to the possession of the land that he asked for a sign. He acted like Gideon.¹¹ Furthermore, all prophecies are conditional. God's oaths, on the other hand, are

⁷ The verse literally reads: *he Damascus Eliezer*. I.E. suggests that the word *ben* be placed before Damascus.

⁸ God considered Abraham's action as just and right.

⁹ There it has the meaning of charity.

¹⁰ Cf. I.E.'s comment on Gen. 12:1.

¹¹ Cf. Jud. 6:37. Gideon, also, although he had faith in God, asked Him for a sign (Krinsky). Cherez explains that inheriting the land entailed expelling the Canaanites. The latter were expelled because of their sinfulness (v. 16). As there was a possibility that the Canaanites might repent, Abraham asked for a sign that regardless of what the Canaanites might do, his children would inherit the land. Similarly Gideon asked for a sign that he would be victorious even if the Midianites repented.

unconditional.¹² Hence Abraham did not sin in requesting that a covenant be made between God and himself.¹³

9. A SHE-GOAT OF THREE YEARS OLD. Some render *ez meshuleshet* as three she-goats.¹⁴ However, it appears to me that the correct translation of the phrase is: a she-goat three years old.

AND A RAM. A full grown male sheep.¹⁵

AND A YOUNG PIGEON. *Gozal* is a young dove.¹⁶ It is to be rendered this way because burnt offerings and other sacrifices were brought only from among the animals and birds mentioned here.

10. AND DIVIDED THEM IN THE MIDST. He cut them up and separated the pieces. *Bater* (split) in *Upon the split mountains* (hare bater)¹⁷ (Cant. 2:17) and *betarav* (parts of) in *between the parts thereof* (betarav) (Jer. 34:18) are analogous to *va-yevater* (and divided them).

AND LAID EACH HALF OVER AGAINST THE OTHER. Note that the word *ish* (each)¹⁸ means the same as *ba'al*, which means the thing itself. Similarly, *ish* (man) in *The Lord is a man* (*ish*) of war;¹⁹

¹² God's initial word to Abraham was prophetic. Hence it was conditional. Had God sworn an oath, Abraham would not have asked for a sign (Krinsky).

¹³ That the land of Canaan be unconditionally given to his descendants. I.E.'s view is in contradistinction to a Midrashic view which held that Abraham sinned in asking for a sign. Cf. *Nedarim* 32a.

¹⁴ Onkelos, Rashi.

¹⁵ A ram is a male sheep older than a year (Krinsky).

¹⁶ The word *gozal* can also be translated as a fledgling. It can thus refer to any bird. Cf. Deut. 32:11.

¹⁷ I.E.'s rendering, i.e., mountains that are split or divided by valleys. Cf. Segel's commentary on Canticles.

¹⁸ *Ish* usually means a man. However, our verse reads, *ish bitro* (each half) and deals with animals. Hence I.E. explains that *ish* does not necessarily mean man. Here it refers to animals. Its meaning is, the half of each animal.

¹⁹ We cannot translate *ish milchamah* as a man of war, as God is not a man. It must mean: the Lord is a being who wages war (Cherez).

(Ex. 15:3); and *ish* (man) in *the man* (ve-ha-ish) *Gabriel*²⁰ (Dan. 9:21); and *ish* (fellow) in *a base fellow* (*ish beliyya'al*) (II Sam. 20:1). In the latter verse it is in the construct.²¹ *Ish* is also used in reference to the living creatures seen by Ezekiel,²² and to the curtains of the Tabernacle, viz., *Five curtains shall be coupled together one* (*ishah*) *to another* (Ex. 26:3). The meaning of our clause is that he placed the piece of each one (*ish*) over against its counterpart. The term *ish* is to be so interpreted because man and beast are two different beings.²³

BUT THE BIRDS DIVIDED HE NOT. The turtle dove and the young dove. *Tzippor* (birds) is a general term.²⁴

11. THE BIRDS OF PREY. *Ayit* (birds of prey) is a type of bird. *Ayit* (bird of prey) in *Is my heritage unto Me as a speckled bird of prey* (*ha-ayit*) (Jer. 12:9) is similar.

UPON THE CARCASSES. On the lifeless bodies.²⁵

AND ABRAM DROVE THEM AWAY. *Va-yashev* (drove away) has a *dagesh* in the *shin* to make up for a missing *nun*.²⁶ He drove them

²⁰ Gabriel is an angel. Therefore the phrase cannot mean the man Gabriel, but rather Gabriel himself.

²¹ According to Weiser. This is a most difficult comment. It is hard to understand what I.E. is trying to say. Obviously *ish* is in the construct with *beliyya'al*. Cherez writes that he does not understand this comment at all. Filwarg emends *ish beliyya'al* to *ish-ba'al* (II Kings 1:8), the point being that we find *ish* and *ba'al* in apposition; i.e., *ish* and *ba'al* mean the same. Thus *ish-ba'al* is similar to *admat-afar* in Dan. 12:2, where *admat* means the same as *afar*.

²² *Their wings were joined one* (*ishah*) *to another* (Ezek. 1:9).

²³ *Ish* must be interpreted as meaning a thing, the very thing. Otherwise it could not refer both to man and beast since they are totally different beings.

²⁴ Thus *tzippor* refers both to the turtle dove and to the young dove.

²⁵ Scripture uses the term *pegarim* (carcasses) and not *betarim* (pieces). The reference is to the carcasses of the turtle dove and the young dove (Krinsky).

²⁶ Its root being *nun*, *shin*, *bet*.

and sent them off the carcasses.²⁷ *Yashev* (he caused to blow) in *He causeth His wind to blow* (*yashev rucho*) (Ps. 147:18) is similar.²⁸ On the other hand, he may have flapped at the carcasses to drive the bird of prey off them.²⁹

12. AND IT CAME TO PASS, THAT, WHEN THE SUN WAS GOING DOWN. This clause indicates that Abraham *took him all these* (v. 10) during the day after he awoke from his prophetic vision.³⁰

13. THAT THY SEED SHALL BE A STRANGER IN A LAND THAT IS NOT THEIRS. In Hebrew a person who has a family is likened to a branch attached to its source. Therefore such an individual is called an *ezech*,³¹ for the meaning of *ezech* is a branch, as in *a sprouting tree with many branches* (*ke-ezech ra'anan*) (Ps. 37:35). On the other hand, a stranger is termed *ger* in Hebrew from the word *gargir* (berry), for he is like a berry plucked from a branch. There are some unintelligent people who find this explanation farfetched. However, if

²⁷ *Them* (otom) refers to the *birds of prey*. It should be noted that *ayit* (birds of prey) is in the singular. I.E. takes it as a collective noun.

²⁸ The root *nun, shin, bet* means to blow. Similarly in our verse Abraham drove the birds off by causing a wind to blow over them, i.e., by flapping at them.

²⁹ According to this interpretation the *them* refers to the carcasses and *ayit* refers to one bird. The verse is to be interpreted as follows: the bird of prey came down...and Abraham flapped at the carcasses and drove "it" off.

³⁰ The vision in which Abraham was told to set aside the animals occurred at night (v. 5). He took the animals on the next day, after awakening from his vision. When the sun came down there transpired what our verse describes (Cherez, Krinsky).

³¹ Ex. 12:49. Cf. Lev. 16:29, 18:26, 19:34, 24:16; Num. 9:14. Ps. 37:35 has been rendered in accordance with I.E.'s interpretation in Psalms. *Ezech* means native-born. According to I.E. one born in the land is called an *ezech* because he is like a branch attached to its tree. It should be added that I.E. points out in his comments on Gen. 2:25 that the Bible compares man to a tree.

they knew the meaning of each letter and its form then they would recognize the truth.³²

FOUR HUNDRED YEARS. Until the end of this period (four hundred years) starting from this very day.³³

14. WHOM THEY SHALL SERVE. Whose slaves they shall be.

15. BUT THOU SHALT GO TO THY FATHERS. A euphemism for a natural death.

[IN PEACE.] Unlike your enslaved descendants, you will die in dignity.

16. AND IN THE FOURTH GENERATION THEY SHALL COME BACK HITHER. Many of the commentaries misunderstood the meaning of the word *dor* (generation).³⁴ The sages of the Talmud said there were ten generations from Adam to Noah.³⁵ We also find, *to a thousand generations*³⁶ (Deut. 7:9) and Job speaks of four generations (Job 42:16).³⁷ In my opinion the meaning of *dor* (generation) is dwells. Compare *dur* (dwell) in *Than to dwell* (mi-dur) *in the tents of*

³² Ibn Ezra discusses the meaning and form of letters in his *Sefer Ha-Tzachot*. He explains that *gimel* means finished, or weaned (*gamal*), and *resh* cut. A poor person is called a *rash* because he is cut off from his sources. *Ger* is spelled *gimel, resh*; it thus means a person weaned and cut off from his family (Cherez, Netter).

³³ In Ex. 12:40, I.E. writes that the 400 years started with the birth of Isaac. Some versions have "from Isaac's birth" in our text.

³⁴ They explain generations as a specific number of years. Cf. I.E.'s commentary on Job 42:16 in which he notes, *Isaac the windbag erred in saying that a generation spans 35 years*. In Deut. 7:9 he quotes an opinion that a generation is 36 years.

³⁵ *Avot* 5:2. The sages speak of generations in terms of people, not years. Each one of those mentioned had a life span that differed from the other. Hence *dor* cannot refer to a fixed number of years.

³⁶ If a generation is a fixed number of years then a thousand generations is a thousand times that number. In Deut. 7:9, I.E. argues that it cannot be so. Cf. I.E.'s comments on Deut. 7:9.

³⁷ In Job the four generations come to 140 years. We thus see that a generation is not a fixed number of years, for each time it is encountered it does not refer to the same number of years.

wickedness (Ps. 84:11). A generation is measured by a person's life span. Some are long and some are short. Our verse refers to the fourth generation starting from the first that lived as strangers in Egypt. Thus it is written, *thou shalt not abhor an Egyptian, because thou wast a stranger in his land* (Deut. 23:8).³⁸ And so it was: Kohath, Amram, Moses and Aaron were strangers in Egypt. Their children, who were the fourth generation, returned to the land of Canaan.

FOR THE INIQUITY OF THE AMORITE IS NOT YET FULL. I have explained the meaning of *iniquity* in my comments on *My punishment is greater than I can bear* (Gen. 4:13).³⁹

The Amorites are singled out because they were the most powerful of the Canaanite peoples.⁴⁰ Behold, the great kings whom Moses slew were Amorites.⁴¹ Furthermore, it was five Amorite kings who united to fight Joshua.⁴² There are other proofs.⁴³ Similarly the prophet says concerning the Amorites, *Whose height was like the height of the cedars, And he was strong as the oaks* (Am. 2:9). Whoever says that *Emori* (Amorite) comes from the same root as *amar* (saying) does not contribute anything.⁴⁴

³⁸ This verse spells out that the Hebrews were strangers in Egypt.

³⁹ Iniquity at times means punishment. That is its meaning in this verse; i.e., I have not yet finished punishing them (Cherez).

⁴⁰ Actually this verse refers to all the inhabitants of Canaan.

⁴¹ Deut. 2:24-36; 4:47. The Bible singles out these kings as being mighty (Weiser).

⁴² Josh. 10:5.

⁴³ In Scripture that the Amorites were the most powerful inhabitants of Canaan.

⁴⁴ The Midrash interprets *the iniquity of the Amorite* (avon ha'emori) to mean the sin for saying (*avon ha-amirah*): O Lord God, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it. *pesikta Zutarta*, Gen. 15:16.

17. AND IT CAME TO PASS, THAT WHEN THE SUN WENT DOWN. Until now the sun had not yet set. It is similarly written, *when the sun was about to go down* (v. 12).⁴⁵

THICK DARKNESS. *Alatah* (thick darkness) means darkness. The word *alatah* is also found in Ezekiel (12:6, 7, 12). It means a cloudy night. It might also refer to the darkness that sets in as soon as the last light has disappeared in the clouds.

BEHOLD A SMOKING FURNACE, AND A FLAMING TORCH. An image of a smoking furnace with a flaming torch in it.

BETWEEN THESE PIECES. *Ben ha-gezarim* means between the pieces. This⁴⁶ was the actual taking of the oath. *The words of the covenant which they made before Me, when they cut the calf in twain and passed between the parts thereof* (Jer. 34:18) is similar. We thus read in the next verse, *In that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, 'Unto thy seed have I given this land,'* etc.

18. FROM THE RIVER OF EGYPT. This refers to the Shihor, and not the Nile.⁴⁷

19. THE KENITE, AND THE KENIZZITE AND THE KADMONITE. These are children of Canaan. Each one had two names.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ This is the literal meaning of *va-yehi ha-shemesh la-vo* (when the sun was going down). We thus see that what transpired until now took place before the sun went down.

⁴⁶ The passing of the smoking furnace with the flaming torch inside it between the pieces.

⁴⁷ Cf. Josh. 13:3; Jer. 2:18. Josh. 13:3 says that the Shihor lies before Egypt. The Nile is in Egypt.

⁴⁸ Each one had another name and was listed under the other name in Gen. 10:15-18, in which the children of Canaan are enumerated. See I.E.'s comment on Gen. 13:7.

20. AND THE REPHAIM. This is what *That also is accounted a land of Rephaim* (Deut. 2:20) refers to.⁴⁹ Do not be surprised that Scripture lists the Canaanite and after him the Jebusite.⁵⁰ Note: Each one of the seven nations that dwelled in Canaan were Canaanites. They descended from Canaan, who fathered eleven sons. Elsewhere Scripture lists six Canaanite nations by their specific names and includes the remainder under the term Canaanite.⁵¹ In our chapter Scripture lists ten of them.⁵² At other times Scripture includes them all in the term Canaanite without enumerating them. Scripture similarly states, *Judah and Israel were many* (I Kings 4:20) even though the term Israel includes Judah.⁵³

⁴⁹ The point of I.E.'s comment is that *Rephaim* in our verse refers to the land of Rephaim and not to the Rephaim per se, since the latter were not Canaanites (Weiser). However, Krinsky explains that the Rephaim were a branch of the Canaanites.

⁵⁰ Canaan was the father of these nations. Why, then, list him between the Kenites and Jebusites (Meijler)?

⁵¹ Thus Canaan refers to the Canaanite people (Weiser).

⁵² Two are included in the name Canaan.

⁵³ We thus see that the Bible at times is especially explicit. Similarly, although Canaanite can refer to all seven nations, the Bible mentions Canaanite and then notes a number of them.

CHAPTER 16

2. IT MAY BE THAT I SHALL BE BUILT UP. *Ibbaneh* (I shall be builded up) comes from the same root as *ben* (son).¹ It is possible that the word for son (*ben*) comes from the root *bet, nun, heh* (to build), with the *heh* dropped because, metaphorically speaking, the father serves as the foundation and the son as the building.² *Chai* (life) in the third person perfect and in the adjectival form is similar.³

AND ABRAM HEARKENED. Abraham said yes to her.

3. AFTER ABRAM HAD DWELT TEN YEARS IN THE LAND OF CANAAN. Our sages, of blessed memory, transmitted a law that a man shall not remain married more than ten years to a woman who has not borne him a child. They used this verse as sort of a support for this law. It is a good support.

¹ Hence *ibbaneh* (I shall be builded up) means I shall have a son.

² I.E. comments thusly because the root of *ibbaneh* is obviously *bet, nun, heh*.

³ From the root *chet, yod, heh*.

4. WAS DESPISED. The *tzere*⁴ in *va-tekal* (was despised) is in place of the *dagesh* which should be placed in the *kof* to make up for one of the missing root letters.⁵ *Va-tekal* is a *nifal*.

7. FOUND HER. *Va-yimtza'ah* (found her) is irregular.⁶ It should have been vocalized like *va-yisna'eha* (and he hateth her) (Deut. 22:16).

8. WHENCE. *Ay* (whence) means where. *Ay* (where) in *Where is (ay) Abel thy brother* (Gen. 4:9) is similar. *Mi-zeh* (from this)⁷ is short for *mi-zeh makom* (from this place).⁸ The meaning of *ai mi-zeh vat* is: where is the place thou camest from?

I FLEE. The *resh* of *borachat* (I flee) is vocalized with a *pattach* because it is followed by a guttural.⁹ These are similar: *borachat* (fleeth) in *The whole city fleeth* (*borachat*) (Jer. 4:29); *porachat* (budding) in *and as it was budding* (*khe-forachat*) (Gen. 40:10); *rachat* (shovel) in *with the shovel* (*va-rachat*) *and with the fan* (Is. 30:24); and *yoda'at* (known) in *that hath known man* (*yoda'at ish*) (Num. 31:17). The reason the middle letter of the root of the above words is vocalized with a *pattach* is that it precedes gutturals. They are: *alef*, *chet*, *heh*, *ayin*. This is the rule. There is no exception.

⁴ The letters added to the root to indicate that it is in the imperfect are, with the exception of the first person singular, always vocalized with a *chirik* in the *nifal*. I.E. literally reads, the missing *yod* between the prefix and the root letter. He is referring to the *tzere* which has a *yod* sound.

⁵ A *lamed*. The root of *va-tekal* (was despised) being *kof*, *lamed*, *lamed*. This comment is difficult. The *tav* of *va-tekal* is in reality vocalized with a *tzere* to make up for the *dagesh* that should have been placed in the *kof* to make up for the missing *nun* of the *nifal* form. Filwarg amends I.E. to read so.

⁶ Our verse should have read, *va-yimtza'eha*.

⁷ J.P.S. translates *ai mi-zeh* as whence. It literally reads, where (*ay*) from this (*mi-zeh*), hence I.E.'s comments.

⁸ Weiser.

⁹ The second radical of a participle in the feminine is usually vocalized with a *segol*. Compare, *shomeret*, *kotevet*.

11. BEHOLD THOU. *Hinnakh* (behold thou) is the form used when a female is being addressed, because it is a preposition. It is like the word *im* (with); it follows the paradigm of *immakh* (with you).¹⁰

ISHMAEL. The *alef* of Ishmael is not pronounced to simplify enunciation.

12. A WILD ASS OF A MAN. He will be free among men.¹¹ Compare, *Who hath sent out the wild ass free* (Job 39:5). The meaning of our clause is that no stranger will rule over him.¹² Others say that we should render *perah adam* (a wild ass of a man) by a wild ass and a man.¹³ It is like *The sun and moon stand still in their habitation* ((Hab. 3:11)).¹⁴ The meaning of our verse is: because he will be a wild ass *his hand shall be against every man*, but because he is a man *every man's hand (shall be) against him*. In my opinion its interpretation is: he will be as a wild ass among men;¹⁵ i.e., he will overcome men. However, ultimately *every man's hand (shall be) against him*. This is clearly stated in the book of Daniel, for the fourth beast described therein refers to the kingdom of Ishmael.¹⁶

¹⁰ A word with a second person singular feminine pronominal suffix is usually vocalized with a *tzere*. Compare, *sifrech* (your book) or *lekhtekh* (your going). Thus I.E. points out that prepositional words such as *immakh* (with you), *lakh* (to you) and *bakh* (in you) are vocalized with a *kamatz* in place of a *tzere*.

¹¹ As a wild ass is. No one controls the wild ass or places a burden on him. Similarly Ishmael shall be a free and uncontrolled person. The Hebrew has *perah adam*, literally, wild ass-man, hence the different interpretations which follow.

¹² Weiser.

¹³ That is, a connective *vav* should be placed before *adam* (man). He will have the qualities of a wild ass and of a man.

¹⁴ Here, too, a connective *vav* has to be prefixed to *yare'ach* (moon). The verse literally reads: the sun moon stand still in their habitation.

¹⁵ This opinion, like the first one, renders *perah adam* as wild ass among men, but it explains it differently.

¹⁶ Cf. Dan. 7:7. I.E.'s point is that at first the Ishmaelite kingdom will prevail. However, in the end it will be defeated.

AND HE SHALL DWELL IN THE FACE OF ALL HIS BRETHREN. The latter being the children of Keturah.¹⁷ It is similarly written, *over against all his brethren did he settle* (Gen. 25:18). Also, the Midianites are of the children of Keturah. However, they are referred to as Ishmaelites in the Pentateuch¹⁸ and in the Book of Judges.¹⁹

13. A GOD OF SEEING. *Ro'i* (seeing) follows the paradigm of *oni* (affliction).²⁰ Compare, *I am the man that hath seen affliction* (*oni*) (Lam. 3:1). The meaning of *a God of seeing* is a God who appears in visions.

HAVE I EVEN HERE. The commentaries translate *halom* as now.²¹ However, its correct meaning is here. *Halom* (hither) in *Is there yet a man come hither* (*halom*) (I Sam. 10:22) is similar.

The meaning *ha-gam halom ra'iti achare ro'i* (have I even here seen Him that seeth me) is: have I even here seen an angel of God after God saw my affliction, because God constantly seeth me (*ro'i*).²²

14. BEER-LAHAI. *Beer lahai* means the well of him who will be alive next year.²³ Compare, *ko le-chai* (so to life next year) (I Sam. 25:6).²⁴ The well was so called because the Ishmaelites held annual

¹⁷ The woman whom Abraham took after Sarah's death (Gen. 25:1).

¹⁸ Gen. 37:25-28.

¹⁹ Jud. 8:22-24.

²⁰ *Ro'i*, like *oni*, is a noun (Krinsky) and both are vocalized with a *chataf kamatz* beneath the first letter.

²¹ According to Weiser.

²² In other words, did God who always sees me (*ro'i*) really see my affliction and send an angel to me in the desert. The clause literally reads: Have I even here seen after He seeth me. I.E. apparently views our verse as abridged or perhaps in her excitement Hagar did not complete her thoughts.

²³ According to Bachya, I.E. explains *Beer-lahai-roi* as meaning the well (*be'er*) that he who is alive next year (*la-chai*) shall see me there (*ro'i*). Since the Ishmaelites met yearly at this well, they referred to it by this name.

²⁴ I.E.'s translation of *ko le-chai* (Netter).

festivities at this well. It is still in existence and is called the well of *zamum*.

CHAPTER 17

1. GOD ALMIGHTY. *Shaddai* is an adjective meaning mighty. *Shaddai* in *like a mighty voice* (ke-kol shaddai)¹ (Ezek. 1:24) is similar. Also, *Shaddai* in *And mighty will be thy silver*² (shaddai betzarekha) (Job 22:25) is similar because the word *betzarekha* (thy silver) has the same meaning as the word *betzer* (silver) in *And lay thy treasure (or silver) (betzer) in the dust*³ (Job 22:24). The word *Shaddai* follows the paradigm of *davvai* (faint), in *And my heart is faint* (davvai) (Lam. 1:22). Many derive *Shaddai* from the same root as *shoded* (overpowering),⁴ meaning, He is victorious and overpowering.

The reason God used this name at this time was to impress upon Abraham the fear of God so that he would circumcise himself.

The correct interpretation of the divine names is as follows: *Shaddai* is an adjective describing God's power over creation. The Tetragrammaton, God's revered and awesome name, stands in contrast

¹ Our translation follows that of I.E. Cf. Kimchi on Ezek. 1:24. I.E.'s point is that here, too, *Shaddai* is an adjective meaning mighty.

² I.E. on Job. 22:24, 25 renders *betzer* by *kesef* (silver). *And mighty will be thy silver* means you will have a great amount of money.

³ Hence the verse is to be rendered: And mighty (*Shaddai*) will be thy silver. Thus *Shaddai* is an adjective meaning mighty

⁴ Brown, Driver and Briggs (*Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*) define *shoded* as: deals violently with, despoils, devastates, ruins. Cf. Jer. 6:26. Thus *shoded* has the connotation of overpowering. In keeping with the concept of I.E., but more important out of respect to God, we have translated *shoded* as overpowering.

to it. The world exists by virtue of these two names.⁵ Whoever understands the secret of God's name will accept my interpretation.

AND BE THOU WHOLE-HEARTED. Do not question the reason for circumcision.

5. ABRAHAM. The new name with the addition of the *resh* means the mighty one of a multitude of nations. This is so because the new name did not come to diminish a letter from Abraham's original name but to add one.⁶

Sarah, unlike Sarai, is a general adjective.⁷

Blessed be the Lord before whom all actions are weighed. He commanded Abraham to circumcise himself before Sarah became pregnant so that his seed would be holy.⁸

[10. EVERY MALE AMONG YOU SHALL BE CIRCUMCISED.] *Himmol* (shall be circumcised) is to be read as if it had a *lamed* prefixed to it. It is an infinitive.⁹ It belongs to the verbs having a *vav* as the

5 The Tetragrammaton expresses God's essence, His eternality, and His being the cause of all existence. *Shaddai* emphasizes His power over creation. Thus these two names stand opposite each other; i.e., these names teach that there is an Eternal God who created all (Tetragrammaton) and has the power over all (*Shaddai*). Furthermore, on a more "practical" level it is via the Tetragrammaton that the world was created, and via the name *Shaddai* that nature is overcome. Others comment that the Tetragrammaton stands for creation and *Shaddai*, for destroying or limiting the creation (Krinsky). See I.E.'s comment on Ex. 3:15, 6:3.

6 *Prima facie* there is no meaning for the *resh* in Abraham. I.E. argues that it does not have a meaning, for the *resh* is an integral part of the new name. Abraham means *avir hamon goyim*, for *av hamon goyim* with the *resh* added gives *avir hamon goyim*. I.E. is in contradistinction to Rashi who comments that the *resh* in Abraham was carried over from Abram and did not signify anything. We have followed *Vat. Ebr.* 38 in our translation, which reads, *Abraham im tosefet ha-resh avir hamon goyim*.

7 Sarai connotes my princess; Sarah connotes princess over all (Cherez).

8 By being the seed of a circumcised father.

9 Hence it means shall be circumcised. *Himmol* might be taken to be an imperative, hence I.E.'s comment.

middle letter of their root.¹⁰ It is like *va-yamal*¹¹ in *and circumcised* (*va-yamal*) *the flesh of their foreskin* (v. 23). It follows the paradigm of *le-hikkon* (to be prepared).¹²

11. AND YE SHALL BE CIRCUMCISED. *U-nemaltem* (and ye shall be circumcised) is similar to *u-shemartem* (and ye shall keep).¹³ The *nun* of *u-nemaltem* is a root letter.¹⁴ *Yadon* (shall be sheathed) in *My spirit shall not be sheathed* (*yadon*) (Gen. 6:3) and *nidneh* (sheath) (Dan. 7:15) are similar.¹⁵

12. SHALL BE CIRCUMCISED AMONG YOU. *Yimmol* (shall be circumcised) is a *nifal*, as are *himmol yimmol* (must needs be circumcised) (v. 13). Why does Scripture state twice, *He that is born in thy house...must needs be circumcised*?¹⁶ This is the answer: Scripture first states that in the future all males, those of thy seed and also those *born in the house or bought with money*, shall be circumcised on the eighth day. It then states, "Abraham immediately circumcise all males *born in thy house and he that is bought with thy money* although they are adults."¹⁷

¹⁰ It is an *ayin*, *vav*, its root being *mem*, *vav*, *lamed*.

¹¹ Whose root is also *mem*, *vav*, *lamed*.

¹² Cf. Ez. 38:7; Amos 4:12. The root of *le-hikkon* is *caf*, *vav*, *nun*. *Le-himmol* is the same form as *le-hikkon*. Both *le-himmol* and *le-hikkon* are *nifal* infinitives.

¹³ *U-shemartem* is a *kal*. Similarly *u-nemaltem* (and ye shall be circumcised) is a *kal*, meaning: and ye shall circumcise.

¹⁴ Its root is *nun*, *mem*, *lamed*. There are thus two roots meaning to circumcise, viz., *nun*, *mem*, *lamed* and *mem*, *vav*, *lamed*. (See I.E.'s comments on verse 10 and note 10).

¹⁵ There are two roots for the Hebrew word for sheath, viz., *nun*, *dalet*, *nun*, *nidneh* (Dan. 7:15) and *dalet*, *vav*, *nun*, *yadon* (Gen. 6:3). (Rendering Gen. 6:3 according to I.E. See I.E. on Gen. 6:3).

¹⁶ Verse 13 seems to repeat what is in verse 12. I.E. asks why.

¹⁷ It might have been thought that since the command speaks of circumcision on the eighth day, those past that age when the command was given were exempt. Thus verse 12 speaks of the future and verse 13 of the present. Thus there is no repetition.

14. AND THE UNCIRCUMCISED MALE WHO IS NOT CIRCUMCISED. *Yimmol* (is circumcised) is a *kal*. It is like *yiddo* (voweth) in *When a man voweth (yiddor) a vow* (Num. 30:3). It comes from the same root as *u-nemaltem* (and ye shall be circumcised) in *and ye shall be circumcised (u-nemaltem) in the flesh of your foreskin* (v. 11).¹⁸ The meaning of the verse is, a male who reaches the age when he is obligated to observe the commandments of the Torah and does not circumcise himself is subject to the penalty of *karet* (being cut off). The verse refers to an adult because while a person is yet a child, the obligation to circumcise him falls upon his father. However, should his father fail to do so, then upon reaching maturity he must circumcise himself. *Karet* (being cut off) is a penalty inflicted by God. Those who err hold that a child that dies uncircumcised does not have a share in the world to come.¹⁹ However, the meaning of the word *nefesh* is not as they think, a soul²⁰, but a person; it means a body containing a soul. Similarly, *If anyone (nefesh) shall sin* (Lev. 4:2). Some say that *karet* refers to death before the age of fifty-two. Others say it means the eradication of one's name via the death of one's children. Therefore Scripture states, *that soul shall be cut off from his people*, for a person who leaves children is considered to live on even after his death, and his name is not cut off.

16. AND MOREOVER I WILL GIVE THEE. *Natati* (I will give thee) in our verse is like *natati* in *I will give (natati) the price of the field*

¹⁸ J.P.S. renders both *yimmol* and *u-nemaltem* as *nifals*. I.E. renders them as *kals*, as actives whose root is *nun, mem, lamed*.. Our verse should thus be rendered: And the uncircumcised male who does not circumcise the flesh of his foreskin.

¹⁹ It is for this reason that Jews customarily circumcise, prior to burial, a child who dies uncircumcised. Cf. *Shulchan Arukh Yoreh Deah* 263:5. It is clear from I.E.'s refutation of the belief that an uncircumcised child does not have a share in the world to come that those who held this view based it on the verse: *And the uncircumcised male...that soul (nefesh) shall be cut off from his people* (v. 14). They interpreted *nefesh* as soul and cut off as referring to the world to come (Weiser).

²⁰ They translated *nefesh* as soul.

(Gen. 23:13). Observe, although both are perfects, they are to be rendered as imperfects.

17. SHALL A CHILD BE BORN UNTO HIM THAT IS A HUNDRED YEARS OLD. Abraham was amazed at being told that he would have a son because the sperm of an old man is cold²¹ and therefore aged men are infertile. However, he was even more amazed that Sarah, a woman whose menstrual cycle had ceased, would bear a child, since the embryo is made and constructed from the woman's menstrual blood. If you will reflect you will conclude that Sarah's conceiving was a greater wonder than Abraham's begetting a child. For we find instances of men over ninety begetting children in later generations,²² and the life span of people in Abraham's time was much longer than in later times.²³

As soon as the angel left, Abraham immediately circumcised Ishmael and all those born in his house and those bought with money.

26. IN THE SELFSAME DAY. Abraham did not hesitate to carry out the commandment of circumcision. Behold, Abraham's household consisted of three hundred eighteen males *born in his house*²⁴ aside from those *bought with his money*. After circumcising them, Abraham

²¹ Medieval medicine believed in four humors.

²² However, we do not find in Scripture any report of an aged woman bearing a child. *Vat. Ebr.* 38 reads, "We find that King David's forefathers each sired a son when over 90." Cf. I.E.'s comment on Ruth 4:17.

²³ Since men of later generations whose life spans were shorter than that of Abraham sired children when over 90, it diminishes the uniqueness of Abraham's experience. *Vat. Ebr.* 38 reads, "The life span of people in Abraham's generation was longer than that of David's generation."

²⁴ Cf. Gen. 14:15.

circumcised himself on that very day.²⁵ Now Ishmael his son plus all those born in his house and bought with his money were voluntarily circumcised with him (Abraham) (v. 27). For the meaning of "with him" (v. 27) is that Abraham did not have to force his household to comply with God's commandment. They all voluntarily hurried to do and fulfill God's will.

27. WERE CIRCUMCISED WITH HIM. *Nimmolu* (were circumcised) is a *nifal*. Its root is *nun, mem, lamed*.²⁶ *Ve-nishlo'ach* (were sent) in *And letters were sent* (*ve-nishlo'ach sefarim*) (Est. 3:13) is similar.²⁷

²⁵ The Bible states, *And Abraham took Ishmael his son, and all that were born in his house, and all that were bought with his money...and circumcised the flesh of their foreskin in the selfsame day* (v. 23). After stating this, Scripture notes, *And Abraham was ninety years old and nine when he was circumcised* (v. 24). Thus Abraham was circumcised last.

²⁶ Hence there is a *dagesh* in the *mem* of *nimmolu* to make up for the missing *nun* of the root. The *nun* of *nimmolu* is the *nun* of the *nifal*.

²⁷ The *cholam* in *nimmolu* presents a problem. When a letter having a *nun* as the first letter of its root is conjugated in the *nifal* as a *shelamim* it is not vocalized with a *cholam* (Weiser). I.E. thus points out that we find the same with *nishlo'ach*. *Nishlo'ach* is a *shelemim nifal* and it, too, is vocalized with a *cholam*, i.e., *nishlo'ach* rather than *nishlach* (Filwarg).

CHAPTER 18

VA-YERA

1. AND THE LORD APPEARED. Behold, a few say that God is three men: He is one and He is three and they are inseparable.¹ They forget that Scripture expressly states, *And the two angels came to Sodom*

¹ This comment of I.E. is cryptic. Krinsky sees in it an allusion to the Christian doctrine of trinity. According to him, *a few say* refers to the Christians. Filwarg disagrees. He insists that I.E. is merely saying that God's revelation took the form of three angels appearing to Abraham. One can argue on behalf of Krinsky that the Christians did use this verse as "proof" of their doctrine of trinity. And indeed, I.E.'s language seems to support Krinsky. On the other hand, would I.E. refer to the Christians as *a few say*, thereby giving some credence to their trinitarian interpretation? Furthermore, Rashbam accepts this interpretation minus, of course, its trinitarian aspects. Commenting on this verse, Rashbam says, *And the Lord appeared to him. How? Three men who were angels came to him*. Thus Rashbam interprets this verse in a way similar to the phrase *a few say* quoted by I.E. Hence *a few say* may very well refer to a Jewish interpretation. However, it should be noted that Saadiah Gaon, in rejecting the doctrine of trinity, writes, "Others (finally) conjecturing about the implication of the passage, *And the Lord appeared unto him by the terebinths of Mamre* (Gen. 18:1), declare that the thing that appeared to Abraham and was designated by this name was a trinity because Scripture later on explicitly states: *And, lo, three men stood over against him* (Gen. 18:2). Let me explain, then, that these are more ignorant (than the opinions concerning God's essence previously refuted) because they did not wait until they reached the end of the passage. For had they had patience until they heard the verse: *And the men turned from thence, and went toward Sodom; but Abraham stood yet before the Lord* (Gen. 18:22), they would have realized that the *men* had departed while the light of God remained stationary with Abraham, who was in its presence. The thought therefore that God was identical with these men is completely refuted" (*The Book of Beliefs and Opinions*, Rosenblat translation, p. 108). Reading Ibn Ezra's comments side by side with that of Saadiah seems to leave no doubt that both deal with the same group, the Christians. Indeed, it seems that Saadiah was the source of I.E.'s comments.

*at even.*² However, the commentaries tell us³ that God first appeared to Abraham in a vision after which Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw three angels.⁴ One came to bring happy tidings to Sarah⁵ and the other two went on to Sodom, one to destroy it and one to save Lot.

The meaning of *And they did eat*⁶ (v. 8) is that the bread was consumed.⁷ Eaten, in our verse, has the same meaning as the identical word in *whereto the fire hath eaten* (consumed) (Lev. 6:3).

[5. FORASMUCH AS YE ARE COME.] *Ki al ken avartem* (forasmuch as ye are come) means the same as *ho'il va-avartem* (since you are come) in Rabbinic Hebrew.⁸ It is like *forasmuch as* (*ki al ken*) as *they are come under the shadow of my roof* (Gen. 19:8).

SO DO, AS THOU HAST SAID. They responded politely and said to him that a morsel of bread would suffice.⁹

² Gen. 19:1. This verse clearly shows that the three are separable and thus cannot refer to God. The *few say* state that the three are inseparable.

³ Perhaps the term *mefareshim* (commentators) is used to indicate that what they say is acceptable in contrast to the first ones quoted who are not even deemed Biblical commentators. See preceding notes.

⁴ Cf. Rashi.

⁵ That she would have a son.

⁶ Angels do not eat.

⁷ The angels caused the bread to be consumed. Thus it appeared to have been eaten.

⁸ In other words, *ki al ken* means the same as the Rabbinic term *ho'il* (since). The Hebrew *ki al ken* can also be explained to mean, for this reason; i.e., the verse can be read: I will fetch a morsel of bread and stay your heart...for this reason (to eat) are ye come to your servant (Netter), hence I.E.'s comment.

⁹ We would expect them to say: We will do as thou hast said, rather than *So do*, hence I.E.'s comment.

6. KNEAD IT. *Lushi* (knead it) is like *va-talash* (and kneaded it) (I Sam. 28:24).¹⁰

10. WHEN THE SEASON COMETH ROUND. *Ka-et* (when the season) means next year, at this time, and *chayyah* (cometh round), that Sarah will then be alive.¹¹ It is like *ko le-chai* (so to life next year) (I Sam. 25:6).¹²

WHICH WAS BEHIND HIM.¹³ The angel who spoke to Abraham was behind the tent. Abraham sat in the tent door and consequently could not see Sarah. Others say that the door of Sarah's tent was behind the tent of Abraham.¹⁴

11. AND WELL STRICKEN IN AGE. They lived many days.¹⁵

12. SHALL I HAVE. *Hayetah li* means shall I have.¹⁶

PLEASURE. The word *ednah* means pleasure and enjoyment. *Va-yitaddenu* (and luxuriated) in *and luxuriated* (*va-yitaddenu*) in *Thy great goodness* (Neh. 9:25) is similar. The meaning of our verse is: How can

¹⁰ That is, *lushi* means to knead, as in I Sam. 28:24. Since the root *lamed*, *vav*, *shin* is not often found in Scripture, I.E. quotes an additional verse to illustrate its meaning (Filwarg). Cherez explains that since *lushi* is a transitive verb we would expect to find the object "dough," i.e., knead the dough, as in *and the women knead the dough* (Jer. 7:18). Hence I.E. points out that occasionally the word dough is left out, as in I Sam. 28:24.

¹¹ *Ka'et chayyah* is not to be rendered as J.P.S. does, but rather, next year at this season and Sarah will then be alive (Weiser, Netter).

¹² See I.E.'s comment on Gen. 16:14 and the notes to it.

¹³ The verse reads, *ve-hu acharav*, which is rendered by I.E.: and he (the angel) was behind it (the tent).

¹⁴ According to this interpretation *ve-hu* is to be rendered: and it. The "it" (*ve-hu*) refers to the door of Sarah's tent. The verse thus reads: and it (the door of Sarah's tent) was behind it (Abraham's tent) (Cherez).

¹⁵ The verse literally reads: coming into the days.

¹⁶ *Hayetah li* literally means I had. I.E. explains that *hayetah* is to be taken as an imperfect even though it is a perfect.

the enjoyment and pleasure of youth be renewed in me, seeing that I have waxed old and aged and my husband, too, is old.

[WITHIN HERSELF.] In her mind. God revealed Sarah's inner thoughts to the angel.

13. WHOM AM OLD. This explains *After I am waxed old*.¹⁷ The angel spoke the truth.¹⁸

The *mem* of *umnam* (of a surety) is not a root letter. It is like the *mem* of *shilshom* (the day before yesterday) (Gen. 31:5).

Other commentators maintain that Abraham's three guests were prophets. If one should argue, why would God send a message via a prophet to Abraham who himself was a prophet,¹⁹ since it is only when one prophet is greater than the other, as in the case of Moses who was sent with a prophesy to Aaron,²⁰ that God transmits his intentions to a prophet through another prophet,²¹ then they would answer that the three prophets came not to Abraham but to Sarah. Indeed, Scripture explicitly states, *And they said unto him: Where is Sarah thy wife* (v. 9).²² After one of the prophets delivered the message to Sarah, the other two went on to Sodom. Also, do not be troubled by the clause *for we will destroy this place* (Gen.19:13),²³ as we find a similar expression

¹⁷ Sarah said, *achare viloti* (after I am waxed old). The angel quoted her as saying, *ani zakanti* (I who am old). I.E. points out that *zakanti* means the same as *viloti*.

¹⁸ See *Baba Metzia* 87a and *Yebamot* 65b, which state that Scripture changed Sarah's actual words for the sake of peace so that Abraham would not take offense. They interpret *ani zakanti* (I whom am old) as referring to Sarah's statement of *va-adoni zaken* (my lord being old also). I.E. disagrees with this interpretation (see note 17).

¹⁹ God could have revealed his prophecy to Abraham directly, as he did to the three prophets who visited him. What need was there to send a prophet to him?

²⁰ Cf. Ex. 4:14-16, 28.

²¹ Abraham was obviously the greatest prophet in his generation.

²² This indicates that the message was for Sarah.

²³ A prophet cannot destroy a city. An angel can. Therefore, this clause implies that they were angels.

with regard to Moses and Aaron: *And Moses and Aaron did all these wonders before Pharaoh* (Ex. 11:10). In reality God did the wonders and they were attributed to Moses and Aaron because they were the agents by which the miracles were performed. Now according to this interpretation, *and they did eat* (v. 8) is to be taken literally.

Similarly, according to this interpretation, the term *Adonai* (Lord) in *My lord, (Adonai) if now I have found favor in thy sight* (v. 3) does not refer to the Deity, but means my lords. Hence there is a *pattach* beneath the *nun*, and it is not vocalized with a *kamatz* as would be the case if it referred to God.²⁴ However, in those copies of the Pentateuch where *Adonai* is vocalized with a *kamatz* the term must be interpreted as: O prophet of God.²⁵

Also (according to the aforementioned interpretation), the reason Abraham said, *if now I have found favor in thy sight* (v. 3)²⁶ is that he first addressed the most important of the three and then the other two.²⁷ Those who maintain that the three who visited Abraham were prophets²⁸ point out that the prophet Haggai is referred to in Scripture as an angel.²⁹

Others say that *Adonai* means Lord and that Abraham respectfully requested that God wait until he had attended his guests. There are still

²⁴ *Adonai* with a *pattach* means my lords; with a *kamatz*, it means Lord.

²⁵ In our copies of the Pentateuch, *Adonai* is vocalized with a *kamatz*.

²⁶ If Abraham addressed three prophets why did he employ the singular *be-enekha*? He should have used the plural *be-enekhem*.

²⁷ Krinsky. He then said the same to each one of the others.

²⁸ Gen. 19:1 refers to them as angels and so must be explained.

²⁹ Haggai 1:13.

others who say that the verses are not in order of their occurrence.³⁰ According to this interpretation, *And he lifted up* (v. 2) is to be interpreted: and he had already lifted up his eyes and looked and done so and so. After this, God appeared to him and said, *Shall I hide from Abraham that which I am doing*, etc. (v. 17), and *Verily the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great*, etc. (v. 20). *But Abraham stood yet before the Lord* (v. 22) when the two angels who left for Sodom arrived there. In any case,³¹ *And the Lord said: Shall I hide from Abraham that which I am doing*, etc., relates either to what God directly revealed to Abraham or to what He told the angels to relate to Abraham. However, all opinions agree that *And the Lord said: Verily the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and verily their sin is exceedingly grievous*, etc. (v. 20 and 21), definitely records God's words to Abraham. Upon hearing this, Abraham drew near and said, *Wilt thou indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked*, etc. (v. 23-32).

And the men turned from thence, and went toward Sodom; but Abraham stood yet before the Lord, (v. 22) is a parenthetical statement noting that at the very moment that the men came to Sodom, God told Abraham, *Verily, the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great*. This is similar: *As they were going down at the end of the city, Samuel said to Saul: 'Bid the servant pass on before us - and he passed on - but stand thou still at this time, that I may cause thee to hear the word of God'* (I Sam. 9:27).³²

³⁰ I.e., Abraham first saw the angels (v. 2-16) and then God appeared to him (v. 1). According to this interpretation the Bible introduces the chapter with a statement that God appeared to Abraham. It then tells us that before God appeared to Abraham angels visited him. Scripture then records what God told Abraham when He appeared to him (v. 17-21). According to the earlier interpretation God first appeared to Abraham and then Abraham saw the angels.

³¹ Whichever of the above interpretations we adopt.

³² *And he passed on* is a parenthetical statement. I.E. points out that such statements are found in the Bible. Similarly verse 22 is parenthetical.

There is no need to assume that the scribes changed the original reading of our verse³³ from *but the Lord stood yet before Abraham* to *but Abraham stood yet before the Lord*. Indeed, the verse *And Abraham got up early in the morning to the place where he had stood before the Lord* (Gen. 19:27) proves that there was no scribal emendation.³⁴

I will allude to my own beliefs with regard to the appearance of the angels in my commentary on the first Torah portion of Exodus.³⁵

14. [IS ANYTHING TOO HARD FOR THE LORD?] *Ha-yippale* (is it too hard) means is it hidden.³⁶ *Fele* (hidden things) in *oseh fele* (doing hidden things) (Ex. 15:11)³⁷ is similar. Others say the meaning of *ha-yippale me-adonai davar* is: it is not a wonder in God's eyes to do such a thing.³⁸ However, if this were so, then a *mem* would not be prefixed to God's name.³⁹

18. SHALL BE BLESSED IN HIM. *Ve-nivrikhu* (shall be blessed) is a *nifal*. It means that they shall be blessed because of Abraham.

³³ According to the Midrash verse 22 originally read: But the Lord yet stood before Abraham. However, out of respect for God the Scribes reversed the passage to read: *But Abraham stood yet before the Lord*. Cf. *Bereshit Rabbah* 49:7; *Va-yikra Rabbah* 11:5. For the reason that the Midrash assumed the verse originally read: but the Lord yet stood before Abraham; see Rashi and Krinsky. I.E. claims that there never was, in fact, any scribal emendation, as the literal meaning of the text does not support such an assumption (Filwarg).

³⁴ This verse clearly states that it was Abraham who stood before the Lord.

³⁵ Following Krinsky. Cf. I.E.'s short commentary on Ex. 3:15.

³⁶ According to this interpretation, *ha-yippale me-adonai davar* (is anything too hard for the Lord) means is anything hidden from God. Cf. Rashi, "is anything too hidden...or concealed from me, that I cannot do it."

³⁷ The manner in which God works miracles is hidden to man.

³⁸ They interpret *ha-yippale me-adonai davar* to mean: is anything wondrous from God?

³⁹ The text reads, *ha-yippale me-adonai davar*. *Me-adonai* means from God, and cannot imply, in God's eyes. Otherwise Scripture would have written, *la-adonai*, meaning: is anything wondrous to the Lord? "Wondrous from" is not used in Hebrew. Therefore the correct meaning of our phrase is: is anything hidden from the Lord?

However, *ve-hitbarekhu* (Gen. 22:18) has a different meaning. It means: they shall bless themselves in him.⁴⁰

20. [VERILY THE CRY OF SODOM.] Either the cry of its blasphemy or the cry of those victimized by its violence.

AND, VERILY, THEIR SIN IS EXCEEDINGLY GRIEVOUS. And the earth cannot bear it.

21. [I WILL GO DOWN NOW, AND SEE WHETHER THEY HAVE DONE ALTOGETHER ACCORDING TO THE CRY OF IT.] Some say this verse is to be interpreted as follows: If they have done so then I will destroy them (*kalah*).⁴¹

AND IF NOT, I WILL KNOW. *Eda'ah* means I will have pity upon them. They similarly interpret *va-yeda Elohim* (and God took cognizance of them)⁴² (Ex. 2:25). However, I believe that this verse is to be explained as follows: I will go down and see if all of them (*kalah*) have done this evil.⁴³ For in truth,⁴⁴ God who is All knows the individual in

⁴⁰ They shall bless themselves by invoking his name. That is, all the nations of the earth shall pray that they, too, be blessed as Abraham's seed (Krinsky, Netter).

⁴¹ According to this interpretation *kalah* (altogether) means destruction. *If they have done so* is I.E.'s paraphrase of *whether they have done according to the cry of it, which is come unto me*.

⁴² That *va-yeda Elohim* means God pitied them.

⁴³ According to I.E. *kalah* (altogether) is to be rendered as all, as in Ex. 11:1 (Krinsky). *Have done this evil* is a paraphrase of *according to the cry of it, which is come unto me*.

⁴⁴ The reason that Scripture relates that God went down to see if they all did according to the cry that came before him.

a general rather than in a detailed manner.⁴⁵ Proof that this interpretation is correct, although it is a great mystery, is Abraham's plea, *Wilt thou indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked* (v. 23).⁴⁶

The *heh* of *ha'af* (wilt) is vocalized with a *pattach*⁴⁷ even though it is an interrogative *heh*, because it is followed by an *alef*, which is a guttural, and it is the rule in Hebrew to elongate the vowel before gutturals.⁴⁸

23. THAT WILT SWEEP AWAY. *Tispeh* (thou wilt sweep away) is a transitive verb. It means is thou wilt destroy (or finish). *Aspeh* (finish) in *I will finish* (*aspeh*) *evils upon them* (Deut. 32:23) is similar.⁴⁹ Both words (*tispeh* and *aspeh*) mean the same thing even though they belong to different conjugations.⁵⁰

24. AND NOT FORGIVE THE PLACE. *Tissa* means forgive. Compare, *nose* (forgiving) in *forgiving iniquity* (*nose avon*) (Ex. 34:7).

⁴⁵ Ibn Ezra seems to be saying that "Ordinarily...God does not know the particular individual as such. He knows him only as implied in the whole" (Husik, p. 193). Thus it was necessary for God to *go down and see*. Nachmanides criticized Ibn Ezra on this point for introducing alien philosophical concepts into Judaism. Cf. Nachmanides' commentary on the Pentateuch, on this verse. Other commentaries could not accept the literal implication of Ibn Ezra's words and harmonized his comments to conform to traditional thinking. See Krinsky. Some argue that this comment did not come from I.E.'s hand but was inserted in the text by a misguided student.

⁴⁶ Abraham asked God not to judge Sodom by his general knowledge but to look upon each of the city's inhabitants as an individual.

⁴⁷ An interrogative *heh* is vocalized with a *chataf pattach*.

⁴⁸ Hence an interrogative *heh* preceding the gutturals *alef*, *heh*, *chet*, *ayin* is vocalized with a *pattach*, rather than with a *chataf pattach*. When the preceding letters are vocalized with a long *kamatz*, the interrogative is vocalized with a *segol*.

⁴⁹ I will spend (finish) all evil upon them. That is, there will be no further evil left to bring upon them. Cf. I.E. on Deut. 32:23 (translated according to I.E.).

⁵⁰ *Tispeh* is a *kal*, *aspeh* a *hifil*.

[THE PLACE.] Sodom. For it was on account of Sodom that Abraham approached God in prayer. He did so to save Lot.⁵¹

25. THAT BE FAR. *Chalilah* (that be far) means it is not possible. Others say that *chalilah* (that be far) is to be connected to the word *chalul*, which means empty.⁵²

THAT SO THE RIGHTEOUS SHOULD BE AS THE WICKED. When two *cafs* are prefixed to two words following each other⁵³ we are dealing with an abridged statement. Hence our verse should be understood as follows: that so the righteous should be as the wicked and the wicked be so as the righteous. Similarly, *for thou art even as Pharaoh*⁵⁴ (Gen. 44:18); *my people as thy people* (I Kings 22:4);⁵⁵ and *The darkness is even as the light* (Ps. 139:12).⁵⁶ The thrust of Abraham's appeal is: How is it possible for the Judge of all the earth to act unjustly?

[26. WITHIN THE CITY.] That is, who publicly⁵⁷ revere My name. *Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, And see now, and know, And seek in the broad places thereof, If ye can find a man, If there be any that doeth justly, and seeketh truth; And I will pardon her* (Jer. 5:1) is similar.

⁵¹ I.E. takes issue with those who maintain that Abraham pleaded for the other cities as well. Cf. *Targum Jonathan* and Rashi.

⁵² The first explanation interprets *chalilah* in context. The second connects it to the word *chalul* (Weiser).

⁵³ Our verse reads, *ve-haya kha-tzadik ka-rasha* : that so the righteous should be as the wicked.

⁵⁴ *Ki kha-mokha ke-farah* is to be understood as if written: for thou art even as Pharaoh, and Pharaoh is even as thou.

⁵⁵ *Ke-ammi khe-ammekha*, which should be understood: my people as thy people, thy people as my people.

⁵⁶ *Ka-chashekhah ka-orah* : And the darkness is even as the light, and the light even as the darkness.

⁵⁷ *Fifty righteous within the city* means 50 people who are publicly righteous.

27. [I HAVE TAKEN UPON ME.] *Ho'alti* (I have taken upon me) does not mean I began; it means I wanted. *Ho'il Moshe* (took Moses upon him) (Deut. 1:5) is similar. The *caf* of *anokhi* (I) is superfluous.⁵⁸ On the other hand, it is possible that there are two different words for I in Hebrew.⁵⁹

[WHO AM BUT DUST AND ASHES.] For dust I was and ashes I will be. Abraham was speaking only about the body's foundation, i.e., its skeletal frame.⁶⁰

28. PERADVENTURE THERE SHALL LACK FIVE. Perhaps a tenth of the number will be lacking.

[WILT THOU DESTROY ALL THE CITY FOR LACK OF FIVE.] Will you destroy the city because of the five who are missing from the fifty?⁶¹ Abraham then repeated his request and said, "Will you destroy the city if a ninth are missing from the number (forty-five) concerning which you stated that if there be found there that many righteous men I will not destroy them."⁶²

[29. I WILL NOT DO IT FOR THE FORTY'S SAKE.] *I will not do it*⁶³ means I will not bring destruction. And so as not to prolong his

⁵⁸ *Anokhi*, meaning I, is a variant of *ani*. J.P.S. renders *va-anokhi* (literally, and I) as *who am*.

⁵⁹ *Ani* and *anokhi*, and the two are not related.

⁶⁰ Man's spirit does not turn to ashes (Weiser). Hence I.E. explains that dust and ashes refer to man's bones, which are made out of earth (Krinsky). Cf. I.E.'s comment on Gen. 3:18.

⁶¹ The *bet* of *ba-chamishah* means because, i.e., because of five. I.E. makes this comment because *bet* usually means in.

⁶² That is, if there are 40 righteous people in Sodom.

⁶³ The text literally reads: I will not do for the sake of the 40. I.E. interprets it as: I will not do a destruction; i.e., I will not bring destruction. Cherez explains, God says, *I will not destroy*, and at other times, *I will not do*. I.E. points out that they mean the same thing.

prayers Abraham combined the two previous subtractions.⁶⁴ Thus Abraham asked if one quarter of the forty was missing would God destroy the city. He then asked if a third of the thirty were missing, would God destroy it. He concluded by asking if God would destroy the city if half of the twenty righteous men were missing. Some say that Abraham did not ask God to spare for less than ten people because there were five cities and thus less than two righteous per city. However, they are mistaken, for Scripture expressly tells us that Abraham spoke only of Sodom.⁶⁵ Now even though our sages, of blessed memory, transmitted as mere tradition the law that there can be no public prayer when fewer than ten men are present,⁶⁶ this verse may be taken as a support of our faith in the law which they passed on to us.⁶⁷

33. AND ABRAHAM RETURNED UNTO HIS PLACE. To Hebron. This vision took place at the spot where Abraham went to accompany the angels on their way.⁶⁸ From this spot Abraham looked out toward Sodom. *And he (Abraham) looked out toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the plain, and beheld, and lo, the smoke of the land went up as the smoke of a furnace* (Gen. 19:28) took place after sunrise. This is so even though the preceding verse opens

⁶⁴ That is, from 50 to 45, from 45 to 40. Then Abraham asked if the Lord would destroy the city if 10 were missing from the number to which God had acceded. He no longer asked concerning five.

⁶⁵ According to Cherez and Krinsky. Cf. I.E.'s comment on verse 24. Perhaps we should render for God only promised with regard to Sodom as: *If I find in Sodom*, etc. (v. 26). Thus only the men of Sodom are to be counted in the total.

⁶⁶ Cf. *Berakhot* 7b, 47b; *Megillah* 21b.

⁶⁷ I.E.'s point is that the rabbis could have used this verse as a support for the *halakhah* concerning the necessity of 10 men for public prayer.

⁶⁸ I.E. accepts the opinion that God revealed himself to Abraham after he sent the angels on their way (cf. I.E.'s comments on v. 13). This vision took place on the day prior to Sodom's destruction. After Abraham finished pleading for Sodom he returned to Hebron (Cherez).

with *And Abraham got up early in the morning*.⁶⁹ This is so because Sodom was not destroyed at night. The latter is clearly noted in Scripture.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ Which implies that Abraham looked upon Sodom before sunrise. See I.E. on Gen. 1:18 where he explains that morning comes before sunrise.

⁷⁰ Gen. 19:23,24. Ibn Ezra implies that Abraham got up early in the morning to go to the place from which he could see Sodom. By the time he got there the sun had already risen and Sodom was destroyed (Weiser).

CHAPTER 19

[1. AT EVEN.] The term *ba-erev* (at even) will be explained in the chapter dealing with the Passover observed by the Israelites in Egypt.¹

AND HE FELL DOWN ON HIS FACE TO THE EARTH. Until his nose touched the earth. *Appayim* (his face) refers to the nostrils which protrude from the face.²

2. BEHOLD NOW, MY LORDS. *Adonai* is to be rendered my lords. It does not refer to God.³

When the word *sur* (turn aside) is followed by a *mem* it means to turn away from.⁴ When it is followed by the word *el*⁵ (to) it means turn from your place and come here, or turn from your place and go to a designated place. Compare, *surah elai* (turn in to me) (Jud. 4:18).

1 See I.E.'s comment on Ex. 12:6.

2 *Af* means a nostril; hence *appayim* (his face) means nostrils or nose. I.E. renders *and he fell down on his face to the earth* as: *and he fell down on his nostrils to the earth*.

3 It is vocalized with a *pattach* beneath the *nun*. See I.E.'s comment on Gen. 18:13.

4 See *sur mera* (turn aside from evil) (Ps. 34:15).

5 Either *el* itself or *el* plus a pronominal suffix. Cf. Krinsky. We have translated according to *Vat. Ebr.* 38. The printed editions read *alef* with a *pattach*. The meaning is the same.

AND THEY SAID: "NAY." Unless you urge us to do so.⁶ The word *va-yiftzar* (and he urged) indicates the use of many conciliatory words. *Haftzar* (stubbornness) in *And stubbornness* (*haftzar*) is as idolatry and teraphim (I Sam. 15:23)⁷ is similar.

4. COMPASSED. *Nasabbu* (compassed) is a *nifal*.

ALL THE PEOPLE FROM EVERY QUARTER. Those who did not live in the vicinity of Lot's house.

5. THAT WE MAY KNOW THEM. A euphemism for sexual intercourse.

6. TO THE DOOR. *Ha-petchah* means to the door.⁸ The *tav* of the word *delet* (door) is the sign of the feminine.⁹ The word *delet* is also found spelled without the *tav*.¹⁰

8. KNOWN MAN. The third person plural perfect is the same in both the masculine and feminine when not written with a *vav* conversive which is vocalized with a *pattach*.¹¹

6 That is why Lot did not take their refusal as final. According to Krinsky, I.E. was bothered by the angels apparently changing their mind. Thus I.E. interpreted that the tone of their voices indicated that, if pleaded with, they would change their minds (Weiser).

7 Which I.E. renders: pleading with God to change a prohibition is like idolatry and teraphim (Weiser).

8 The *heh* at the end of the word *petach* means to.

9 It is not a root letter.

10 *Keep watch at the door* (*dal*) *of my lips* in Ps. 141:3.

11 In other words, *yade'u* (have known) is used both for the masculine and the feminine. However, when *have known* is written with a *vav* conversive, which is vocalized with a *pattach*, then the masculine and feminine have different forms. The masculine in this case is *va-yede'u* and the feminine *va-tedanah*.

THESE. *Ha-el* (these) means the same as *ha-eleh*.¹² Saadiah Gaon claims that Scripture used the term *ha-el* because one of the three angels was missing.¹³ However, his comment is far-fetched, for the Aramaic translation of the Pentateuch renders both *ha-el* and *ha-eleh* by the same word.¹⁴

11. WITH BLINDNESS. *Sanverim* (blindness) has a quadrilateral root. This term is also found in the account of Elisha (II Kings 6:18). It refers to physical and intellectual blindness.¹⁵

12. HAST THOU HERE ANY BESIDES? SON-IN-LAW. If you have a son-in-law here.¹⁶

AND THY SONS, AND THY DAUGHTERS. Or sons-in-law who are considered as your sons and daughters.¹⁷

We have here a refutation of the opinion that maintains that one of the two angels was sent to save Lot.¹⁸ For behold, both angels spoke to Lot. Furthermore, they said to him, *for we will destroy this place* (v. 13).¹⁹ Also, Lot later said to the angel, *behold now, thy servant hath found grace in thy sight, and thou hast magnified thy mercy, which thou*

¹² *Ha-eleh* is the usual term for these.

¹³ According to Saadiah, had all three angels been present then Lot would have said *ha-eleh*.

¹⁴ Onkelos renders both *ha-el* and *ha-eleh* by *ha-illen*. If they had different nuances Onkelos would have used a different word for each.

¹⁵ Netter. Had they only been blind they still could have found the door.

¹⁶ The angel was not asking a question; he was making a statement: "If you have a son-in-law here...take him out" (Krinsky).

¹⁷ Lot had no sons (Krinsky). The words "or sons-in-law" have to be supplied by the reader. It is implied in the text. The *vav*, usually translated as and, here is to be rendered as *as* (*vav ha-dimuy*). Cf. Weiser.

¹⁸ *Bereshit Rabbah*, Chap. 50, states that each of the two angels sent to Lot had a separate task, one to save him, the other to destroy Sodom.

¹⁹ Which shows that both angels destroyed Sodom.

hast shown unto me in saving my life, etc. (v. 19). Now that very angel replied to Lot, *Hasten thou, escape thither, for I cannot do anything till thou be come thither* (v. 22).²⁰

14. WHO MARRIED HIS DAUGHTERS. Lot had two other daughters who perished in Sodom. This is clear from Scripture's statement: *Arise, take thy wife, and thy two daughters that are here* (v. 15).²¹

15. AND WHEN THE MORNING AROSE. Rabbi Jonah, the Spanish grammarian,²² said that it is ungrammatical to say *u-khemo alah ha-shachar* (and when arose the morning).²³ However, Rabbi Jonah seems to have forgotten the verse *ve-ravu kemo ravu* (and they shall increase as they have increased) (Zech. 10:8).²⁴

THEN THE ANGELS HASTENED. *Va-ya'itzu* (hastened) means they pressured. Compare, *And the taskmasters were urgent* (atzim), *saying* (Ex. 5:13).

[16. BUT HE LINGERED.] I am amazed by Ben Ephraim's²⁵ commentary. He claims that *va-yitmahmah* (but he lingered) is derived

²⁰ We thus see that the very angel who saved Lot was also involved in the destruction of Sodom.

²¹ Which implies that he took the two daughters who were with him in the house. The term "here" implies that there were others. As to the number two, I.E. probably arrived at it as follows: Scripture speaks of *sons-in-law, who married his daughters* (v. 14). Thus Lot had married daughters. Daughters implies at least two.

²² Ibn Janah.

²³ Our verse reads, *u-khe-mo ha-shachar alah* (and when the morning arose). The usual Biblical syntax for a clause such as ours is verb, noun, *alah ha-shachar*, rather than *ha-shachar alah* (Krinsky). Hence Ibn Janah's comments that *kemo* cannot come before a verb in the perfect.

²⁴ *Kemo* is connected to *ravu*, a verb in the perfect.

²⁵ A Kariate Biblical commentator.

from the same root as *mah* (what).²⁶ However, he seems to have forgotten that both *hehs* of *va-yitmahmah* are pointed.²⁷ In reality *va-yitmahmah* means lingered. It comes from a trilateral root²⁸ with the first letter written twice.²⁹

AND THE MEN LAID HOLD UPON HIS HAND. The verse notes that Lot was overcome with fear and had no strength to flee on his own.

[17. WHEN THEY HAD BROUGHT THEM FORTH.] *Ke-hotzi'am* (when they had brought) is an infinitive. *Ke-hotzi'am* should not be confused with *le-hotzi'am* (to bring them out), in *to bring them out* (*le-hotzi'am*) *of the land of Egypt* (Jer. 31:32), for in our verse the *mem* suffix stands for the subject, i.e., the angels.³⁰ The object of the sentence, Lot and his family, are indicated by the word *otam* (them).

LOOK NOT BEHIND THEE. Neither you nor any that belong to you.³¹ *Thou shalt not eat of it* (Gen. 2:17)³² is similar.

26 It is written twice. S.D. Luzzato explains this as follows: When one rushes his companion, the latter replies, *mah, mah*, i.e., what do you want from me, why are you rushing me? Cf. Luzzato's commentary on Gen. 19:25.

27 The *heh* is silent in *mah* (what). However, it is pointed in *va-yitmahmah* (but he lingered). I.E.'s comment is difficult. Only the last *heh* in *va-yitmahmah* is pointed. Filwarg explains that what I.E. means is that the first *heh* has a *sheva* beneath it, while the final *heh* has a *mapik*. Hence *va-yitmahmah* cannot be derived from *mah*.

28 Its root is *mem, heh, heh*. This root means to linger.

29 The *mem* is written twice in the word *va-yitmahmah*.

30 While in *le-hotzi'am* the *mem* suffix stands for the object.

31 *Al tabbit* (look not) is in the singular. I.E.'s point is that *al tabbit* did not only apply to Lot, but to his entire household.

32 *Thou shalt not eat of it* is a singular. This command did not only apply to Adam. It also applied to Eve. Its meaning is thus: Neither you nor any of yours shall eat of it. Otherwise why would Eve have been punished?

18. OH, NOT SO MY LORD. *Adonai* (my lord) does not refer to God. It is vocalized with a *kamatz* only because it comes at the end of the verse.³³

Rabbi Samuel Ha-Nagid the Spaniard, of blessed memory, said that *al* (not so) in *al na* (Oh, not so) is derived from the same root as *ho'il* (wanted, was willing).³⁴ However, I believe that *al* means no. The meaning of our verse is as follows: When the angels told Lot, *escape to the mountain*, Lot replied, "Oh, not so my lords." He then turned to one of the angels and said, *behold now, thy servant*³⁵ *hath found grace in thy sight*, etc. (v. 19). He did so because he considered this angel to be the more important of the two. The truth is that even among angels there are superiors who lord it over other angels.

The *tav* of the root of *mavet* (death) is dropped in the word *va-matti* (and I die). The reason for this is that in the first person perfect a *tav* and a *yod* are added to the root. When the *tav* of the stem and the *tav* of the suffix come together, the *tav* of the root is lost in the pronunciation.³⁶ The word *ve-kharatta* (and cut down) in *them thou mayest destroy and cut down* (*ve-kharatta*) (Deut. 20:20)³⁷ is similar.

33 *Adonai* with a *kamatz* usually refers to God. Here it does not. It means my lords. It is vocalized with a *kamatz* because the *pattach* changes to a *kamatz* at the end of a verse.

34 According to Rabbi Samuel the Nagid the word *al* is an imperative from the root *yod, alef, lamed*, meaning to want or to be willing (Krinsky). Lot's reply to the angels was: My lords, please accept (want, show willingness to) my request.

35 *Avdekha* (thy servant) is in the singular. Hence I.E. says that this was addressed to the angel whom Lot considered to be the most important of the two.

36 Otherwise *and I die* would be written with two *tavs*, rather than with one. The *tav* of the root is dropped (swallowed is the term used by I.E.) because it is difficult to pronounce two *tavs* in succession.

37 If the *tav* were not lost, *ve-kharatta* (and cut) would have two *tavs*, rather than one, for in the second person singular perfect a *tav* is added to the root.

20. A LITTLE ONE. The meaning of *mitzar* (a little one) is small. It comes from the same root as *tza'ir* (young, little). It is an adjective.³⁸ Even so, it is written without a *heh* at its end.³⁹ Compare, *shegal* (consort).⁴⁰

24. FROM THE LORD. This is a poetic way of saying from Himself.⁴¹ We similarly find Scripture repeating the term the children of Israel five times in one verse (Num. 8:19).

25. AND THAT WHICH GREW UPON THE GROUND. The trees growing there were consumed.

26. FROM BEHIND HIM. From behind Lot.⁴²

A PILLAR. *Nitziv* (pillar) means the same as *matzevah*.⁴³ Her bones were burned by brimstone and she was encrusted in salt,⁴⁴ for it is written, *brimstone, and salt...like the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboiim*⁴⁵ (Deut. 29:22). This verse also shows

38 Modifying city, which is not in the text. Hence the text should read *mitzarah*, rather than *mitzar*.

39 City is feminine. Therefore the adjective modifying city should be feminine. A *heh* at the end of an adjective or noun indicates that the word is in the feminine.

40 A consort is of course a female. Yet the noun *shegal* (consort) is written without a *heh* at its end.

41 The verse reads: *Then the Lord caused to rain upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven.* The second *from the Lord* is redundant. The line should have read: then the Lord caused rain...from Himself out of heaven. I.E. points out that it is poetic to repeat "the Lord" twice. The term I.E. uses for poetic is *tzachot* (elegant). Weiser interprets it to mean, in our context, precise. The Bible wanted to be precise.

42 In contradistinction to *Targum Jonathan*, who interpreted the word to mean from behind her.

43 *Matzevah* is the term usually used for pillar, hence I.E.'s comment.

44 Weiser suggests translating: she became a pillar of salt. He believes *im melech* (with salt) to be an error for *ammud melech* (a pillar of salt).

45 We thus see that salt as well as brimstone descended upon Sodom.

that Zoar was not destroyed.⁴⁶ The latter is also borne out by the words of the angel.⁴⁷

28. AS THE SMOKE OF. *Ke-kitor* means as the smoke of. *Kitor* is derived from the same root as *ketoret* (incense).⁴⁸

A FURNACE. A place where fire is continually burning.

29. WHEN HE OVERTHREW THE CITIES IN WHICH LOT DWELT. In one of which Lot had been living.⁴⁹ Each of these is similar: *Then died Jephthah the Gileadite, and was buried in the cities of Gilead* (Jud. 12:7);⁵⁰ *Even upon a colt the foal of she-asses* (Zech. 9:9);⁵¹ and *And if a man take with his wife also her mother, it is wickedness: they shall be burnt with fire, both he and they* (Lev. 20:14).⁵²

⁴⁶ Deut. 29:22 lists the following cities as being overthrown: Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah and Zaboiim. Zoar is not mentioned.

⁴⁷ Who said, *that I will not overthrow the city of which thou hast spoken* (v. 21).

⁴⁸ Incense produces a lot of smoke.

⁴⁹ Lot did not dwell in all of the overthrown cities. He dwelt only in Sodom.

⁵⁰ Its meaning is: and was buried in one of the cities of Gilead.

⁵¹ Its meaning is: Even upon a colt the foal of one of the she-asses.

⁵² *They* does not mean both women. It is only the second one who is burned. If a man is married to a woman and sleeps with her daughter, the daughter is burned. If he is married to the daughter and sleeps with her mother, then it is the mother who is burned. See I.E. on Lev. 20:14. Hence, although the plural is used, it means one of them.

31. AND THE FIRST-BORN SAID. Lot possibly had a wife who predeceased the wife who turned into a pillar of salt.⁵³ Lot's daughter thought that the world was destroyed by fire and brimstone in the same manner that it had previously been destroyed by the flood.

33. WHEN SHE LAY DOWN. *Be-shichvah* (when she lay down) is an infinitive even though it is vocalized with a *chirik* beneath the *shin*.⁵⁴ *Be-shivri*⁵⁵ in *When I break (be-shivri) your staff of bread* (Lev. 26:26) is similar.

37. MOAB. Moab is the same as *me-av* and means from a father.

[UNTO THIS DAY.] No other people were intermingled with them.⁵⁶ *Unto this day* may also signify that the incestuous origin of the Moabites is known to this day.⁵⁷

⁵³ The Bible mentions that Lot had married daughters (v.14) in addition to the ones whom he had at home (v. 8). It is unlikely that any of the unmarried daughters was older than any one of the married ones. I.E. therefore concludes that the married daughters were from a wife other than the mother of the first-born mentioned in our verse. Since the "elder" (literally, the first-born) was younger than the married daughters, she was from the second wife. In view of that fact that Scripture refers only to one wife in the account of Lot's fleeing from Sodom, I.E. assumes that Lot's first wife was then no longer alive.

⁵⁴ We would expect a *kamatz katan* beneath the *shin*.

⁵⁵ It, too, is an infinitive and is vocalized with a *chirik* beneath the first letter of the root.

⁵⁶ Moab is still the ancestor of the Moabites because all of them are his descendants.

⁵⁷ The time that the Torah was written.

CHAPTER 20

2. OF SARAH HIS WIFE. The word *el* in *el Sarah* (of Sarah) should be rendered *al* (of, concerning).¹ *El* in *For (el) this child I prayed* (I Sam. 1:27) is similar.²

The angel appeared to Abimelech in a dream because of God's regard for Abraham's honor.³ Scripture tells us that both Abimelech⁴ and Pharaoh⁵ took Sarah;⁶ nevertheless, God brought upon Pharaoh and his house great plagues,⁷ while the plagues brought on Abimelech and his house were of a lesser nature. The reason for this is that Abimelech was more righteous than Pharaoh.

[4. LORD, WILT THOU SLAY EVEN A RIGHTEOUS NATION?]
The term *nation* includes Abimelech, his household and his kingdom. That this is so can be seen from Scripture.⁸ Pay no attention to the

¹ *El* is usually rendered to. Thus our phrase would ordinarily be translated: And Abraham said to Sarah she is my sister. However, this makes no sense. Therefore I.E. points out that *al* also has the meaning of, concerning.

² If we translated *el* to mean to, this verse would read: to this child I prayed. This would be an impossible rendering.

³ Abimelech was no prophet and consequently would not experience prophetic visions. He did so only because God wanted to safeguard Abraham's wife. It should be noted that Scripture says God appeared to Abimelech. I.E. explains that God came to him via an angel.

⁴ With regard to Abimelech it is written, *And Abimelech King of Gerar sent, and took Sarah* (v. 2).

⁵ *So I took her (Sarah) to be my wife* (Gen. 12:19).

⁶ Hence both committed the same sin.

⁷ Gen. 12:17.

⁸ Verse 9, in which we read, *What hast thou done unto us...that thou hast brought on me and on my kingdom a great sin?* Thus Abimelech was worried about his kingdom.

dreamer⁹ who changes the terms used in Scripture. The latter explains *goy* (nation) to mean *ish* (a person). I will elaborate a bit upon this in my comments on the verse *to sell her unto a foreign people he shall have power* (Ex. 21:8).¹⁰

6. TO TOUCH. *Li-nego'a* (to touch) means the same as *la-ga'at*. The same is true¹² with *li-neto'a* (to plant)¹³ and *la-ta'at*.¹⁴ All of the above are infinitives.¹⁵

9. WHAT HAST THOU DONE UNTO US? *Meh* (what) is vocalized with a *segol* because it precedes a guttural.¹⁶ This is the rule in Hebrew grammar.

12. AND MOREOVER SHE IS INDEED MY SISTER, THE DAUGHTER OF MY FATHER. Some say that this verse is to be understood in the same way as *O God of my father Abraham* (Gen.

⁹ A term used by I.E. for one who comes up with a far-fetched interpretation. See I.E.'s comment on Gen. 2:11. According to Weiser the allusion is to Saadiah. Saadiah renders our verse, "Lord, wilt thou slay even a righteous man?"

¹⁰ Saadiah renders people as person. Cf. I.E.'s comment on Ex. 21:8.

¹¹ Our verse employs *li-nego'a*. The root of *li-nego'a* is *nun, gimel, ayin*. In *la-ga'at* the *nun* is dropped; in *li-nego'a* it remains. The point is that in this *peh nun* the *nun* is not dropped in one form of the infinitive. It is treated as a *shelemim*, a root that does not drop a letter. We find the same with the root *nun, tet, ayin* (to plant).

¹² The word can be expressed in two ways.

¹³ Cf. Is. 51:16.

¹⁴ Cf. Eccles. 3:2.

¹⁵ They are also *kal* forms.

¹⁶ The *ayin* of *asita* (thou hast done) is vocalized with a *kamatz*. I.E. points out that the Hebrew word for "what" is always vocalized with a *segol*, (*meh*) whenever it comes before an *ayin* vocalized with a *kamatz*. The usual vocalization of "what" is with a *pattach* (*mah*), hence I.E.'s comment.

32:10).¹⁷ However, I believe that Abraham put Abimelech off with a timely excuse. When we come to the verse *I am Esau thy first-born* (Gen. 27:19), I will offer other examples of the same.¹⁸

13. WHEN GOD CAUSED ME TO WANDER. The word *Elohim* is to be rendered as God.¹⁹ The meaning of *hitu oti Elohim* (God caused me to wander) is that God made Abraham journey from place to place without Abraham knowing where he would go next. *To'eh* (wandering) in *and, behold he was wandering (to'eh) in the field* (Gen. 37:15) is similar. *Hitu* (caused me to wander) in our verse is not to be translated as caused me to err.²⁰ We find the Bible using the word *to'eh* in the sense of erring²¹ in *O Lord, why does Thou make us to err (tatenu) from thy ways* (Is. 63:17).²²

SAY OF ME. *Imri li* ²³ is to be rendered: say of me. *And Pharaoh will say of the children of (le-vene) Israel* (Ex. 14:3)²⁴ is similar.

¹⁷ That *daughter of my father* is short for the daughter of my brother, the son of my father, in the same way as *O God of my father Abraham* is short for O God of my father's father Abraham (Weiser). Some identify Sarah with Iscah, the daughter of Haran. I.E. rejects this identification. Cf. I.E.'s commentary on Gen. 11:29. Krinsky suggests that what I.E. means is that grandchildren are considered as children. Thus Sarah, the daughter of Haran, was considered Terah's daughter and hence Abraham's sister. Similarly Jacob is considered Abraham's son.

¹⁸ Jacob also was not telling the full truth.

¹⁹ *Hitu* is the plural. Hence at first glance *Elohim* cannot refer to God since there is only one God. I.E. points out that even so, *Elohim* here refers to God. It should be noted that Onkelos apparently took *Elohim* as referring to idols. See also Rashi's note on this verse. Cf. M. Adler's commentary on Onkelos, *Netivat Ha-Ger*, Israel, 1968.

²⁰ Onkelos renders *to'eh* as err. He explains *when God caused me to wander* as meaning: when the nations erred and followed idols, God drew me near to his service; i.e., *ka-asher hitu* (when the nations erred), *oti Elohim* (God took me).

²¹ According to Cherez. For an alternate interpretation see Krinsky.

²² The root of err is *tav, ayin, heh*, the same as the root for wander. The word can therefore mean wander or err. Erring is an intellectual wandering.

²³ The word *li* usually means to me, hence I.E.'s comment.

²⁴ Here, too, the *lamed* means of, not to.

16. BEHOLD, IT IS FOR THEE A COVERING OF THE EYES
 Some say that this alludes to the dimming of her son's (Isaac's) eyes. 2.
 However, the latter is a Midrashic interpretation.²⁶ I believe that the
 phrase *kesut enayim* (a covering of the eyes) is to be read as if written
 twice.²⁷ It is similar to the word not (*al*) in *O Lord, rebuke me not in*
Thine anger, and chasten me in Thy wrath (Ps. 38:2).²⁸ There are many
 other such examples in Scripture.²⁹ Our verse is to be interpreted as
 follows: Behold, he, viz., Abraham thy husband, is for thee as a
 covering of the eyes, i.e., no one will dare lift up his eyes to thee.³⁰ He
 is similarly a covering of the eyes to all that are with thee, namely, the
 handmaidens who are married to his servants.³¹ Furthermore, the *vav* of
ve-nokhachat (thou are righted) is rather like the Arabic *fa*.³² There are
 thousands of similar *vavs* in Scripture, an example being *On the third*
day Abraham lifted up (*va-yissa*) *his eyes* (Gen. 22:4).³³ *Ve-nokhachat*

²⁵ Gen. 27:1.

²⁶ According to the Talmud (*Megillah* 15a; *Baba Kama* 93a), Abimelech cursed Sarah for deceiving him. The Talmud states, "Abimelech cursed Sarah and said, may your eyes be covered...The curse took effect on her seed as it is written, *And it came to pass, that when Isaac was old, and his eyes were dim.* "

²⁷ See I.E.'s comment on Gen. 2:8 and the note thereto. The verse should be read as follows: Behold, I have given thy brother a thousand pieces of silver; behold, he is for thee a covering of the eyes; and he is also a covering of the eyes to all that are with thee. The Hebrew word *hu* can mean either he or it, Hebrew having no neuter term. I.E. translates the word *hu* in our verse as he and explains that it refers to Abraham.

²⁸ The word not (*al*) in Ps. 38:2 is to be read as if written twice: O Lord rebuke me not in thine anger, chasten me not in thy wrath.

²⁹ In which a word written once is to be read as if written twice. See I.E.'s comments on Gen. 14:3.

³⁰ Because Abraham is your husband. What I.E. seems to be saying is that *covering of the eyes* refers to other men's eyes, i.e., because of Abraham it is as if other men's eyes are covered.

³¹ No one will molest any of the handmaidens; i.e., because of Abraham no one will dare lift up his eyes to Sarah or her handmaidens (Filwarg). Weiser explains I.E. as meaning that the handmaidens will honor Sarah and not treat her with disdain.

³² This *vav* is not a connective but is similar to the Arabic *fa* which serves as a particle introducing the principal part of the sentence (Friedlander).

³³ If the *vav* of *va-yissa* were a connective *vav*, the verse would read: On the third day and Abraham lifted up his eyes.

(thou are righted) is a comment by Moses,³⁴ who added that Sarah did not ever again claim that Abraham was her brother. The meaning of *ve-et kol* (and before all men) is: after all this; i.e., after all this Sarah was chastened.³⁵

Others explain that *behold, it is for thee*³⁶ refers to money which Abimelech gave for the purchase of a garment, and it is the word *natati* (I have given) that is to be read as if written twice. The verse is to be interpreted as follows: Behold, I have given thy brother a thousand pieces of silver to buy thee a covering (*kesut*), meaning a garment, that is appealing to the eye (*enayim*) and I have also given gifts to all that are with thee, and I have also given Abraham sheep, cattle, man and maidservants.³⁷ However, my above quoted interpretation is better. It means that Abraham is a covering of the eyes to thee, before the servants that you had prior to coming here and before the servants that I have given you. Similarly *ve-et kol* (and before all men) means, and before all men Abraham is your *covering of the eyes*.³⁸ According to this interpretation only *ve-nokhachat* (and she was chastened)³⁹ are the

³⁴ And not spoken by Abimelech. Abimelech would not first apologize and then reprimand Sarah; hence *and after all this Sarah was chastened* (*ve-et kol nokhachat*) is a comment by Moses on the affair. It should be noted that I.E. interprets *ve-nokhachat* (thou art righted) as chastened, and *ve-et kol* (and before all man) as: and all, which he explains to mean, and after all this.

³⁵ I.E. interprets *ve-et kol ve-nokhachat* as: and after all of this, and after this incident, she was chastened. Netter interprets I.E. as saying: even with all this honor done to her, Sarah was chastened. If the *vav* of *ve-nokhachat* were a connective *vav*, the phrase would read: and after all this and she was chastened, a very awkward construction.

³⁶ See note 27. According to this interpretation *a covering of the eyes* means a garment appealing to the eyes.

³⁷ This is implied in *ve-et kol* (and all). It is to be interpreted *ve-et kol asher natati*, plus everything that I have already given. It should be noted that this third *natati* is implied in *ve-et kol* and does not pertain to the *natati* which is to be taken as if written twice.

³⁸ That the *covering of the eyes* refers to Abraham.

³⁹ According to this interpretation Abimelech's statement concludes with: and before all men Abraham is your covering of the eyes.

words of Moses. Hence the *vav* of *ve-nokhachat* is a connective *vav* ϵ is normally. Saadia Gaon says that *ve-nokhachat* comes from *nokh* (in front of).⁴⁰ However, he is wrong.⁴¹

17. AND THEY BORE CHILDREN. That is, Abimelech's wife and maidservants. It does not refer to Abimelech.⁴² The following ϵ is similar: *and shed the blood of war in peace* (I Kings 2:5);⁴³ *He spoke unto them in the pillar of cloud* (Ps. 99:7);⁴⁴ *These are the sons of Adah* (Gen. 36:12);⁴⁵ *for whom I have served thee* (Gen. 30:26),⁴⁶ and *thy father of Abraham, and the father of Nahor; and they served other gods* (Josh. 24:2).⁴⁷ That *and they bore children* does not apply to Abimelech is obvious from the fact that Abimelech per se is omitted from the verse which follows, *For the Lord had fast closed up all the wombs of the house of Abimelech, because of Sarah Abraham's wife* (v. 18). I dwell on this point because there are commentators who insist that Abimelech's

⁴⁰ It comes from the root *nun, caf, chet*, meaning in front of; i.e., you are now able to stand before anyone without shame (Weiser, Cherez).

⁴¹ According to I.E. the root of *ve-nokhachat* is *yod, caf, chet*, meaning to chasten, show (Weiser). For alternate interpretations of I.E.'s comment on this verse, see Filwarg.

⁴² Scripture says: *and God healed Abimelech, and his wife, and his maid-servants, and they bore children*. As to how *and they bore children* can apply to Abimelech, see note 48.

⁴³ *In peace* refers only to Abner, not to Amasa, although both are mentioned in the verse.

⁴⁴ This refers only to Moses and Aaron but not to Samuel even though all three are mentioned in the previous verse.

⁴⁵ *These are the sons of Adah* refers only to Eliphaz and his descendants. It does not refer to Reuel or Amalek. The former was the son of Basemath and the latter the son of Timna. This is so even though both Eliphaz and Reuel are mentioned prior to *These are the sons of Adah, Esau's wife* (Weiser).

⁴⁶ This refers to Jacob's wives not his children. This is so even though both are mentioned in Gen. 30:26.

⁴⁷ *And they served other gods* refers to Tereh and Nahor, not to Abraham, even though all are mentioned in the verse (Weiser).

bowels were closed up and he could not eliminate.⁴⁸ However, the presence of the phrase *all the wombs* (v. 18) clearly refutes their interpretation. The term *va-yeledu* (and they bore children) is used when referring to women even though it is a masculine form. Compare, *va-yechemu ha-tzon* (and the flocks conceived) (Gen. 30:39).⁴⁹

⁴⁸ See also Rashi who says, "Their bowels were opened and they eliminated. This is what Scripture means by *and they bore*."

⁴⁹ Since it is the females who conceived, Scripture should have read, *va-techamnah ha-tzon*, rather than *va-yechemu ha-tzon*. In the same manner Scripture says, *va-yeledu* (and they bore), which is a masculine form, rather than *va-teladnah*, which is a feminine form.

CHAPTER 21

2. AT THE SET TIME OF WHICH GOD HAD SPOKEN TO HIM. The reference is to the angel who had asked, *Where is Sarah thy wife?*¹ The same angel also returned to Abraham, for he had promised to do so.²

[3. ISAAC.] God never added any letter to Isaac's name; neither did He ever change it, for God Himself commanded Abraham to call his son Isaac.³

9. MAKING SPORT. Ishmael was acting as a boy is wont to act. Sarah was jealous because he was older than her son.

11. ON ACCOUNT OF HIS SON. *Odor* means account of.

14. AND A BOTTLE OF WATER. *Chemeth* (bottle) is a vessel. It is possibly made out of skin or wood. *Chametekha* (thy venom) in *That putteth thy venom* (*chametekha thereto*) (Hab. 2:15)⁴ is analogous.

Many are amazed at Abraham's behavior. They ask, how could Abraham chase his son out of his house? How could he send away mother and child empty handed? Where was his kindness? However, I

¹ Gen. 18:9.

² *I will certainly return unto thee when the season cometh round; and, lo, Sarah thy wife shall have a son* (Gen. 18:10). I.E. points out that the angel kept his word even though this is not recorded in Scripture.

³ Abraham's name received an additional letter (Gen. 17:5). Jacob's name was changed to Israel (Gen. 32:29). Isaac was the only one of Israel's three patriarchs not to have his name changed.

⁴ I.E. renders *chametekha* (thy venom) as thy vessel.

am amazed at those who are amazed at Abraham, for Abraham acted according to God's dictates.⁵ Had he acted contrary to Sarah's wishes and given money to Hagar, then he would have transgressed God's command. However, ultimately, after Sarah's death, he gave gifts to Ishmael's children.⁶

BREAD AND A BOTTLE OF WATER. He gave the bread and bottle of water to Hagar and placed them upon her shoulder. He then told her, "Take your son with you," and he sent her away. It is possible that Abraham gave Hagar some gold and silver, although this is not mentioned in Scripture. Abraham at that time lived in Gerar. He gave Hagar enough bread and water to last her till she reached Beersheba.⁷ However, Hagar did not know the way and strayed in the wilderness of Beersheba. Ishmael became ill from lack of water. She took him to her bosom⁸ and when she saw that he was dying of thirst, she cast him under one of the shrubs.

15. UNDER ONE OF THE SHRUBS. One of the trees.⁹

16. AS IT WERE A BOWSHOT. *Ki-metachave* (as it were a shot) is not found elsewhere in the Bible. Its definition is known.¹⁰ It means the distance an arrow travels after being shot.

⁵ God had told Abraham, *in all that Sarah saith unto thee, hearken unto her voice* (v. 12).

⁶ Gen. 25:6. The children of the concubines included Ishmael. As long as Sarah lived Abraham was bound to obey her with regard to Ishmael. After her death he was free to show his concern for Ishmael, and he did.

⁷ I.E. assumes that Beersheba was Hagar's destination and that Abraham gave her enough provisions to last her till she got there. He did not simply cast her out into the desert (Weiser).

⁸ I.E. previously noted that Hagar did not carry Ishmael. He therefore has to explain *and she cast the child* (Cherez).

⁹ To provide him with shade (Krinsky).

¹⁰ Weiser.

20. AN ARCHER. Compare, *Call together the archers* (rabbim) *against Babylon* (Jer. 50:29). Although *roveh* (archer) in our verse and *rabbim* (archers) (in Jer. 50:29) come from different roots, they mean the same thing.¹¹ We find a similar case with the words *sarar* and *sarah* (ruled over),¹² also the words *ravah* and *ravav*, both of which mean increased.¹³

ARCHER. *Kashat* (archer) is an adjective. Compare, *gannav* (thief).¹⁴

HAVE I EVEN HERE SEEN HIM THAT SEETH ME?¹⁵ The angel first appeared to her here.¹⁶

23. THAT THOU WILT NOT DEAL FALSELY WITH ME. *Tishkor* (thou wilt deal falsely) is a *kal*. This is the only place in the Bible that this word appears in the *kal*.

MY SON'S SON. *Nechdi* is to be rendered the son of my son.

29. WHAT MEAN THESE. *Hennah* (these) is feminine.

¹¹ The root of archer in our verse is *resh, bet, heh* ; in Jeremiah it is *resh, bet, bet*.

¹² In Es. 1:22 *sorer* (bear rule) comes from the root *sin, resh, resh* ; in Hos. 12:4 *arah* (he strove or ruled over) comes from the root *sin, resh, heh* (Krinsky).

³ The root of *ravah* is *resh, bet, heh*. The root of *ravav* is *resh, bet, bet*.

⁴ *Keshet* is a bow, *kashat* an archer. That this is the case can be seen from its vocalization of a *pattach kamatz*. This vocalization indicates an adjective, as seen from the word *gannav*. Hence *roveh* is not in the construct with *kashat*. The verse is to be read: he was a shooter, an archer (Krinsky).

⁵ This phrase is taken from Gen. 16:13. Some suggest that there is a scribal error in the text and that this comment has been misplaced from 16:13. However, see next note.

⁶ That is, she came to the same place where the angel had first appeared to her after she had been cast out by Sarah when pregnant with Ishmael (Chap. 16). Perhaps the original reading in I.E. was: and he dwelt in the wilderness, the place where she (his other) once said, "Have I even here seen Him that seeth me" (Weiser).

BY THEMSELVES. *Levaddanah* (by themselves) is spelled with *heh* at the end of the word. This is the only place in Scripture where the word is so written.

30. A WITNESS. *Le-edah* means a witness. It should be noted that the word for oath (*shevu'ah*) comes from the word for seven (*shivah*).¹⁷ I will elaborate on this point in my comments on the term *oh hishava shevu'ah* (or sweareth an oath).¹⁸

33. A TAMARISK-TREE. *Eshel* (a tamarisk tree) is a tree.¹⁹ The word *va-yitta* (and he planted) which precedes it is also proof of this.²⁰

¹⁷ The number seven has a mystical meaning. An oath is somehow connected to this mystery. It is for this reason that Abraham took seven ewe lambs (Weiser). Since *shevu'ah* comes from *shivah*, Abraham called the place *be'ersheva*, rather than *be'er shevu'ah*.

¹⁸ For some reason I.E. did not elaborate on this in his comments on Num. 30:3. See Weiser. Also see I.E.'s comments on Zech. 4:10.

¹⁹ Cf. I Sam. 22:6. Some of the Talmudic sages interpret *eshel* to mean an inn (*Sotah* 10a), hence I.E.'s comment.

²⁰ Aside from the fact that we know from other sources that *eshel* is a tree, our verse also indicates the same.

CHAPTER 22

1. THAT GOD DID PROVE ABRAHAM. Some say that the word *nissah* (did prove, tested) is a variation of *nissa* (lifted up),¹ with the *sin* replacing the *samekh*² and the *heh* replacing the *alef*.³ However, the plain meaning of the entire chapter contradicts this interpretation.⁴ The word *nissah* is thus to be taken literally. The philosophers teach that there are two kinds of knowledge, knowledge of events prior to their occurrence, and knowledge of what is presently in existence. The latter is the meaning of *God did prove*, and *for now I know* (v. 12).⁵ Saadia Gaon says that *did prove* means that God tested Abraham in order to demonstrate his piety to mankind; furthermore, he interprets *for now I know that thou art a God-fearing man* (v. 12) to mean that now I have made known to all that thou art a God-fearing man. But didn't Saadia know that even Abraham's young men were not present when he bound Isaac and placed him on the altar?⁶

¹ The problem which some commentators found in a literal translation of *nissah* as prove is that it seemed to imply that God did not know what Abraham's response to his request would be. They thus interpreted *nissa* as coming from *nun, sin, alef*, meaning lifted up; i.e., God exalted Abraham by showing him to be a paragon of absolute obedience to the Lord's will. Cf. *Bereshit Rabbah* 80:55.

² *Nissah* is spelled *nun, samekh, heh*; *nassah* is spelled *nun, sin, alef*.

³ The *heh* in *nissah*, like the *alef* in *nasa*, is silent.

⁴ The chapter deals with a test, a trial. Hence *nissah* means proved, tested, not exalted.

⁵ God knew (now I know) what Abraham would do if tested. However, until Abraham offered Isaac, God's knowledge was knowledge of the potential or possible. He tested Abraham (did prove) to actualize His knowledge (Krinsky). He now knew what Abraham did, not only what Abraham would do.

⁶ Cf. verse 5. In other words, no one was there to witness his act.

Others say that *and offer him there for a burnt offering* is to be interpreted as: bring him up to the mountain; this will be considered as if you brought him up as a burnt offering.⁷ However, Abraham did not understand his prophetic vision⁸ and hurried to sacrifice Isaac. God then told him, "I did not ask you to slay Isaac."

Still others say that God told Abraham: act as if you were bringing him up as a burnt offering. We find a similar occurrence in connection with the prophet Jeremiah, who was commanded to *Go unto the house of the Rechabites...and give them wine to drink* (Jer. 35:2).⁹

Now these geonim offered the above interpretations because they held that it is not possible that God would issue a command and then take it back.¹⁰ However, they overlooked the fact that God took the first-born to serve Him and after a year replaced them with the Levites.¹¹ In reality all questions are removed by Scripture's first stating *that God did prove Abraham*.¹² The reason God tested Abraham was in order to reward him.¹³ The meaning of *for now I know that* (v. 12) is the same as *and if not, I will know* (Gen. 18:21).¹⁴ I will also explain, if God

⁷ The word translated as offer him { *ve-ha'alehu* } literally means bring him up.

⁸ He thought that God actually wanted him to offer his son as a burnt offering.

⁹ The Rechabites were foresworn by Rechab from drinking wine (Jer., Chap. 35). When God told Jeremiah, *and give them wine to drink* he did not intend that Jeremiah actually make them drink. Similarly God's intention was not that Abraham actually sacrifice Isaac. He wanted Abraham to make all the preparations necessary for the sacrifice, i.e., to bind Isaac, lay him on the altar, etc. He was to do everything as if he were offering him as a sacrifice.

¹⁰ God is unchangeable; hence his mind, too, is unchangeable. Therefore they offered the latter two interpretations.

¹¹ The first-born were at first sanctified to God to minister before him (Ex. 13:2). However, the next year the Levites took their place. Cf. Num. 3:40-44.

¹² God did not change His mind. He never intended for Abraham to sacrifice Isaac.

¹³ For his willingness to sacrifice his son in obedience to His will. I.E. now backsteps and explains why God, who is all-knowing, tested Abraham. He had earlier insisted that "prove" is to be taken literally. He now explains why. He similarly alludes to the meaning of *for now I know*.

¹⁴ See I.E.'s comments on Gen. 18:21.

who knows all hidden things will help me, the secret meaning of t term in my comments on *I know thee by name* (Ex. 33:12).

2. UPON ONE OF THE MOUNTAINS. The temple was later bu on this mountain. This is explicitly stated in Scripture: *So Solomon bu the house on Mount Moriah*.¹⁵ It was not a very tall mountain. Th threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite was on it.

3. AND HE CLEAVED THE WOOD FOR THE BURNT OFFERING. And placed them on his ass.¹⁶

4. ON THE THIRD DAY. That he set out from Beersheba. Some ask, how could Abraham say, *and (we will) come back to you* (v. 5)?¹⁷ Others answer them by saying that Abraham intended to return with Isaac's bones, and he disguised his intentions so that his young men would wait for him till he returned and Isaac would not know what was about to happen and flee.¹⁸

Our sages, of blessed memory, say that Isaac was thirty-seven years old at the time of his binding.¹⁹ If this be a tradition, we will accept it. However, from a strictly logical point of view it is unacceptable. If Isaac was an adult at this time, then his piety should have been revealed in Scripture and his reward should be double that of his father for willingly having submitted himself to be sacrificed. Yet Scripture says nothing concerning Isaac's great self-sacrifice. Others say that Isaac was five years old at the time of his binding. This, too, is unacceptable, since

¹⁵ Cf. I Kings 6:14 and II Chron. 3:1. The verse quoted by I.E. does not appear anywhere in the Bible. It is a composite of these two verses.

¹⁶ I.E. derives this from Scripture's stating that after Abraham left his young men with the ass (v. 5), he placed the wood on Isaac (v. 6). This implies that until then the wood was on the ass (Weiser).

¹⁷ When he knew that only he would return. He should have said, "and I will return."

¹⁸ A prophet may tell an untruth if necessary. See I.E.'s comments on Gen. 20:12; 27:19.

¹⁹ *Bereshit Rabbah* 56:11.

Isaac carried the wood for the sacrificial pyre.²⁰ It thus appears logical to assume that Isaac was close to thirteen years old and that Abraham overpowered him and bound him against his will. Proof of this can be seen from the fact that Abraham hid his intention from Isaac and told him, *God will provide Himself the lamb for a burnt-offering, my son* (v. 8). Abraham knew that if he said, "You are to be the burnt-offering," Isaac would quite possibly have fled.

11. ABRAHAM, ABRAHAM. The repetition of the name expresses urgency.

13. BEHIND HIM A RAM CAUGHT IN THE THICKET. Abraham beheld a ram after (*achar*) it had been caught in the thicket by its horns.²¹

If the *chet* of *ne'echaz* (caught) is vocalized with a *kamatz*, then the word "was" is missing from the text and the meaning of the phrase is, after it was yet caught in the thicket.²² There are many other similar instances.²³ Others say that *achar* is connected to *And Abraham lifted up his eyes*.²⁴ But if this were so, the word *achar* would have been

²⁰ A child of five would be unable to carry that much wood.

²¹ Scripture reads: *achar ne'achaz*. This is ungrammatical. I.E. suggests that it be interpreted as if written, *achar she-ne'echaz* (after it had been caught). J.P.S. renders *achar* (after) as behind him.

²² In our texts the word *ne'echaz* (caught) is vocalized with a *pattach*. When *ne'echaz* is so vocalized it is a third person perfect, meaning it was caught. However, there are texts in which *ne'echaz* is vocalized with a *kamatz*. In this instance *ne'echaz* is a participle, meaning it is caught. If this be the case, then the word "was" has to be inserted in the text to make sense out of the verse, as "was" followed by a participle is proper Hebrew.

²³ "Was" followed by a participle indicates a continuous action. Compare, in Rabbinic literature, *hu hayah omer* { *Aboth* 1:2), literally translated, he was saying; i.e., he used to say.

²⁴ The meaning of our verse being: and Abraham lifted up his eyes after this and saw a ram caught in the thicket by its horns. Until now I.E. explains *achar* (after) as being connected to caught. This new interpretation suggests that *achar* concludes the first clause in our verse. This is the opinion of Rashi and Onkelos. According to them our verse reads: And Abraham lifted up his eyes after this.

followed by *ken* or *zot*,²⁵ as is the case whenever the word *achar* (af indicates a pause.

14. [IN THE MOUNT WHERE THE LORD IS SEEN.] T meaning of this clause can be ascertained in my comments on *These a the words* (Deut. 1:1).²⁶

16. BY MYSELF HAVE I SWORN. *By Myself* indicates a great an eternal oath.²⁷

BECAUSE. *Ya'an* (because) is similar in meaning to *anah* (testify o bear witness).²⁸ The meaning of the term is: this act will testify and bear witness.²⁹

17. THE GATE OF HIS ENEMIES. Cities surrounded by walls having gates.

18. BECAUSE. *Ekev* (because) means a reward that is granted at the end.³⁰

19. SO ABRAHAM RETURNED. Isaac is not mentioned because he was under Abraham's care. Those who say that Abraham slaughtered

²⁵ Cf. *Vat. Ebr.* 38 and Filwarg. Our text is probably corrupt. The word *achar* is always in the construct. When *achar* is not in the construct it is written, *achar ken* or *achar zot*. Hence our verse should read *achar ken*. Since it does not, *achar* cannot be connected to the preceding clause but rather to what follows.

²⁶ I.E. implies in his commentary on Deut. 1:1 that certain phrases in the Pentateuch, among them this phrase, were added later.

²⁷ An irrevocable oath.

²⁸ *Ya'an* is spelled *yod, ayin, nun* ; *anah* is spelled *alef, nun, heh*. *Anah* means to respond, answer, bear witness.

²⁹ The primary meaning of *ya'an* is, what is going to happen will bear witness that, etc. Cf. I.E.'s comments on Is. 7:15 and Friedlander's comment thereto.

³⁰ *Ekev* means heel. The heel is the bottom of a person; hence it means the reward ultimately given (at the end) for a deed (Krinsky, Weiser, Cherez). Thus the clause should be rendered: as a reward for thou hast hearkened to my voice.

Isaac and left him on the altar and following this Isaac came to life are contradicting Scripture.³¹

20. BEHOLD, MILKAH, SHE ALSO HATH BORNE. This is stated to inform us of Rebekah's pedigree.³²

³¹ Scripture explicitly tells us that God told Abraham not to slay Isaac (v. 12).

³² The purpose of verses 20-23 is to inform us of Rebekah's pedigree.

CHAPTER 23

CHAYE SARAH

1. THE LIFE OF. The word life (*chayyim*) is always encountered in the plural. We never find it in the singular.

[A HUNDRED AND SEVEN AND TWENTY YEARS.] Hebrew usually first lists the larger numbers and then the smaller ones.¹ But we also find the opposite, an example being Scripture's enumeration of Jacob's years² (Gen. 47:28).

2. KIRIATH-ARBA. Arba was the name of one of the great men of the Anakim.³ The identification of Arba with Abraham is homiletical,⁴ as Abraham was not of that race. When Sarah died Abraham was elsewhere; hence Scripture states, *and Abraham came*.

¹ Verse 1 literally reads, *And the life of Sarah was a hundred and twenty and seven years*.

² Gen. 47:28 literally reads, *So the days of Jacob, the years of his life were seven years and forty and a hundred years*. Here Scripture lists the smaller numbers first.

³ Cf. *Now the name of Hebron beforetime was Kiriath-arba, which Arba was the greatest man among the Anakim* (Josh. 14:15); *even Kiriath-arba, which Arba was the father of Anak* (Josh. 15:13).

⁴ *Bereshit Rabbah* 14:6.

AND TO WEEP FOR HER. The word *livkotah* is to be rendered *to weep for her*. And *bewail her father* (Deut. 21:13)⁵ is similar.

3. BEFORE HIS DEAD. This alludes to the body.⁶

[SAYING.] The explanation of this term is found elsewhere in this commentary.⁷

4. I AM A STRANGER. When the word stranger (*ger*) stands by itself, it refers to a transient stranger. And a *sojourner* (*ve-toshav*) means a resident stranger.⁸ Abraham said to them, "I am a sojourner among you. We are all mortal, I do not have a possession (*achuzah*) i.e., an inherited or bought piece of land⁹ for use as a burial plot."

6. MY LORD. Not our lord.¹⁰ One man spoke. He employed the term my lord because it is impolite to include others when one is speaking as a subordinate.¹¹

⁵ *Livkotah* is made up of two words, *livkot* (to weep) and the object *otah* (her). This combination of pronoun and object can only be made with a transitive verb. However, *livkotah* is intransitive. The meaning of *livkotah* is thus to weep her, an impossible rendering. Hence I.E. comments that the meaning of our word is to weep for her. He points out that the same is true in Deut. 21:13 (Krinsky).

⁶ His dead (*meto*) is in the masculine. However, Sarah was a woman. Thus Scripture should have used the feminine (*metato*). I.E. explains that dead refers to the body, *guf*, which is a masculine word (Cherez).

⁷ Ex. 19:3, or perhaps in his comments on verse 17 (Weiser).

⁸ In other words, when sojourner (*toshav*) is coupled with stranger (*ger*) it means a resident stranger (Krinsky). Cherez disagrees. He thinks I.E. is only commenting on the word sojourner (*toshav*).

⁹ It comes from the root *alef, chet, zayin* (to hold). One holds on to land by inheritance or acquisition. *Achuzah* thus means a holding, the idea being a piece of property with a title.

¹⁰ Scripture states, *And the children of Heth answered Abraham, saying...Hear us, my lord*. Since they apparently all spoke we would expect the use of the term our lord.

¹¹ In other words, *And the children of Heth answered* does not mean they all spoke in unison. One man spoke on behalf of all. Had they all spoken, Scripture would have read *adonenu*. It should be noted that the entire verse, with the exception of *adoni*, is in the plural.

A MIGHTY PRINCE. Because thou art a prophet. The term *elohim* (mighty) is used in the sense of great.¹²

SHALL WITHHOLD. *Yikhleh* means shall withhold.¹³ It can be spelled either with a *heh* or an *alef*.¹⁴

[7. AND BOWED DOWN.] I have given the grammatical explanation of this word in *The Book of Foundation*.¹⁵ Those who say that Abraham bowed down to God speak nonsense.¹⁶ Scripture explicitly states that Abraham bowed to the children of Heth. Bowing means a bending of the head.¹⁷ It is a way of showing reverence. Moses also bowed before his father-in-law.¹⁸

9. THE CAVE OF MACHPELAH. A cave within a cave.

FOR THE FULL PRICE. The opposite of *male* (full) is *chaser* (lacking).¹⁹

11. NAY. Not so, *my lord*, only hear me.²⁰

¹² The word *elohim* (translated by J.P.S. as mighty) usually means God.

¹³ The root *caf, lamed, heh* means to finish (see Gen. 2:1). The root *caf, lamed, alef* means to withhold (see Gen. 8:2; Ps. 40:12). *Yikhleh* is spelled with a *heh* in our verse. Hence I.E. points out that *caf, lamed, heh* can also mean to withhold.

¹⁴ Rashi makes the same point.

¹⁵ See I.E.'s comments on Gen. 2:17 and the notes thereto.

¹⁶ They are troubled by Abraham bowing before another human being.

¹⁷ Abraham did not prostrate himself. The latter is done in prayer and only before God. He merely bowed his head as a sign of respect.

¹⁸ Ex. 18:7.

¹⁹ Our verse reads, *kesef male* (the full price). The word *male* means full. The opposite of full is empty (*rek*). I.E. points out that in our case this does not apply. One cannot say, *kesef rek* (empty money). However, one can say, *chaser kesef* (money is lacking). Hence *male* in our verse means the full amount and it is the opposite of *chaser*, rather than of *rek* (Filwarg). Thus *kesef male* means the full price.

²⁰ *Nay, my lord, hear me*, could conceivably be taken to mean: My lord should not hear me, hence I.E.'s comment (Filwarg).

12. BEFORE THE PEOPLE OF THE LAND. Abraham bowed before Ephron in the presence of the people of the land in order to honor him.

13. BUT IF THOU WILT, I PRAY THEE, HEAR ME. If you will do this²¹ I pray thee, hear me. Or it may mean, if you will do this, I pray thee, when I will give the price of the field, take it of me.²²

16. CURRENT MONEY WITH THE MERCHANT. Merchants accept only the best currency.

17. WERE MADE SURE. The field was made sure and passed permanently into Abraham's possession. This verse and the one that preceded it are to be read as one verse. Similarly the verse opening with *I am a stranger and a sojourner* (v. 4) and the verse which precedes it are to be read as one verse. The ten pairs of verses that Saadiah Gaon listed as being in reality one verse are in fact not to be read as one verse.²³

[18. IN THE PRESENCE OF THE CHILDREN OF HETH.] The local inhabitants.

[BEFORE ALL THAT WENT IN AT THE GATE OF HIS CITY.] Those who happened to be passing by.

19. AND AFTER THIS, ABRAHAM BURIED SARAH HIS WIFE. After the burial of Sarah the field was made sure as a burial

²¹ According to I.E. *if thou wilt* is short for *thou wilt do this*, i.e., give me the field. The verse should be interpreted as follows: But if thou wilt give me the field, I pray thee, hear me, I will give the price of the field; take it of me.

²² According to this interpretation *I pray thee* (lu) is connected to *I will give* rather than to *hear me* as it is in the first explanation. The verse should be interpreted as follows: But if thou wilt give me the field, hear me, I pray thee, when I give the price of the field, take it of me (Cherez).

²³ Saadiah Gaon lists 10 pairs of Biblical verses that are to be interpreted as one verse. I.E. disagrees with him. Saadiah's 10 pairs of verses are enumerated by Krinsky.

ground possession belonging to Abraham and his descendants.²⁴ Scripture tells of the purchase of the field of Machpelah to teach us of the superiority of the land of Israel over all countries, both for the living and the dead. Moreover, it informs us that God's word to Abraham that he would possess the land as an inheritance was fulfilled.²⁵

²⁴ I.E. points out that verse 20 does not repeat verse 17. The latter states that the field was made sure as a possession, the former that it was made sure as a burial ground for Abraham and his descendants (Filwarg).

²⁵ Abraham now began to take actual possession of the land of Israel (Filwarg).

CHAPTER 24

1. AND THE LORD HAD BLESSED ABRAHAM IN ALL THINGS. With length of days, wealth, honor and sons, these being all the things that men desire to have. If the interpretation that Abraham had a daughter named Bakkol¹ were correct, then Scripture should have read: and the Lord blessed Abraham "with" Bakkol.²

2. PUT, I PRAY THEE, THY HAND UNDER MY THIGH. Some say that *my thigh* alludes to Abraham's circumcised member.³ However, if this were the case, then Abraham should have made him swear by the covenant of circumcision, and not by the Lord.⁴ I believe that it was customary in those days for a person to place his hand under the thigh of his master, its meaning being, "If you are subject to my authority, place your hand under my thigh." The lord then sat on his servant's hand. By doing so the servant, as it were, said to the master, "My hand is under your authority to do your will." This custom is still followed in India.

¹ Our verse reads, and the Lord had blessed Abraham *ba-kol* (in all things). According to the Talmud *ba-kol* is a proper noun. Cf. *Baba Batra* 16b, "He (Abraham) had a daughter named Bakkol."

² If *ba-kol* is a proper noun then the preposition "with" is missing. Rather than reading *ba-kol*, the verse should have read, *be-vakkol* (with Bakkol).

³ One who takes an oath must take hold of a holy object. The circumcised member is such an object. Cf. *Shevuot* 38b and Rashi.

⁴ One swears by the holy object that one is holding.

3. [THE GOD OF HEAVEN AND THE GOD OF THE EARTH.]

God is so described in our verse because it is ordained in heaven who here on earth will be united in matrimony. This thing is a secret.⁵

OF THE CANAANITES. This includes all of the eleven Canaanite peoples.

4. BUT THOU SHALT GO UNTO MY COUNTRY. To Haran where he had once dwelt.⁶

AND TO MY KINDRED. Ur of the Chaldees.⁷

5. PERADVENTURE. *Ulai* (peradventure) has many meanings in Scripture.⁸ *If so (ulai) be it yield, strangers shall swallow it up* (Hos. 8:7), is similar.

The *heh* of *he-hashev* (must I needs bring back) is vocalized with a *segol*⁹ because the *heh*¹⁰ of the *hifil* which follows it is vocalized with a *kamatz*.¹¹ If the first *heh* of *he-hashev* were vocalized with a *pattach*, it would be difficult to pronounce both *hehs* in succession.¹²

⁵ It is one of the secrets of creation (Krinsky). Or the one so ordained is a secret and man must pray that God send him his destined one. Abraham noted this so that his servant would take with utmost seriousness the task laid upon him (Weiser).

⁶ See I.E.'s comments on Gen. 12:1.

⁷ Cf. Gen. 11:31 and I.E.'s comments on Gen. 11:26.

⁸ In our verse it means, and if (Weiser). It has a similar meaning in Hos. 8:7.

⁹ The *heh* interrogative (*heh ha-she'elah*) is generally vocalized with a *chataf pattach*, a furtive *pattach*. Before *heh*, *alef*, *chet*, *ayin* it is vocalized with a *pattach*. However, here in *he-hashev* it is vocalized with a *segol*, hence I.E.'s comment.

¹⁰ The point is that before the letters *heh*, *alef*, *chet*, *ayin* vocalized with a long *kamatz*, the *heh* interrogative is vocalized with a *segol*, hence the vocalization *he-hashev*.

¹¹ *Hashev* comes from the root *shin*, *vav*, *bet*. The *heh* of *hashev* is the sign of the *hifil*.

¹² That is, if the *heh* preceding *heh*, *alef*, *chet*, *ayin* vocalized with a long *kamatz* were to be vocalized with a *pattach*, it would be hard to pronounce both *hehs* in succession. Therefore it is vocalized with a *segol*.

6. [BEWARE.] When the word *hishamer* (beware) is penultimately accented it is related to the word *shemirah* (watching, guarding).¹³ However, when it is ultimately accented it is related to the word *shemarim* (lees).¹⁴ Compare, *hishamer* (keep calm) in *Keep calm* (*hishamer*), *and be quiet* (Is. 7:4), which has the same basic meaning as *shemarav* (his lees) in *And he hath settled on his lees* (*shemarav*) (Jer. 48:11).

7. HE WILL SEND HIS ANGEL BEFORE THEE. This is a prayer. If it were a prophecy Abraham would not have said, *And if the woman be not willing to follow thee* (v. 8).¹⁵

8. THOU SHALT NOT BRING MY SON BACK THITHER. He must remain in the land of Israel. Abraham said, *thou shalt not bring my son back* ¹⁶ because he (Abraham) was the root.¹⁷

11. AND HE MADE THE CAMELS TO KNEEL DOWN. He made them kneel upon their knees.¹⁸

12. SEND ME, I PRAY THEE. Its meaning is, prepare for me what I desire.¹⁹ *Because the Lord thy God sent me* (Gen. 27:20) is similar.²⁰

¹³ Thus when *hishamer* is penultimately accented it means be on guard, beware. This is the usual meaning of *hishamer* in Scripture. Cf. Deut. 8:11.

¹⁴ In this case it means keep calm. Krinsky points out that Is. 7:4 is the only place in Scripture where *hishamer* is accented on the last syllable.

¹⁵ There would have been no need to make contingent plans if God had told Abraham that he would appoint a girl for Isaac from his kindred and country.

¹⁶ Isaac never dwelt in the place where the servant was being sent. How, then, could Abraham say, *thou shalt not bring my son back thither*? One cannot bring back what was never there. Abraham should have said: *thou shalt not bring my son thither*.

¹⁷ And Isaac, as it were, was the tree. If Abraham was the root, then it is as if Isaac were there. Thus on Seder night we read, *We were Pharaoh's bondmen in Egypt* (Deut. 6:21). If our ancestors were there it is as if their children were there (Krinsky).

¹⁸ *Va-yavrekh* (and he made kneel) is a denominative of *berekh* (knee) (Weiser).

¹⁹ The object (what I desire) is missing and must be supplied by the reader (Weiser).

²⁰ Here, also, the object is missing and is to be supplied by the reader.

14. SHE THAT THOU HAST APPOINTED. The servant relied on the efficacy of the prophet's²¹ prayer.²² He was certain that God accepted it and sent an angel, the latter being God's very own messenger, to help him by appointing a damsel in a dream.²³ The servant reasoned that there was no family as charitable as his master's.²⁴

Many are perplexed²⁵ because they say that the servant expressed his request improperly.²⁶ I, however, do not see anything wrong in what he said, for had it been another damsel, one not of Abraham's family, who offered to give him drink and water his camels, he would have left her and nothing would have been lost, for the verse *and said; Whose daughter art thou* means he had previously said, before he gave the ring and bracelets to Rebekah, *whose daughter art thou*?²⁷ Scripture similarly states, *And I asked her, and said: Whose daughter art thou? And she said: The daughter of Bethuel...And I put the ring upon her nose, and the bracelets upon her hands* (v. 47). The sum of the matter is

²¹ Abraham.

²² *Thou hast appointed* implies that God had already chosen a bride for Isaac. How did the servant know this? I.E. suggests that the servant believed that God had accepted Abraham's prayer (Krinsky). Or I.E.'s point is that the servant did not set up a test to see if the Lord set aside a damsel for Isaac. He trusted that God had because he relied on Abraham's prayer (Filwarg). Throughout this section I.E. refers to the servant as "the servant." He apparently was uncertain as to whether to identify him with Eliezer, as the Midrash and other medieval commentators did.

²³ I.E.'s comment is vague. Weiser suggests that an angel appeared to Rebekah and directed (appointed) her to go out to the well. According to Krinsky the angel appeared to Rebekah's family in a dream and told them to appoint a damsel for Isaac.

²⁴ Hence a girl saying, *Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also* would most probably be of Abraham's family (Krinsky).

²⁵ *Taanit* 4a.

²⁶ In other words they claim that the servant selected an improper omen as proof of God's choice. "What would the servant have done if a lame or a blind girl would have offered to give him and his flocks water? What would he have done if she was not of Abraham's family and kindred" (*Taanit* 4a)?

²⁷ Verses 22 and 23 state that the servant first gave Rebekah a golden ring and two bracelets and then said, *Whose daughter art thou*? This implies that he took Rebekah for Isaac before he knew who she was. This contradicts what I.E. has just said, hence his interpretation.

the servant prayed that God would appoint for Isaac a young lady from the family of his master, the sign of God's choice being that the damsel would act graciously as a woman of noble character should.²⁸ God heard his prayer. However, the case of Jonathan is totally different.²⁹

16. NEITHER HAD ANY MAN KNOWN HER. It is extremely unlikely that Scripture speaks of abnormal intercourse.³⁰ The verse rather refers to a certain intercourse method wherein it is possible to sleep with a virgin and even to impregnate her without deflowering her. However, it is unseemly to describe how this can be done.

21. AND THE MAN LOOKED STEADFASTLY ON HER. *Mishta'eh* (looked steadfastly) means the same as *mishtomem*³¹ (astonished, awe-struck). It comes from the same root as *sha'u* and *tisha'eh* (waste) in *Until cities be waste* (*sha'u*) (Is. 6:11),³² and *And the land become utterly waste* (*tisha'eh shemamah*) (Is. 6:11).

The meaning of *lah* (on her) is because of her.³³ *Then Daniel...was appalled* (*eshtomam*) *for a while* (Dan. 4:16) is similar.³⁴ The *tav* of

²⁸ Cf. Cant. 7:2 (*bat nadiv*).

²⁹ I.E.'s point is that the servant did not really set up a test to determine God's will. He merely offered a prayer that God send him what he was looking for. His choice was not dependent on what the girl would do. If she acted in a certain way then he would investigate further. However, Jonathan set up a test. If such and such would happen he would act thus; if it did not, he would act differently. Jonathan's test related to his attacking the Philistines. Jonathan said, *If they say thus unto us: Tarry until we come unto you; then we will stand still in our place, and will not go up unto them. But if they say thus: Come up unto us; then we will go up; for the Lord hath delivered them unto our hand; and this shall be the sign unto us* (I Sam. 14:9, 10).

³⁰ Cf. Rashi's comment on this verse.

³¹ Both *mishta'eh* and *mishtomem* come from roots meaning wasted and themselves mean astonished, perplexed or awe-struck.

³² *Mishta'eh tisha'eh* and *sha'u* come from the root *shin, alef, heh*.

³³ The word *lah* usually means to her. However, it cannot be so translated in our verse. The servant was not astonished to her; he was astonished because of her.

³⁴ Daniel was perplexed or astonished. In this verse, too, a word (*eshtomem*) from a root meaning waste (*shin, mem, mem*) is used to describe one who is awe-struck or astonished. See note 31.

mishta'eh is not part of the root of the word but is the sign of the *hitpa'el* conjugation. It is like the *tav* of *nitra'eh*³⁵ in *let us look* (*nitra'eh*) *one another in the face* (II Kings 14:8). *Mishta'eh* definitely does not come from the root *shin, tav, heh* (drink).³⁶

22. A GOLDEN RING. *Nezem* (ring) can refer either to a nose ring³⁷ or to an earring.³⁸ The one worn on the nose is attached by a string which is tied around the forehead.³⁹

HALF A SHEKEL. *Beka* means half a shekel. It comes from the same root as *nivka* (was cleft).⁴⁰

AND TWO BRACELETS. *Tzemidim* (bracelets) comes from the same root as *tzamid* (cover of a vessel) in *covering* (*tzamid*) *close-bound* (Num. 19:15).⁴¹ A bracelet is called a *tzamid* because each bracelet worn on the hand is made up of two parts.⁴² The form of this ornament is well known.

23. TO LODGE IN. *La-lin* (to lodge in) is in the *hifil*. If it were a *kal* it would read *la-lun*.

³⁵ The root of *nitra'eh* is *resh, alef, heh*. The *tav* of *nitra'eh* is the *tav* of the *hitpa'el*.

³⁶ Some versions of Onkelos read, *and the man was drinking*. See Krinsky. According to this interpretation the man acted as if he was drinking, but he was really looking at Rebekah (Cherez).

³⁷ See verse 47.

³⁸ See Gen. 35:4.

³⁹ Krinsky suggests that I.E. was not aware of the fact that nose rings are inserted in the pierced nostril.

⁴⁰ See Gen. 7:11. A *beka* is thus a split shekel, i.e., half a shekel.

⁴¹ *Tzemed* means a pair. Cf. *a couple of asses* (*tzemed chamorim*) (Jud. 19:10). According to I.E. a *tzamid* (Num. 19:15) is a cover made up of two parts. Cf. I.E.'s comments on Num. 19:15. Hence a *tzemed* is a bracelet made of two parts.

⁴² For a different interpretation see Filwarg.

32. AND PROVENDER. *Mispo* (provender) is a general term for cattle feed. The Bible could have used barley in its place.⁴³

33. AND THERE WAS SET. *Va-yusam* (and there was set) is in the *hofal*. It is like *va-yushav* (brought) in *And Moses and Aaron were brought* (*va-yushav*) (Ex. 10:8).⁴⁴ Some say that the statement *I am Abraham's servant* is connected to *I will not eat*, the meaning of the verse being: I am Abraham's servant and there are certain foods which we are prohibited from eating. However, I believe that the meaning of the servant's words are self-evident.⁴⁵

41. THEN SHALT THOU BE CLEAR FROM MY OATH. The servant did not say, from my *shevu'ah* (oath).⁴⁶ What he meant was, "I fear my master and his curse."

49. KINDLY. *Chesed* (kindly) denotes an act which one is not obligated to perform.

AND TRULY. *Emet* (truly) denotes keeping the promise to deal kindly. The word *emet* comes from the same root as *emunah* (steadfastness).⁴⁷ The *tav* of *emet* is the sign of the feminine.⁴⁸

⁴³ Barley was used as animal feed. See I Kings 5:8 and *Sotah* 14a.

⁴⁴ *Va-yushav* is a *hofal*.

⁴⁵ Since God sent him good speed he did not want to eat till he had completed his task (Krinsky). It is proper to take care of one's obligations first and then to eat (Weiser).

⁴⁶ He said, from my *alah*. However, in verse 8, Scripture employs the term *shevu'ah*. *Alah* is an oath which has a curse attached to it. Cf. Num. 5:21. The servant thus emphasized that the oath he took had a curse attached to it; i.e., a curse would fall upon him if he violated the oath (Weiser).

⁴⁷ The root being *alef, mem, nun*.

⁴⁸ If the root of *emet* is *alef, mem, nun*, where does the *tav* come from? I.E. points out that it is the sign of the feminine. The word should read *amenet*. However, the *nun* of the root is dropped (Krinsky).

51. AS THE LORD HATH SPOKEN. As the Lord hath decreed. *By the word of the Lord were the heavens made* (Ps. 33:6)⁴⁹ is similar. On the other hand, it may mean: as the Lord hath appointed in a dream.⁵⁰

53. PRECIOUS THINGS. *Migdanot* (precious things) comes from the same root as *megadim*⁵¹ (precious) (Cant. 4:13).⁵² On the other hand, it may mean expensive garments. In the latter case the *nun* of *migdanot* is part of its root,⁵³ and the word *migdanot* follows the paradigm of *mitpachot* (cloaks).⁵⁴

55. AND HER BROTHER AND HER MOTHER SAID. They received the gifts and Bethuel was silent.⁵⁵ It is possible that Laban was wiser and more respected than his father, for we find, *Then Laban and Bethuel answered* (v. 50).⁵⁶

59. AND HER NURSE. In former days.⁵⁷

61. AND THEY RODE UPON THE CAMELS. That the servant brought with him.

⁴⁹ In Hebrew *bi-devar adonai*. I.E. renders this verse: By the decree of the Lord were the heavens made.

⁵⁰ See I.E.'s comment on verse 14 and the notes thereto.

⁵¹ From the root *mem, gimel, dalet*. In this case the *nun* of *migdanot* is not a root letter.

⁵² Cant. 4:13 reads, *precious fruits* (*magadim*). He thus gave them precious or sweet fruits.

⁵³ Its root being *gimel, dalet, nun*. In this case the *mem* is not a root letter and the word is a *hapax legomenon* (Filwarg).

⁵⁴ Is. 3:22. Here, too, the *mem* is not a root letter but is the *mem* of the paradigm.

⁵⁵ I.E. disagrees with the Midrash, which states that an angel slew Bethuel for trying to prevent the marriage. Cf. *Bereshit Rabbah* 60:12, and Rashi.

⁵⁶ Since Laban is mentioned before Bethuel we may surmise that he was more respected than Bethuel, or else he would not have dared to speak before his father.

⁵⁷ Rebekah, being of marriageable age, had no need for a nurse. I.E. disagrees with the Midrashic statement that Rebekah was three years old at that time. See *Seder Olam*, Chap. I.



AND WENT HIS WAY. *Va-yelakh* (and went his way) is vocalized with a *pattach* rather than a *kamatz* even though it closes a verse,⁵⁸ the reason for this being that this word is normally vocalized with a *segol*, and a vowel cannot go up two steps.⁵⁹ The same principle applies to the word *va-yomar* (and he said).⁶⁰ The meaning of *And the servant took Rebekah, and went his way* is that he took Rebekah under his personal care until Isaac came up toward them and did not experience any hardship in caring for her.⁶¹

62. AND ISAAC CAME FROM THE WAY OF BEER-LAHAI-ROI. Beer-lahai-roi has two names.⁶² Others say that *ba mi-bo* (came from the way) means came from the inside of.⁶³ They similarly explain the word *mi-bo* in *Every house is shut up, that none may come in* (*mi-bo*) (Is. 24:10). However, I believe that *mi-bo* is an infinitive⁶⁴ and *ba*

⁵⁸ A *pattach* usually changes to a *kamatz* at the end of a verse. We would thus expect *va-yelakh* to be vocalized with a *kamatz*.

⁵⁹ *And he went* is usually written with a *segol* (*va-yelekh*). However, since here it closes a verse, the *segol* changes to a *pattach*. It cannot change to a *kamatz* because it would then be going up two steps, that is, from a *segol* to a *kamatz*, skipping the step of *pattach*. The normal sequence of the vowels followed by I.E. is *segol pattach, kamatz*.

⁶⁰ *Va-yomer* (and he said) is vocalized *va-yomar* with a *pattach* and not a *kamatz*, at the close of a verse.

⁶¹ The servant did not assign any of the people with him to take care of Rebekah. He did so himself and did not consider it a burden, so devoted was he (Weiser).

⁶² Bo and Beer-lahai-roi. The Hebrew reads, *ba mi-bo be'er-la-chai ro'i*. If the Bible meant Isaac came from Beer-lahai-roi it should have read, *ba mi-be'er-la-chai-ro'i*. The word *mi-bo* thus presents a problem. This interpretation suggests that the verse be translated: Isaac came from Bo-beer-lahai-roi, the latter being a combination of both names (Cherez).

⁶³ I.e., *mi-bo* means from inside. They explain our verse to mean that Isaac came from inside (*mi-bo*) of Beer-lahai roi. The latter was a town in which the well by that name was located. The town took the name of the well. Isaac had some business in this town and was leaving it when he met Rebekah (Weiser).

⁶⁴ That is, it consists of the infinitive *bo* (come) plus the prepositional *mem*. Thus *mi-bo* means from the way.

mi-bo be'er-la-chai-ro'i means came from the way leading to Beer-lahai-roi.⁶⁵

FOR HE DWELT IN THE LAND OF THE SOUTH. For at the time he dwelt there (in the Negev). The latter is in the southern part of the land of Israel.⁶⁶

63. AND ISAAC WENT OUT TO MEDITATE. The word *la-su'ach* (to meditate) means to walk among the trees.⁶⁷

AT THE EVENTIDE. Close to sunset. The opposite of *li-fenot erev* (at the eventide) is *lifnot boker* (before the dawning of the day). I will give a full explanation of these terms in the Torah portion *Ki Tetze*.⁶⁸

64. [SHE ALIGHTED FROM THE CAMEL.] Of her own free will.⁶⁹ Compare, *he fell upon his face* (Num. 16:4). What is reported in the following verse took place before, for the meaning of *va-tomer el ha-aved* is: And she had said unto the servant.⁷⁰

65. AND COVERED HERSELF. *Va-titkas* (and covered herself) is in the *hitpa'el*. The first *tav* is the sign of the third person feminine, and the second *tav*, the *tav* of the *hitpa'el*.

⁶⁵ That is, Isaac was returning from a visit to Be'er-lahai-roi.

⁶⁶ Isaac lived in the Negev. He happened to be coming from Beer-lahai-roi on that day (Weiser).

⁶⁷ See Gen. 2:5, *si'ach ha-sadeh* (shrub of the field).

⁶⁸ Deut. 21:10 - 25:19. Cf. I.E.'s comment on Deut. 23:12, where he notes *li-fenot erev* means before evening.

⁶⁹ The Hebrew reads *va-tippol* (she fell). Krinsky explains that I.E. translates she fell as she willingly fell from the camel. Weiser explains that she came off the camel in order to bow; that is, she alighted.

⁷⁰ The sequence of events was as follows: And Rebekah lifted up her eyes and saw Isaac (v. 64) and she said unto the servant, "What man is this that walketh in the field to meet us?" And the servant said, "It is my master." And she took her veil and covered herself (v. 65). And she alighted from the camel (v. 64) (Cherez).

67. INTO HIS MOTHER SARAH'S TENT. This is short for the tent, tent of Sarah his mother.⁷¹ *Even the prophecy of Oded the prophet* (II Chron. 15:8)⁷² and *Thy throne given of God* (Ps. 45:7)⁷³ are similar.

⁷¹ The Hebrew reads *ha-ohelah Sarah immo*. Now a word with the emphatic *heh* cannot be in the construct. Hence the verse literally reads: the tent Sarah his mother. I.E. maintains that an additional word, tent, has to be added to the text. The text should be read as if written, the tent, tent of Sarah his mother. More literally, the tent, Sarah his mother's tent.

⁷² The text literally reads: *ve-ha-nevu'ah Oded ha-navi* (even the prophecy, Oded the prophet). I.E. suggests, for the reasons given in note 67, that the word *nevu'at* (prophecy of) is to be supplied by the reader. The verse should thus be read: the prophecy, Oded the prophet's prophecy, more literally, even the prophecy, prophecy of Oded the prophet.

⁷³ A word ending in the suffix *kha* cannot be in the construct. The verse literally reads: Thy throne, God. I.E. suggests the word *kisseh* be inserted after thy throne. The verse is to be explained: Thy throne, God's throne, more literally, Thy throne, throne of God.

CHAPTER 25

1. KETURAH. Keturah is not to be identified with Hagar¹ because Scripture explicitly states, *But unto the sons of the concubines* (pilagshim), *that Abraham had, Abraham gave gifts* (v. 6).² The meaning of *pilegish* (concubine) is a handmaid. This term cannot refer to a male. We can explain *upon concubinage* (Ezek. 23:20) as referring to females.³

3. ASSHURIM. Some say that *asshurim* means those who know the roads⁴ and *letushim*, those who see from afar.⁵ However, I believe that *asshurim* and *letushim* are proper nouns and not adjectives.

¹ See *Bereshit Rabbah* 61:4; also Rashi's comments.

² "Concubines" indicates that Abraham had more than one concubine. If Keturah and Hagar were one and the same person the verse would have read concubine. I.E. goes on to note that *pilegish* (concubine) refers exclusively to a handmaid to forestall the argument that verse 6 refers to male slaves (*pilagshim* has a masculine ending) and therefore negate his argument that Abraham had more than one concubine.

³ The printed editions have, "We can explain on concubines as women." If we accept this reading the point that I.E. is apparently making is that even though the word *pilagshim* has a masculine ending it refers to females (Weiser). However, Filwarg and Krinsky, as well as Weiser himself, point out that I.E. may be alluding to Ezek. 23:20, *And she doted on concubinage* (pilagshehem) *with them, whose flesh is as the flesh of asses, and whose issue is like the issue of horses*. The words *be-saram* (whose flesh) and *zirmatam* (whose issue) are masculine; hence the concubines spoken of in this verse appear to be males. Indeed, Kimchi in his comments on Ezek. 23:20 quotes an opinion which maintains that the concubines referred to in this verse are male slaves. Therefore I.E. points out that *pilagshim* refers only to females. Filwarg suggests amending our texts of I.E. to read *pilagshehem*, as in Ezek. 23:20. In this case the allusion to Ezekiel would be unmistakable. The fact of the matter is that *Vat. Ebr.* 38 reads *al pilagshehem*, and we have translated accordingly.

⁴ Caravancers. This interpretation connects *asshurim* with *ashur* (step or going). See Job 31:7; Prov. 14:15.

⁵ See Job 16:9, *yiltosh enav* (sharpeneth his eyes). This term, too, pertains to their occupation as caravancers.

6. GIFTS. He gave them money.⁶

EASTWARD. *Kedemah* (eastward) means *unto the East country*. *And it shall come to pass, that the nation and the kingdom which will not serve him, Nebuchadnezzar King of Babylon* (Jer. 27:8)⁷ is similar. East means east of the land of Israel.⁸ Others say that *kedemah* (eastward) means to the place where the son of Ishmael dwelt.⁹ The first of these two interpretations is the correct one.

8. [AND ABRAHAM EXPIRED.] Expired refers to a death wherein the soul leaves the body in a moment, without pain or delay. Proof of this is *he (Jacob) gathered up his feet unto the bed* and then immediately expired (Gen. 49:33).¹⁰ Every expiration (*gevi'ah*) is a death, but not every death is an expiration (*gevi'ah*). Hence Scripture states, with regard to those who perished in the flood, *And all flesh expired* (Gen. 7:21).¹¹ The meaning of, *and (Abraham) died*¹² is that he died at a ripe old age.¹³

⁶ That is, movable possessions, in contrast to real estate (Weiser).

⁷ This is the literal reading of the verse. J.P.S. translates, *And it shall come to pass, that the nation and the kingdom which will not serve the same Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon*.

⁸ Eastward refers to the entire eastern compass point, be it northeast or southeast (Weiser). According to this interpretation *unto the east country* is an explanation of *eastward* in the same way that *Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon* is an explanation of *him*.

⁹ This explanation is that *kedemah* means to Kedemah. Kedemah was a son of Ishmael (v. 15). According to this interpretation the verse is not redundant in stating *unto the east country*, for it is telling us where Kedemah dwelt.

¹⁰ We thus see that *gava* refers to a quick and painless death.

¹¹ According to I.E., Gen. 7:12 teaches that the flood killed swiftly (Weiser).

¹² There was no need to state "and Abraham died" after stating "and he expired," since expired means he died quickly.

¹³ *And Abraham died* is not redundant since it is not connected to expired but to what follows, i.e., *and Abraham died in a good old age* (Filwarg).

AND WAS GATHERED TO HIS PEOPLE. Some say that this refers to the soul of life which, even while functioning¹⁴ in the body, is a separate entity. When it separates from the body it returns to its source.¹⁵ Others say that *and was gathered to his people* is a mere idiom.¹⁶ One who follows in the footsteps of his ancestors is said, as it were, to be joining them. *But thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace* (Gen. 15:15) is similar.

16. AND BY THEIR ENCAMPMENTS. *Tirotam* (encampments) means palaces. Compare, *a turret of silver* (*tirat kasef*) (Cant. 8:9).

ACCORDING TO THEIR NATIONS. We find Scripture employing *ummot* (nations) and *ummim* (nations),¹⁷ both of which are vocalized with a *shuruk*.¹⁸ The *lamed* of *le-ummatam* (according to their nations) is a preposition,¹⁹ similar to the *lamed* of *le-goyehem* (after their nations). It is not the same as the *lamed* of *ba-le'ummim* (upon the peoples) (Ps. 149:7) which is a root letter like the *lamed* of *le'om* (people) in *And the one people* (*u-le'om*) *shall be stronger than the other people* (*mi-le'om*) (v. 23). Whether spelled with a *lamed* or not, it has the same meaning. However, they come from different roots.²⁰

¹⁴ I.E. uses the term *kevod ha-nefesh* literally, the glory of life. The "glory" refers to man's soul which gives life to the body.

¹⁵ According to I.E. man's soul is derived from a universal soul. While in the body the soul does not share the former's corporeal properties. It has its own existence and can function independently of the body. It is thus a "separate entity" (Levine, p. 13).

¹⁶ According to this interpretation there is no philosophical implication in the verse.

¹⁷ Num. 25:15 (*ummot*); Ps. 117:1 (*ummim*). The former has a feminine ending, the latter, a masculine ending. Our verse (*le'ummatam*) employs the former.

¹⁸ Actually a *kubbutz*. I.E. refers to both a *kubbutz* and a *shuruk* by one term, *shuruk*. Cf. L. Prijs, *Die Grammatikalische Terminologie Des Ibn Ezra*, Basel, 1950, p. 136.

¹⁹ It is not a root letter. It means according to.

²⁰ That is, both *om* and *le'om* mean the same, but come from different roots. The root of *om* is *alef*, *vav*, *mem* and that of *le'om*, *lamed*, *alef*, *mem* (Cherez, Krinsky).

18. OVER AGAINST ALL HIS BRETHREN. Zimram and Jokshan.²¹

HE DID SETTLE.²² The meaning of *nafal* (fell) is that his portion or his lot fell among his brethren. Or it refers to the fact that most of the Ishmaelites journeyed from place to place. In this case *nafal* ²³ is like *nofel* in *Thou fallest away* (nofel) *to the Chaldeans* (Jer. 37:13). However, this is a bit far-fetched in view of the fact that his brethren were in the east (v. 6), and Egypt and Asshur are west²⁴ of the land of Israel.²⁵ It is possible that this verse deals with Ishmael's death. He died during the lifetime of his brethren, after he fell.²⁶ We do not know the cause of Ishmael's death.

TOLEDOT

19. AND THESE. After recording the generations of Ishmael, Scripture returns to record the progeny of Isaac, Esau and Jacob. Some

²¹ Verse 2.

²² The verse literally reads: *upon the face of his brethren he (or it) fell*. I.E. points out that fell must refer to Ishmael's portion or to Ishmael himself. It may also mean settled.

²³ That is, it means passed over.

²⁴ This comment presents a problem in view of the fact that Assyria (Asshur) lies east of the land of Israel. Krinsky suggests that Asshur does not refer to the Assyrians but rather to the children of *dedan* who were Asshurim (v. 3).

²⁵ It is hard to believe that they had so large an inheritance. I.E.'s comment applies to all the interpretations of *nafal* offered up to this point.

²⁶ He fell off a roof or out of a tree and died (Krinsky). This interpretation is possible because we do not know any of the causes of his death. Cohen, on the other hand, suggests that I.E. held that fell means fell dead.

say that *Abraham begot Isaac* means that Isaac resembled his father, and all who looked upon him could tell that he was Abraham's son.²⁷ Others say that *holid* (begot) means raised and brought up, as in *were born*²⁸ (yulledo) *upon Joseph's knees* (Gen. 50:23). This interpretation is substantiated by *And he sent them away from Isaac his son* (v. 6).²⁹

20. OF PADDAN. *Paddan* means a field. It has the same meaning in Arabic.³⁰

THE SISTER OF LABAN. Laban is mentioned because he was better known and more revered than her father. *Elisheba...the sister of Nahshon* (Ex. 6:23), is similar.

21. AND ISAAC ENTREATED. *Va-yetar* (entreated) is in the *kal*. However, *hatiru* (entreat) in *Entreat the Lord* (Ex. 8:4) is in the *hifil*. Its meaning is that Isaac appeased³¹ God with his prayers.³²

AND THE LORD LET HIMSELF BE ENTREATED. *Va-ye'ater* means and He was appeased. It is a *nifal*.

²⁷ *Baba Metziah* 87a and Rashi.

²⁸ I.E. renders *yulledu* as: were brought upon Joseph's knees. They obviously were not born on his knees.

²⁹ He did not raise the sons of the concubines but he raised Isaac.

³⁰ Similarly Rashi.

³¹ Vocalizing the *resh*, *tzadi*, *heh* with a *chirik* and reading the word *ritzah*, as in *Vat. Ebr.* 38.

³² Reading *bi-devarim* as in *Vat. Ebr.* 38, rather than *bi-divreham* as in the printed texts. The latter reading is extremely difficult. It reads: *ratzah* (he wanted)...*bi-divreham* (their words). Krinsky tries to justify this reading by maintaining that I.E. explains why entreat is here in the *kal* and in Ex. 8:4 in the *hifil*. It is here in the *kal* because God wanted their prayers. However, He really did not want to hear prayers on behalf of Pharaoh, hence the *hifil* form in Exodus. The latter being in the causative form implies that Moses burdened God with his prayers on behalf of Pharaoh. Krinsky also suggests that the text be read: he appeased God (vocalizing *ritzah* rather than *ratzah*) with their prayers, that is, with Isaac and Rebekah's prayers. This is a bit forced. *Vat. Ebr.*'s reading is superior and has been followed.

22. AND THE CHILDREN STRUGGLED TOGETHER. *Va-yitrotzatzu* (and they struggled) comes from the word that means running.³³ The *tzadi* is doubled.³⁴ Its parallel is found in *They run to and fro* (*yerotzetzu*) *like the lightnings* (Nahum 2:5).³⁵ The Bible refers to the fetuses as children³⁶ because that is what they ultimately became.³⁷ *And stripped the naked of their clothing* (Job 22:6)³⁸ is similar. Rebekah asked women who had children if they had had a similar experience. They responded that they did not. Rebekah then said, *if it*, namely, the manner and custom of pregnancy, *be so* as they said, *wherefore do I* undergo such an abnormal pregnancy.³⁹

23. AND THE LORD SAID UNTO HER. Via a prophet, or through Abraham himself, for Abraham did not pass away until her sons were fifteen years of age.⁴⁰

³³ The root of run is *rash*, *vav*, *tzadi*. According to I.E., *And the children struggled...within her* is to be rendered: and the children ran within her, that is, moved quickly within her.

³⁴ As is the rule when an *ayin vav* is conjugated in the *hitpa'el*.

³⁵ *Yerotzetzu* (run to and fro) is from the root *resh*, *vav*, *tzadi*. The *tzadi* is doubled in keeping with the rule that the last letter of an *ayin vav* is doubled when conjugated in the *pi'el*.

³⁶ *Banim* (children) always refers to born children. A fetus is not a child (Krinsky).

³⁷ The Hebrew reads: *nekre'u banim al shem sofam*.

³⁸ One cannot strip the naked.

³⁹ *Lammah zeh anokhi* (Wherefore do I live) literally reads: why, then, am I, which I.E. interprets to mean: why, then, am I undergoing an abnormal pregnancy. It should be noted that according to I.E., Rebekah's questioning of the other women is not stated in the text but is implied by her saying, *im ken lammah zeh anokhi*.

⁴⁰ Abraham begot Isaac at the age of 100 (Gen. 21:5). Isaac was 60 when he begot Jacob and Esau. Abraham lived 175 years (Gen. 25:7). Thus Jacob and Esau were 15 when Abraham died.

THE ELDER. Elder is the subject.⁴¹ *A son honoureth his father* (Mal. 1:6) is similar.⁴² I will explain our verse later.⁴³

24. TWINS. The root letter *alef* is missing in the word *tomim* (twins). *Tomim* in this regard is like the word *sheritikha* (release thee)⁴⁴ in *Verily I will release thee* (*sheritikha*) *for good* (Jer. 15:11), the meaning of which is: I will deal well with thy last years (*she'erit*).⁴⁵

25. [RUDDY.] The *yod* of *admoni* (ruddy) is superfluous. It is similar to the *yod* of *akhzari* (cruel).⁴⁶

[LIKE A MANTLE.] *Ke-adderet* (like a mantle) is not in the construct with *se'ar* (hairy).⁴⁷ The verse is to be read as follows: all over hairy, like a mantle. However, others say that *ke-adderet* is in the construct with *se'ar*.⁴⁸

⁴¹ *Et*, the indicator of the direct object, is missing in our verse. I.E. points out that even so, *elder* is the subject and *younger* the object, the meaning of our verse being the elder shall serve the younger. *Ve-rav ya'avod tza'ir* is the same as *ve-rav ya'avod et hatza'ir*. One can argue that since this verse is poetic it has placed the object first and the subject last and that its intention is to teach that the younger shall serve the elder, hence I.E.'s comment.

⁴² Here, too, *et* is missing. However, it is obvious that it is the son who honors the father and not the reverse. We thus see that the Bible at times omits *et*. Nevertheless, the syntax of the sentence remains subject (son), object (father). Similarly in our verse the subject (elder) is stated first and the object (younger) afterward.

⁴³ See I.E. on Gen. 27:40.

⁴⁴ This is the J.P.S. translation. I.E. renders it your remnant. *She'erit* is usually spelled with an *alef*, which is missing in our verse. Thus *tomim* is like *sheritikha* in that the root *alef* is missing in both words. *Tomim* should have been written *te'omim* and *sheritikha*, *she'erikha*.

⁴⁵ Your last years, your *she'erit*, will be happy years. Cf. Kimchi's comment on this verse.

⁴⁶ *Akhzar* and *akhzari* mean the same thing, cruel. Hence its *yod* is superfluous. Similarly *admoni* and *admon* mean the same thing and Scripture could have read *admon*.

⁴⁷ That is, the text is not to be interpreted as *kullo ke-adderet se'ar* (all over like a hairy mantle) but as *kullo se'ar ke-adderet* (all over hairy; like a mantle). In other words, *kullo* (all over) refers to *se'ar* (hairy) even though the word *ke-adderet* (like a mantle) separates the two (Krinsky).

⁴⁸ In this case the verse reads: all over like a mantle of hair.

AND THEY CALLED HIS NAME. Those who saw him called him thus. The name Esau possibly connotes a unique occurrence (*ma'aseh*).⁴⁹ This birth was extremely wondrous. Every human being leaves the womb in a placenta which covers him.⁵⁰ However, in this instance the two placentas opened simultaneously.⁵¹

26. AND HIS NAME WAS CALLED. Someone, or Isaac his father, called him Jacob.⁵²

27. A CUNNING HUNTER. Esau was constantly practicing deception, for most animals are trapped through trickery.⁵³ Jacob was his antithesis, because he was a man of integrity.⁵⁴ They also differed in that Esau was *a man of the field* and Jacob a man *dwelling in tents*. It is possible that the meaning of *dwelling in tents* is like *live in tents and have cattle* (Gen. 4:20).⁵⁵

⁴⁹ Krinsky maintains that I.E., like Rashi, explains Esau to mean *asui*, a participle meaning made, the idea being that Esau was born a complete man. Filwarg explains that Esau's birth was a unique event (*ma'aseh*) in that unlike all other children he was born hairy.

⁵⁰ Thus Jacob and Esau were each in a separate placenta. The fact that Jacob and Esau's individual placentas opened simultaneously made their birth exceptional.

⁵¹ This is obvious since Jacob was born grasping Esau's heel.

⁵² Literally, he called his name. The subject (he) is not identified, hence, I.E.'s comment.

⁵³ Scripture's purpose in telling us at this point that Esau was a hunter is to inform us that Esau was a cunning and deceptive individual (Weiser).

⁵⁴ The Hebrew *ish tam* is translated by J.P.S. as *a quiet man*. However, according to I.E., as Jacob was the antithesis of Esau, the deceiver, the term *tam* should be rendered as honest, sound, as in *that man was whole-hearted (tam) and upright, and one that feared God* (Job 1:1).

⁵⁵ It does not mean that Jacob was a homebody, but that he was a keeper of herds and flocks. Jacob set up tents in order to be close to the flocks (Weiser).

28. BECAUSE HE DID EAT OF HIS VENISON. He brought him game to eat.⁵⁶

29. AND HE WAS FAINT. *Ayef*⁵⁷ (faint) means hungry and thirsty, as in *be-eretz ayefah* (in a weary land) (Is. 32:2).⁵⁸

30. LET ME SWALLOW. This is the only place in Scripture where the word, *haliteni* (let me swallow) is encountered.⁵⁹ Its meaning is *feed me*. *Nazid* (pottage) means a cooked dish. However, *va-yazed* (sod) is an *ayin vav*. They are two roots with one meaning.⁶⁰ *Yadon* (shall abide) in *My spirit shall not abide* (yadon) (Gen. 6:3) and *nedanah* (the sheath thereof) (I Chron. 21:27)⁶¹ are similar.

31. SELL ME. *Mikhrach* (sell me) is vocalized with a *chirik*,⁶² like *shilchah* (send) in *Send* (shilchah) *the lad* (Gen. 43:8) and *shikhvah* (lie) in *Lie* (shikhvah) *with me* (Gen. 39:7).⁶³ The birthright refers to the

⁵⁶ The Hebrew reads: *ki tzayid be-fiv*, literally, because game in his mouth. I.E. points out that the word *me-vi* (brought) has to be inserted into the text. The verse should be read as if written: he brought game into his mouth; i.e., he brought him game to eat.

⁵⁷ The word *ayef* (faint) may imply faint from exertion or faint from lack of food or water. Here it means the latter (Krinsky). However, Weiser maintains that I.E. holds that *ayef* applies only to faintness due to lack of food and water.

⁵⁸ A *weary land* is a land lacking in food and water.

⁵⁹ Krinsky.

⁶⁰ The root of *nazid* is *nun, zayin, dalet*. The root of *va-yazid* is *zayin, vav, dalet*. Both relate to cooking. The meaning of *va-yazed ya'akov nazid* is: And Jacob cooked a cooked dish.

⁶¹ See I.E.'s comments on Gen. 6:3.

⁶² *Mikhrach* (sell me) is an elongated imperative, the usual imperative of sell being *mekhor*. The rule in Hebrew grammar is that when a word in the *kal* follows the *efol*, vocalization of its elongated imperative is written with a *kamatz katan*, i.e., *zekhor* (remember) is elongated like *zokhrah* (Neh. 5:19), and *shemor* (keep) to *shomrah* (Ps. 25:20). Hence *mekhor* should become *mokhrah*. I.E. points out that even though *mekhor* follows the *efol* conjugation, it is elongated as an *efal*. In the latter, the elongated imperative is vocalized with a *chirik* (Cherez).

⁶³ These words are conjugated in the *efal* and are thus vocalized with a *chirik* in the elongated imperative.



double share of the father's wealth which belongs to the first born.⁶⁴ Others maintain that the first born is always superior to his younger siblings in that they must rise before him and serve him as a son serves his father.⁶⁵

32. [BEHOLD, I AM AT THE POINT TO DIE.] He was daily exposed to danger when he went out hunting, as an animal might kill him. Thus there was a possibility that he would predecease his father.

34. SO ESAU DESPISED. Esau also despised the birthright⁶⁶ because he saw that his father had no wealth. Many are amazed at this because Abraham left Isaac a vast amount of money?"⁶⁷ Have they never seen a man very rich in his youth and poor in his old age? Proof that Isaac was poor is the fact that he loved Esau because of his need.⁶⁸ Had there been ample food in Isaac's house and Esau the honorable one in his father's sight,⁶⁹ he would not have sold his birthright for a dish of food. Furthermore, why did Isaac have to tell Esau, *Bring me venison* (Gen. 27:7), if he had savory meat at home for his daily meals? Additionally, why did Jacob not have choice garments ⁷⁰ and why didn't Rebekah

⁶⁴ Cf. Deut. 21:17.

⁶⁵ In other words Jacob did not buy the birthright because he wanted a double share but because the birthright had honorary significance. I.E. offers this interpretation either because he believes that Isaac was poor at this time and the double share was insignificant, or because the law of the double share of the first-born took effect only after the revelation at Sinai.

⁶⁶ The opening line of I.E. is difficult to comprehend. It literally reads: also this birthright because... Weiser, Filwarg, and Krinsky suggest that the text is corrupt. We have followed Filwarg's reconstruction since it involves adding only one letter, viz., emending *gam zot* (also this birthright) to *gam baz et* (he also despised the birthright). The point is that in addition to selling the birthright because he was weary, he also despised the birthright because his father had no wealth to leave him (Weiser).

⁶⁷ Gen. 24:34, 37.

⁶⁸ Cf. verse 28. The reading of Nachmanides is: because of his game (*tzedo*). The printed texts read: because of his need (*tzorko*).

⁶⁹ Cf. Is. 43:4.

⁷⁰ Gen. 27:15.

give Jacob gold and silver for his journey (when he fled to Haran), seeing that Jacob was so poor that he had to say, "*If God will...give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on*" (Gen. 28:20). Also, why did Rebekah, who loved him so much, not send him money in view of the fact that he was so impoverished that he had to tend Laban's flock? As to the verse which states, *And the man waxed great...And he had possessions of flocks, and possessions of herds, and a great household* (Gen. 26:13, 14), it refers to the period prior to Isaac's old age. Now, those who are intellectually blind think that wealth is a great distinction for the righteous. However, the prophet Elijah shows that the opposite is the case.⁷¹ They further ask, why did God withhold wealth from Isaac? Let them tell us why God withheld sight from Isaac's eyes. Let them not put us off with a poor answer based upon a Midrashic homily,⁷² for there is a secret meaning in the matter⁷³ and we must not probe into it, for the thoughts of God are deep and beyond the ken of man. Similarly others say, behold Isaac had sheep,⁷⁴ for Rebekah told Jacob, *Go now to the flock* (Gen. 27:9). However, it is possible that he had a few sheep remaining. It is also possible that *Go now to the flock* means go to the place where sheep are sold.

71 I Kings 17:6, where Elijah's poverty is described.

72 The allusion is either to an aggada which ascribes Isaac's blindness to a curse put on him by Abimelech (*Megillah* 15a) or as a result of the incense which Esau's wives offered to the idols (*Tanchuma* 20:20). Additional Midrashic reasons for Isaac's blindness are quoted by Krinsky in his comments on Gen. 27:1.

73 Either for Isaac's blindness (Weiser, Krinsky) or to the Midrash (Filwarg).

74 If Isaac had sheep then he was not poor. The contradicts I.E.'s assertion that Isaac was poor.

CHAPTER 26

5. AND KEPT MY CHARGE. *Mishmarti* (my charge) is a general term for all that Abraham was obligated to observe from the commandments (*mitzvot*), statutes (*chukkim*) and laws (*torot*). It is possible that the commandments spoken of in our verse refer to *Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred* etc. (Gen. 12:1), and *Take now thy son...even Isaac...and offer him there for a burnt-offering upon one of the mountains* etc. (Gen. 22:2).¹

The statutes spoken of in our text pertain to the works of God that a man should uphold. These statutes are based on logic.² I will elaborate on this term (*chukkim*) in my comments on the verse dealing with the prohibition of wearing *a garment of two kinds of stuff mingled together* (Lev. 19:19). The *torot* (laws) mentioned in our verse relate to Abraham's circumcision of himself, his children and his servants. I will fully explain the meaning of the terms *torah* and *mitzvah* in my comments on the verse *and the law and the commandment* (Ex. 24:12).

¹ I.E. explains that *My commandments* refers to Gen. 12:1 and Gen. 22:2, as these were commandments. *Statutes* pertain to Abraham's emulating God's ways and laws. It should be noted that I.E. explains *chok* to mean a logical law. This is in contradistinction to Rashi, who explains *chukkim* as irrational laws. I.E. seems to imply that Abraham did not observe all the laws, statutes and commandments contained in the Torah. This is contrary to the Rabbinic sage Rav, who held that Abraham observed the entire Torah, as seen from the verse *because that Abraham hearkened to My voice, and kept My charge* etc. (*Yoma* 28b).

² The point is that Abraham, before the revelation on Mt. Sinai, was able to ascertain God's statutes.

6. AND ISAAC DWELT IN GERAR. Isaac did as God had commanded him.³

7. OF HIS WIFE. The word *le-ishto* (of his wife) should be rendered: about his wife.⁴ We find a similar meaning for this word in *that men say not of me* (li) (Jud. 9:54).⁵

FOR HE FEARED. *Yare* (he feared) is a perfect,⁶ as is the word *zaken* (old) in *And it came to pass, that when Isaac was old* (*zaken*) (Gen. 27:1).⁷ The words "because he said" have been omitted before *lest the men of the place should kill me*.⁸ We find this phrase similarly omitted in *for God hath made me fruitful* (Gen. 41:52).⁹

12. A HUNDREDFOLD. The word *sha'ar* means the same as the Rabbinic term *shi'ur* (estimate, reckon). The meaning of *me'ah she'arim* (a hundredfold) is that Isaac was blessed in that the earth produced one hundred times more than what he sowed was estimated to produce. The word *she'arim* comes from the same root as *sha'ar* in *For as one that hath reckoned* (*sha'ar*) *within himself* (Prov. 23:7).

13. AND GREW. *Ve-gadel* (and grew) is a perfect.¹⁰

³ *Sojourn in this land* (v. 3).

⁴ The *lamed* here means about. See I.E.'s comments on Gen. 20:13. *Le-ishto* might be rendered to his wife, hence I.E.'s comment.

⁵ Here too the *lamed* means about. Thus *li* should be rendered about me, not to me.

⁶ *Yare* can also be a participle, hence I.E.'s comment.

⁷ *Zaken* can also be a participle. However, in this verse it cannot be so, for the verse opens with a perfect, viz., *va-yehi* (and it came to pass).

⁸ The verse reads: *for he feared to say 'My wife:' lest the men of the place should kill me*. According to I.E. this is an abridged verse and should be read as if written: *for he feared to say my wife, "because he said" lest the men of this place, etc.*

⁹ It should be read: "because he said" for God hath made me fruitful.

¹⁰ The word *grew* is written twice in the second part of the sentence. The first time it is written *gadel*, the second time *gadal*. Hence I.E. points out that both are perfects and mean the same. I.E.'s comment is pertinent because *gadel* can also be a participle (Krinsky, Weiser).

14. AND A GREAT HOUSEHOLD. Isaac had man and maidservants to serve him. *Avuddah* (household) is an adjective.¹¹ On the other hand, it may be a noun following the paradigm of *segullah* (treasure).¹²

15. [WELLS.] When the word *be'erot* is in the construct it can be vocalized in one of two ways.¹³

19. LIVING WATER. Water that is always bursting forth.

20. ESEK. This word is not encountered elsewhere in Scripture. However, its meaning can be ascertained from Rabbinic literature.¹⁴

25. DIGGED. *Va-yikhru* means digged. *Kariti*, in *in my grave which I have digged (kariti) for me* (Gen. 50:5); *yikhreh* in *or if a man shall dig (yikhreh) a pit* (Ex. 21:33); and *koreh*, in *whoso diggeth (koreh) a pit shall fall therein* (Prov. 26:27), are similar.¹⁵

¹¹ The word *avuddah* is an adjective, with the noun which it is modifying missing. Scripture should have read: *adamah avuddah*, ground worked by man and maidservants (Cherez, Weiser). I.E. interprets thus because the form *avuddah* looks like an adjective.

¹² A collective noun, following the paradigm of *segullah*, or *kedushah*, the point being we find nouns with this vocalization. Hence *avuddah* does not have to be an adjective. In this case the meaning of *avuddah* is simply servants, both male and female.

¹³ The word *be'erot* (wells) in our verse is in the absolute. In such cases it is always vocalized *sheva*, *tzere*, *cholam*. However, when in the construct it can either be vocalized *sheva*, *tzere*, *cholam*, as in verse 18, or *segol*, *chataf segol*, *cholam* as in Gen. 14:10.

¹⁴ The word *esek* in the Talmud means strife, cf. *Bereshit Rabbah* 8:5. It should be noted that in Rabbinic literature *esek* is spelled with a *samech*, in our verse with a *sin*.

¹⁵ They all come from the root *caf*, *resh*, *heh* and mean to dig.

28. BETWIXT US. Our verse contains two synonymous plurals in succession.¹⁶

33. BEER-SHEBA. There were two reasons why the city was so called.¹⁷ On the other hand, it is possible that this Beersheba is not to be identified with the Beersheba previously mentioned (Gen. 21:28-31).¹⁸

34. JUDITH. Judith is a proper name.¹⁹ She did not bear Esau any children.²⁰

BASEMATH. Basemath is to be identified with Adah.²¹ She had two names. There are hundreds of similar instances in Scripture.²²

¹⁶ Our verse reads: Let there be an oath *benotenu* (betwixt us) *benenu u-vennekha* (even betwixt us and thee). I.E. points out that *benotenu* and *benenu* are both plurals from the same root and mean the same. However, they belong to different paradigms. These two forms were employed by Scripture to avoid redundancy (Weiser). According to Filwarg what I.E. is saying is that one of these phrases could have been left out since they mean the same; i.e., *benotenu* (betwixt us) means the same as *benenu u-vennekha* (even betwixt us and thee) Scripture repeated itself for emphasis.

¹⁷ In Gen. 21:30 Abraham tells Abimelech, *Verily, these seven ewe-lambs shalt thou take of my hand, that it may be a witness unto me, that I have digged this well*. Scripture then adds, *Wherefore that place was called Beer-Sheba because there they swore both of them*. However, here we are told that Beersheba was so called because of the oath (*shevu'ah*) taken by Isaac and Abimelech (cf. Rashi). I.E. points out that Beersheba was so called because of the oaths taken by Abraham and Isaac. Or possibly the two reasons for the name are: Abraham's setting aside the seven (*shevah*) lambs and his oath (*shevu'ah*). Isaac merely repeated Abraham's oath (Weiser). Or Abraham called the place Beersheba because of the setting aside of the seven lambs and Isaac called it thus because of the oath (Cherez).

¹⁸ This would explain the two accounts for the name Beersheba in Scripture. According to this interpretation the two reasons given for Beersheba are the two oaths, viz., Abraham's and Isaac's. Each took place in a different city.

¹⁹ *Yehudit* (Judith) can be taken to be an adjective, viz., *Yehudi*, hence I.E.'s comment (Krinsky).

²⁰ In chapter 36 Scripture lists Esau's wives and children. Judith is not mentioned. I.E. explains that this is due to the fact that Judith did not bear any children.

²¹ In our verse we read, *Basemath, the daughter of Elon, the Hittite*. However, in Gen. 36:2 we read, *Adah, the daughter of Elon, the Hittite*. I.E. explains the discrepancy by saying that she had two names.

²² See I.E.'s comments on Gen. 13:7 and 15:19.

35. A BITTERNESS OF SPIRIT. Each one of Esau's wives²³ was a *morat ru'ach* (bitterness of spirit) to Isaac and Rebekah. Some say that *morat* (bitterness) is similar to the word *moreh* (rebellious) in *If a man have a stubborn and rebellious (moreh) son* (Deut. 21:18).²⁴ However, I believe that *morat* comes from the same root as *marah* (bitter) in *bitter (marah) as wormwood* (Prov. 5:4).²⁵ Indeed, it is explicitly written, *and Esau saw that the daughters of Canaan pleased not*²⁶ *Isaac, his father* (Gen. 28:8). The account of Esau's wives was recorded so that the Israelites would keep themselves from taking Canaanite women.

²³ *And they were* is in the plural; *morat* is a singular. Scripture should have used the plural *morot*. Hence I.E.'s comment.

²⁴ According to this interpretation the verse reads: and each one of them was rebellious (*morat*) against the wishes of (*ru'ach*) Isaac and Rebekah.

²⁵ According to this interpretation *morat* is not a verb meaning rebellious but a noun meaning bitter. The meaning of *morat ru'ach* is: they were a bitterness of the spirit; i.e., Isaac and Rebekah were displeased with having Canaanite daughters-in-law. In this case one does not have to interpret *morat ru'ach* as each one was a *morat ru'ach*, because it can be interpreted as both were a bitterness of spirit. Thus there is no problem with *And they were* being in the plural and *morat ru'ach* in the singular (Krinsky).

²⁶ The Hebrew literally reads: were evil in the eyes of Isaac his father; that is, Isaac did not like them. In other words, they were a bitterness of spirit to him because they were Canaanites, not because they rebelled against him.

CHAPTER 27

2. BEHOLD NOW. The word *na* means now.¹

3. THY WEAPONS. *Khelekha* (thy weapons) is possibly a general term, the particulars being *thy quiver and thy bow*.² *Telyekha* (thy quiver) is a sheath hanging³ from its bearer wherein arrows are placed. On the other hand, *khelekha* may refer to a sword.⁴ However, in this case a conjunctive *vav* should have been placed in front of *telyekha*.⁵ Nevertheless, it does not refute the latter interpretation, for we find a similar instance in *Adam, Seth, Enosh* (I Chron. 1:1).⁶

¹ See I.E.'s comments on Gen. 12:11.

² The verse should be understood as follows: take, I pray thee, thy weapons, namely thy quiver and thy bow.

³ The root *tav, lamed, heh* means to hang.

⁴ The translation follows the *Vat. Ebr.* 38 text. The printed texts have *telyekha* referring to a sword. If this reading is accepted, why does I.E. say a *vav* should have been placed before *telyekha*? The first particular following a general term does not require a *vav*, as I.E. himself implies in his comment on Gen. 26:5. Furthermore, why should a *vav* be placed before *telyekha* if it means a sword and not if it means a quiver? For an attempt to explain the printed texts see Krinsky and Cherez. However, for the impossibility of the printed versions see Filwarg. The reading of *Vat. Ebr.* 38 seems correct.

⁵ Since Scripture is listing three separate items, sword, quiver and bow, a conjunctive *vav* should be placed before quiver as it is before bow. The verse should read: take thy sword and thy quiver (*ve-telyekha*) and thy bow.

⁶ Here, too, we find three separate individuals listed without a *vav* before the final two. The text should have read: Adam and Seth and Enosh. We thus see that Scripture at times leaves out the conjunctive *vav*.

5. AND REBEKAH HEARD. *Shoma'at* (heard) should be translated, "was listening."⁷

7. BEFORE MY DEATH. Before I die.⁸

11. HAIRY. The word *sa'ir* means hairy. The opposite of *sa'ir* is *chalak* (smooth) (v. 11). Someone without hair on his body is possibly so called (*chalak*) because all parts of his body (*chalakav*) are the same.⁹

12. WILL FEEL ME. *Yemusheni* (will feel me) is similar to *yesubeni* (compasseth me about)¹⁰ (Ps. 49:6). It belongs to those roots whose second and third letters are the same.¹¹

AS A MOCKER. The root of *ki-metate'a* (as a mocker) is doubled.¹² It comes from the same root as *to'eh* (err). The meaning of *ki-metate'a* is: as one who misleads his fellow man.

13. UPON ME BE THY CURSE. Don't be afraid that your father might curse you. If he does, the curse will be upon me, not on you. This

⁷ *Shoma'at* is a participle. It literally means listening. Hence, the word "was" has to be added and the verse should be understood: Rebekah was listening when Isaac spoke to Esau his son.

⁸ The word *li-fene* (before) means in the presence of. It might conceivably be rendered immediately before (in the presence of) my death, hence I.E.'s comment. For the same reason Filwarg explains I.E.'s comment as meaning: while I yet live.

⁹ *Chelek* means a part, *chalak* one whose entire body appears to be one part. The idea is that a hairy person has some non-hairy parts on his body; hence his body is not all the same. The smooth man's skin is the same all over his body (Filwarg).

¹⁰ *Yesubeni*, too, has a root (*samech, bet, bet*) whose second and third letters are the same (Weiser). *Yemusheni* follows the paradigm of *yesubeni* (Cherez).

¹¹ The root of *yemusheni* root is *mem, shin, shin*.

¹² Its root is *tav, ayin, heh*. The *heh* drops out and the *tav ayin* are doubled making for a quadriliteral (Weiser, Cherez).

is the way women talk.¹³ However, Saadiah Gaon explained *Upon . be thy curse* to mean: it is upon me to remove the curse.¹⁴

[19.] I AM. Some say, Heaven forbid that a prophet should lie. We must therefore interpret Jacob's words to his father as follows: I am who I am and Esau is thy first born.¹⁵ Others say that Jacob quietly said, I am, and then loudly said, *Esau is thy first-born*.¹⁶ Now these interpretations are nonsense. Prophets are divided into two groups. One group consists of God's messengers concerning commandments;¹⁷ the other, those who foretell the future. If the latter have to say something that is not quite so,¹⁸ there is no harm done.¹⁹ However, a prophet whose task is to reveal commandments never lies. We thus find that King David, whom Scripture calls *the man of God* (II Chron. 8:14) and who said, *The spirit of the Lord spoke by me* (II Sam. 23:2), perverted the truth out of need of the hour when he spoke to Abimelech and said, *Of a truth women have been kept from us about these three days, when I came out, the vessels of the young men were holy* (I Sam. 21:6).²⁰ Also, the prophet Elisha did not speak the truth when he said to Hazael, *Go, say unto him, thou shalt surely recover* (II Kings 8:10), even though what he meant was, go say unto him that thou shalt recover from

¹³ A mother is willing to have any trouble that is destined to fall upon her son fall upon her.

¹⁴ I will intercede with your father to annul any imprecation that he may curse you with (Weiser).

¹⁵ Cf. Rashi. "I am he who brings to you and Esau is your first born."

¹⁶ Hence he said two things; I am; Esau is thy first born.

¹⁷ According to Weiser and *Biblical Encyclopedia* (Heb.) Vol. 8, p. 678. An example of God's messengers with regard to commandments are Moses and Aaron.

¹⁸ A messenger who reveals God's laws never stretches the truth. Prophets who foretell the future occasionally do (Weiser and *Biblical Encyclopedia*). According to Filwarg, what I.E. says is that prophets do not lie when they act as God's messengers. At other times they may tell an untruth.

¹⁹ It is no blight on the prophet's reputation *qua* prophet.

²⁰ When David asked for the holy bread, he had no young men with him. Cf. I Sam. 21 and Weiser.



this illness; however, God has shown me that he will be killed.²¹ Similarly the prophet Micaiah uttered a vain prayer out of deference to King Ahab when he told him, *Go up and prosper; and the Lord will deliver it into the hand of the king* (I Kings 22:15).²² Similarly Daniel said to King Nebuchadnezzar, *My lord, the dream be to them that hate thee* (Dan. 4:16).²³ Those who explain that *My lord* refers to God are indulging in Midrash.²⁴ Similarly Abraham said unto Abimelech, *And moreover she is indeed my sister* (Gen. 20:12);²⁵ and unto his young men, *and I and the lad will go yonder and we will worship and come back to you* (Gen. 22:5).²⁶

AND EAT OF MY VENISON. *Okhlah* (eat)²⁷ is similar to *zokhrah* (remember)²⁸ in *Remember (zokhrah) unto me, O my God, for good, all that I have done for this people* (Neh. 5:19). The *alef* of *okhlah* is a root letter.²⁹

²¹ II Kings 8:10 reads *lo* spelled with an *alef*. Thus the verse may be read: thou shalt not recover. However, the *kere* spells the *lo* with a *vav* meaning: say unto him thou shalt recover. I.E. points out that the *kere* is the correct meaning of the verse. Thus Elisha misled the king of Aram. He told him that he would live although he knew that he would be killed (Netter). For a description of the incident see II Kings 8:7-15.

²² King Ahab inquired of the prophet if he would succeed in his attempt to regain Ramoth-Gilead from Aram. Cf. I Kings 22.

²³ Nebuchadnezzar's dream signified that he would live as a beast for seven years. Since Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the Temple the prophet could not really have meant that the events in the dream should fall on Nebuchadnezzar's enemies.

²⁴ According to the Talmud what Daniel really meant was: O Lord, may this dream fall upon your enemies, that is, Nebuchadnezzar. Cf. *Shavuot* 35b.

²⁵ See I. E. on this verse.

²⁶ Since Abraham intended to offer Isaac as a burnt offering, he really was not telling the truth when he said, *And I and the lad will...come back to you*.

²⁷ *Okhlah* (eat) is an elongated imperative. The usual form is *ekhol*. Thus *okhlah* is similar to *zokhrah* which is also an elongated imperative.

²⁸ The normal imperative for remember is *zekhor*.

²⁹ It is not the *alef* prefix of the first person imperfect. I.E. makes this point because in verse 25 the *alef* of *okhelah* is the *alef* prefix of the first person imperfect. See I.E.'s comment on verse 25 and the note to it.

21. THAT I MAY FEEL THEE. There is no *dagesh* in the *shin* of *va-amushekha* (that I may feel thee) in order to simplify the enunciation of this word.³⁰

25. AND I WILL EAT OF MY SON'S VENISON. The *alef* of *ve-okhelah* (and I will eat) is a first person imperfect prefix. It is vocalized with a *cholam* to compensate for the missing *alef* of the root.³¹ We find the same in the word *omerah* in *I will say (omerah) unto God my Rock* (Ps. 42:10).³² The *nun* of *tevarakhanni* (may bless me) (v. 19) receives a *dagesh* to make up for the missing *nun*³³ which should have been in our word, as we find in *yesovevenhu* (He compassed him about) (Deut. 32:10) and similarly in *yeshacharuneni* (they will seek Me) (Hos. 5:15).³⁴

[27. AND KISSED HIM.] When the word kiss is followed by a *lamed* it means to kiss upon the hand, shoulder or neck; when it is not followed by a *lamed* it indicates a mouth to mouth kiss.³⁵

³⁰ The root of *va-amushekha* is *mem, shin, shin*. One of these *shins* is missing in *va-amushekha*. When a root letter is missing a *dagesh* is placed in one of the remaining root letters; thus we would expect a *dagesh* in the *shin* of *va-amushekha*. I.E. points out that since a *dagesh* doubles the letter in which it is placed, the verse would have to be pronounced *va-amushshekha*. The *dagesh* was left out to avoid this.

³¹ The root of *akhal* (eat) is *alef, caf, lamed*. The *alef* prefixed to a verb in the first person imperfect is usually vocalized with a *segol*. I.E. points out that in *okhelah* the *alef* is a first person imperfect prefix and is vocalized with a *cholam* rather than a *segol* to make up for the missing root letter.

³² The root of *amar* (say) is *alef, mem, resh*. In *omerah* the *alef* is the *alef* of the first person imperfect prefix and it, too, is vocalized with a *cholam* to make up for the missing *alef* root letter.

³³ According to I.E. when a verb is combined with a pronominal suffix, a *nun* is added to the end of the root. Since *ni* is the sign of the first person pronominal suffix, *tevarakhanni* should have been spelled with two *nuns* (we have spelled it with two *nuns* because of the *dagesh*. In the Hebrew it has one *nun*). It should be noted that I.E.'s comment is misplaced as it pertains to verse 19.

³⁴ In *yesovevenhu* we see that a *nun* is added to the root when a verb is combined with a pronominal suffix. In *yeshacharuneni* we see that when a verb is combined with a first person pronominal suffix, two *nuns* are added to the root.

³⁵ I.E. offers no proof for this statement (Weiser).

AND HE SMELLED. The *resh* of *va-yarach* (and he smelled) is vocalized with a *pattach* because it precedes a guttural.³⁶ *Va-yana* (was moved) and *va-yanach* (and rested), in *And his heart was moved* (*va-yana*) (Is. 7:2) and *and rested* (*va-yanach*) *in all the borders of Egypt* (Ex. 10:14),³⁷ are similar. All of the above come from roots whose middle letter is a *vav*.³⁸

SEE. Isaac said this to himself.³⁹ The garments gave off a pleasant odor when Isaac thought in his heart that it was Esau before him and that Esau had just come in from the field.⁴⁰ The garments gave off the scent of trees in blossom since it is possible that this episode took place in the first month.⁴¹

³⁶ *Va-yarach* is an *ayin vav* in the *hifil*. *Ayin vavs* in the *hifil* are usually vocalized with a *segol*. Compare, *va-yashev*, *va-yarem* (Cherez).

³⁷ *Va-yana* and *va-yanach* are vocalized with *pattachs* because they end in gutturals, *va-yana* with an *ayin*, *va-yanach* with a *chet*.

³⁸ They are *ayin vavs*. *Va-yarach* comes from the root *resh, vav, chet*, *va-yana* from *nun, vav, ayin* and *va-yanach* from *nun, vav, chet*.

³⁹ So Weiser. Krinsky suggests that "see" is to be understood as perceive, since it is impossible to see smell.

⁴⁰ Part of Isaac's pleasant sensation was psychological.

⁴¹ The month of Nisan. Hence the trees were in bloom and the garments absorbed their scent and gave off the smell of the field.

[28. OF THE DEW.] The *mem* of *mi-tal* (of the dew) is also to be prefixed to *mishmane* (of the fat places).⁴² *Shall I give my first-born for my transgression?* (Micah 6:7) is similar.⁴³

29. THY BRETHREN. The children of the concubines.⁴⁴

THY MOTHER'S SONS. Esau and his children.

CURSED BE EVERYONE THAT CURSETH THEE. Each one of those that will curse you.⁴⁵ *But the righteous are secure as a young lion* (Prov. 28:1)⁴⁶ is similar. There are many other analogous expressions in Scripture. *And blessed be everyone that blesseth thee* is also similar.⁴⁷

⁴² According to I.E. the word for fat is *mishman*. The particle *mem*, which means from, is thus missing. The word should have read *mi-mishmane*, hence I.E.'s comment (Cherez).

⁴³ There, too, the *bets* of *be-alfe* (with thousands) and *be-rivevot* (with ten thousands) are to be read as if prefixed to *pishi* (my transgression) and *chattat* (the sin of). Micah 6:7 reads, *Will the Lord be pleased with thousands (be-alfe) of rams, With ten thousands (be-rivevot) of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first born for my transgression (pishi), The fruit of my body for the sin (chattat) of my soul.* However, its literal reading is: Shall I give my first born my transgression, the fruit of my body, sin of my soul? This makes no sense. Hence I.E. points out that the *bet* of *be-alfe* is to be applied to *pishi* (my transgression) and that of *be-rivevot* to *chattat* (sin of). Thus *pishi* is to be translated, for my transgression (*be-fishi*) and *chattat*, for the sin of (*be-chattat*) (Weiser). Our verses are thus similar in that letters prefixed to one word also apply to other words.

⁴⁴ Abraham's concubines (Gen. 25:6). I.E. interprets brethren in the sense of relatives (Weiser). Or I.E. assumed that Isaac had concubines.

⁴⁵ The verse literally reads: Those who curse you is cursed. Those who curse you (*orerekha*) is a plural, is cursed (*arur*) is a singular. Hence, I.E.'s explanation that a plural followed by a singular means each one of the plural (Weiser).

⁴⁶ *The righteous* is in the plural; *will be secure* is in the singular. The verse literally reads: And righteous people he will be secure as a young lion. I.E. interprets this: each one of the righteous will be as secure as a young lion.

⁴⁷ Literally, and those who bless you (*u-mevarakhekha*, a plural) is blessed (*barukh*, a singular). It means each one of those who blesses you will be blessed.

33. WHO THEN IS HE. *Mi efoh hu* (who then is he?) should be interpreted as follows: who is he and where is he?⁴⁸ The word *efoh* (then) is made up of two words.⁴⁹ The *vav* of *va-varakhehu* (and have blessed him) is vocalized with a *kamatz* because *va-avarakhehu* is a perfect. Had the *vav* been vocalized with a *pattach*, then *va-avarachehu* would be an imperfect.⁵⁰

35. WITH GUILE. He did not speak the truth.

36. IS NOT HE RIGHTLY. *Ha-khi* is to be rendered as truly. *Ha-khi* in *Thou art truly* (ha-chi) *my brother* (Gen. 29:15) is similar.

NAMED. Someone named him Jacob.⁵¹

FOR HE HATH SUPPLANTED ME. *Va-yakeveni* (for he hath supplanted me) is to be rendered: for he hath deceived me. *Ve-okbah* (in subtlety) in *But Jehu did it in subtlety* (ve-okbah) (II Kings 10:19) is similar.⁵² It is possible that it comes from the same root as *akov* (deceitful) in *The heart is deceitful* (akov) (Jer. 17:9). *Akov* is the opposite of *mishor* (straight).⁵³

RESERVED A BLESSING FOR ME. Kept with yourself (*etzlekha*) a blessing for me. *Atzalta* (reserved) comes from the same root as *ve-*

48 The phrase should be read as follows: *mi hu* (who is he) and *efo hu* (where is he). The *hu* following *efoh* also applies to *mi* (Krinsky, Cherez). *Mi efo hu* literally means who where is he. Hence I.E.'s comment.

49 *Efoh* is made up of *ayeh* (where) and *poh* (here) (Weiser).

50 *Avarakhehu* means I will bless him. The *vav* vocalized with a *kamatz* is a *vav* conversive and changes *I will bless him* to *I blessed him*. If the *vav* were vocalized with a *pattach* it would be a connective *vav*, and *va-avarakhehu* would mean, and I will bless him.

51 The subject of *kara* (named) is omitted. Hence *kara* should be rendered, someone named him. According to I.E. *ha-khi kara shemo ya'akov* (is he not rightly named Jacob) means, someone truly named him Jacob. Cf. Kimchi.

52 According to I.E. it should be translated: But Jehu acted with deceit.

53 Cf. Is. 40:4, *ve-hayah he-akov le-mishor* (and the rugged shall be made level). We thus see that *akov* is the opposite of *mishor*.

atzalti (and I will take) in *And I will take* (ve-*atzalti*) of the spirit which is upon thee (Num. 11:17).⁵⁴

37. BEHOLD, I HAVE MADE HIM THY LORD. Via my blessing. Similarly *have I given to him* (v. 33) also means I have verbally given. Some say that *efo* (then) spelled with an *alef* at the end is one word meaning now.⁵⁵

40. AND IT SHALL COME TO PASS WHEN THOU SHALT BREAK LOOSE. *Tarid* (thou shalt break loose) has the same meaning as *tirdeh* (thou shalt rule) (Lev. 25:43). However, *tarid* and *tirdeh* have different roots.⁵⁶ Others say that *tarid* is similar to *arid* (I cry out) in *I cry out* (arid) in my complaint (Ps. 55:3). According to this interpretation the meaning of our clause is: and it shall come to pass when thou shalt cry out, then God will pity you.⁵⁷

THAT THOU SHALT SHAKE HIS YOKE. *U-farakto* (that thou shalt shake) comes from the same root as *mefarek* (rent) in *rent* (mefarek) the mountains⁵⁸ (I Kings 19:11). The word *mafrakto* (his neck) (I Sam. 4:18) is derived from the same stem.⁵⁹

These blessings present a number of great difficulties. If the blessings were prophecies how is it possible for Isaac not to know whom he was blessing? The wise men of our generation respond to this

⁵⁴ *Etzel* means near. *Ve-atzalti* literally means: I will take from that which is near thee. *Atzalta* (reserved) means kept near you. Cf. I.E. on Num. 11:17.

⁵⁵ This comment is in contradiction to I.E.'s note on verse 33.

⁵⁶ The root of *tarid* is *resh*, *vav*, *dalet*. The root of *tirdeh* is *resh*, *dalet*, *heh*. According to this interpretation *tarid* means thou shalt rule, and the meaning of *And it shall come to pass when thou shalt rule* is, when the time that thou shalt rule shall come (Weiser).

⁵⁷ According to this interpretation *tarid* means thou shalt cry out.

⁵⁸ Its root is *peh*, *resh*, *kof*. It means to break apart, to rend. Hence *u-farakta* (that thou shake) means that thou shalt break.

⁵⁹ *Mafrakto* is derived from the verb meaning to break, i.e., for it is easily broken (Rabbi Solomon Ha-Kohen).

problem by explaining that when Jacob entered the room, God told him, "Bless this one."⁶⁰ However, if this was the case Isaac would have told Esau, "God commanded me to bless Jacob."⁶¹ Furthermore, if God told Isaac to bless Jacob, why did Isaac bless Esau because he cried?⁶² Others say that Isaac was no prophet and his blessings did not come to pass.⁶³ However, they are also mistaken. Scripture explicitly tells us, *And the Lord appeared unto him (Isaac)* (Gen. 26:2, 24).⁶⁴ Moreover, King David in referring to the patriarchs says, *And do My prophets no harm* (I Chron. 16:22).

Others ask, what efficacy could there be in Isaac's blessings since he thought that he was blessing Esau? The truth of the matter is that Isaac was in doubt as to who was really before him. Indeed, he said, *The voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau* (v. 22). What Isaac did was bless the one in his presence without regard to whether it was Esau or Jacob, the reason being that both were his sons.

Some ask, how could God say (Gen. 25:23) *And the elder shall serve the younger*? Similarly how could Isaac say, *and thou shalt serve thy brother* (v. 40)?⁶⁵ Saadiah Gaon superficially answers this question by pointing to Scripture's statement, *And Esau took his wives, and his sons, and his daughters, and all the souls of his house, and his cattle, and all his beasts...and went unto a land away from his brother Jacob* (Gen. 36:6).⁶⁶ However, the Gaon seems to have forgotten that the

⁶⁰ The revelation did not include any name.

⁶¹ Rather than telling him, *Thy brother came with guile, and hath taken away thy blessing* (v. 35).

⁶² The Bible implies that Isaac blessed Esau because he pitied him for having his blessing stolen by his brother.

⁶³ Isaac prophesied that Esau would be subservient to Jacob. We do not find it to be so.

⁶⁴ The verse refers to the patriarchs. See I Chron. 16:13-22.

⁶⁵ When in fact we do not find that Esau was subservient to Jacob.

⁶⁶ This shows that Esau was subservient to Jacob.

Bible relates, *and (Jacob) bowed himself to the ground seven times until he came near to his brother (Esau) (Gen. 33:3).*⁶⁷

It appears to me that the prophet's⁶⁸ blessing was akin to a prayer, and God accepted his prayer,⁶⁹ for Isaac's prayer was mainly concerned with the offspring of Jacob and Esau.⁷⁰ Those who have as yet not awakened from their foolish sleep think that we are in the exile of the Edomites (Esau).⁷¹ However, this is not so. Edom (Esau) was subject to Judah.⁷² Scripture thus states, *In his (Jehoram's) days Edom revolted from under the hand of Judah (II Kings 8:20).*⁷³ We are also told that Joab⁷⁴ *cut off every male in Edom (I Kings 11:16).* It is because of their subjugation to Judah that they rejoiced on the day of Judah's calamity⁷⁵ and told the Babylonians, *Raze it, raze it even to the foundations thereof (Ps. 137:7).* The taunts of the Edomites on the day of Jerusalem's fall was harder for the Judeans to bear than the afflictions visited upon them by the Babylonians. This is also the meaning of *Rejoice and be glad, O daughter of Edom (Lam. 4:21),*⁷⁶ and *Neither shouldst thou have rejoiced over the children of Judah in the day of their destruction (Obad.*

⁶⁷ Which clearly shows that Esau was not subservient to Jacob.

⁶⁸ Isaac.

⁶⁹ A blessing does not take effect immediately. See Rashbam's commentary on Deut. 7:12 (Krinsky). Thus Isaac's blessing was a blessing and not a prophecy. If it had been a prophecy he would have been directed by God whom to bless.

⁷⁰ And the latter were subject to the former.

⁷¹ This opinion identifies the Romans (hence Christianity) with the Edomites. If this is so, then how could Scripture say that Jacob would rule over Esau when in fact Esau destroyed the Temple, exiled the Jews and ruled over them?

⁷² From the time of King David until the reign of King Jehoram.

⁷³ Which indicates that till that time Edom (Esau) was subject to Judah.

⁷⁴ King David's general.

⁷⁵ The day that Jerusalem was taken.

⁷⁶ A sarcastic statement. Rejoice while you still are able to, for your happiness will not long endure. Indeed, the verse concludes, *The cup shall pass over unto thee also; Thou shalt be drunken and shalt make thyself naked.*

1:12). Also, Hyrcanus the elder⁷⁷ made the Edomites (Esau's descendants) guard Jerusalem and had them circumcised. Also, in the days of Agrippa⁷⁸ when Jerusalem was taken,⁷⁹ troops of Edomites⁸⁰ came to Judah's aid.⁸¹ The Romans⁸² who exiled us are from the seed of Kittim. Onkelos similarly explains Kittim to mean Rome in *But ships shall come from the coast of Kittim* (Num. 24:24).⁸³ The Kittim are the very kingdom of the Greeks as I have explained in my commentary on the Book of Daniel.⁸⁴

[At first⁸⁵ there were only a few people who believed in the man that was made into a god. The Romans accepted the belief in this man in the days of Constantine who introduced this new religion to the Romans upon the advice of an Edomite priest and placed upon his flag an image of this man. At that time there was no one in the world aside from a small group of Edomites who followed the new religion.⁸⁶] Similarly the contemporary inhabitants of Egypt, Sheba⁸⁷ and the land of Elam⁸⁸

⁷⁷ John Hyrcanus the Hasmonean. He ruled Judea from 135 to 104 B.C.E. He conquered the Edomites and forced them to embrace Judaism.

⁷⁸ Agrippa II, last king of the House of Herod. When the Jews revolted against Rome in 66 C.E. he went to Jerusalem and tried to restore calm.

⁷⁹ That is, during the Roman-Jewish War.

⁸⁰ During the Roman-Jewish War the Edomites came to the aid of the Jews.

⁸¹ Thus it is clear that the Romans are not to be identified with the Edomites.

⁸² Some printed editions read, *the nation*.

⁸³ Onkelos renders Kittim as Rome.

⁸⁴ See I.E.'s comments on Dan. 2:38 and 37:14.

⁸⁵ I.E. goes on to explain why the Romans are referred to as Edomites.

⁸⁶ This is the reading of *Vat. Ebr.* 38. It was removed by the censor and does not appear in the *Mikra'ot Gedolot* edition. Some of the printed editions read; "At first there were only a few people who believed in the new religion. When the Romans accepted the new religion in the days of Constantine who adopted it as the state religion there was no one in the world who kept the new religion except for the Edomites."

⁸⁷ An allusion to the Moslems living in the vicinity of the Red Sea (Weiser).

⁸⁸ An allusion to the Moslems in Mesopotamia (Weiser).

are called Ishmaelites even though only a tiny minority of the people living there are true descendants of the Ishmaelites.⁸⁹

41. AND ESAU HATED. *Va-yistom* (and he hated) is to be rendered: and he harbored hatred. *Va-yistemuhu* (and hated him) (Gen. 49:23) is similar.

AND ESAU SAID IN HIS HEART. It is possible that Esau confided this thought to one of his friends.⁹⁰ Others say that Rebekah knew this through prophecy.⁹¹ The first interpretation appears correct.

42. DOTH COMFORT HIMSELF. *Mitnachem* (doth comfort himself) comes from the same root as *nechamah* (consolation).⁹² The meaning of our clause is: Esau's sole consolation is that he will be able to kill you. However, the Gaon says that *mitnachem* means to set a time and is similar in meaning to the Arabic *wa'ad*.⁹³

44. A FEW DAYS. *Yamim achadim* (a few days) is to be translated as a few years. Compare *yamim in for a full year* (*yamim*) *shall he have the right of redemption* (Lev. 25:29). *Achadim* (a few) means less than ten.⁹⁴

⁸⁹ The people of these places are called Ishmaelites because they accepted the religion of the Ishmaelites (Islam).

⁹⁰ Otherwise how could Rebekah know that Esau plotted to kill Jacob?

⁹¹ Hence she knew that Esau planned to kill Jacob after Isaac's death.

⁹² It comes from the root *nun, chet, mem* and thus means to comfort or console.

⁹³ Which may mean to set a time. The phrase should thus be rendered: Esau doth set a time to kill you. This interpretation is problematic. For the problems inherent in it, see Weiser's notes on I.E.'s comments on Gen. 6:6.

⁹⁴ *Echad* means one, *achadim* is its plural. Thus *achadim* can refer to any number up to ten.

45. WHY SHOULD I BE BEREAVED. Rebekah was anxious lest they kill each other,⁹⁵ or that Esau would be killed for murdering Jacob. There is a Midrashic opinion that both Jacob and Esau died in one day.⁹⁶

46. I AM WEARY OF MY LIFE. *Katzti* (I am weary) has the same meaning as *tzakti* (I am distressed).⁹⁷ Compare *U-nekitzennah* (and vex it) in *Let us go up against Judah and vex it* (*u-nekitzennah*) (Is. 7:6). Scripture similarly says, *the land whose two kings thou hast cast a horror of (katz)*⁹⁸ *shall be foresaken* (Is. 7:16).

⁹⁵ Hence Rebekah's statement, *why should I be bereaved of you both in one day*.

⁹⁶ Thus her words came true.

⁹⁷ I.E. literally reads: *katzti* is similar to its opposite; that is, *katzti* is similar to *tzakti*, the *kof* and *tzadi* changing places. Thus the root *kof*, *vav*, *tzadi* has the same meaning as the root *tzadi*, *vav*, *kof*.

⁹⁸ That is, the land which causes you distress (Weiser).

CHAPTER 28

9. [SO ESAU WENT UNTO ISHMAEL.] When Esau learned that Isaac blessed Jacob a second time and charged him not to *take a wife of the daughters of Canaan*,¹ he went unto his uncle Ishmael and married his daughter Basemath, who was also called Mahalath.² She, like Jethro, had two names, for I believe that Jethro and Hobab are one and the same person.³

THE SISTER OF NEBAIOTH. He was the most important of all his brothers.⁴ It is also possible that Ishmael had many wives and that Mahalath was Nabaioth's sister from the same mother.⁵

¹ Verse 1. This comment forms the conclusion of I.E.'s notes on Gen 27:46.

² Our verse tells us that Esau married *Mahalath the daughter of Ishmael*. However, Gen. 36:3 tells us that Esau married *Basemath, Ishmael's daughter*. I.E. solves the discrepancy by explaining that the daughter of Ishmael whom Esau married had two names.

³ Cf. Ex. 18:1, and Num. 10:29. In the former, Moses' father-in-law is called Jethro, in the latter, by the name Hobab. In his comments on Ex. 2:18, I.E. says that they refer to one and the same person, as he had two names.

⁴ Therefore Mahalath is identified as the sister of Nebaioth.

⁵ Sister here means sister from the same mother. Hence Scripture tells us that Mahalath was the sister of Nabaioth. The Bible mentions one wife of Ishmael (Gen. 21:21). Hence I.E.'s uncertainty.

VA-YETZE

10. [AND JACOB WENT OUT FROM BEER-SHEBA.] Saadiah Gaon is of the opinion that *va-yelekh charanah* (and went toward Haran) is to be interpreted as, to go to Haran.⁶ However, this is not so. *Va-yelekh charanah* is to be interpreted literally.⁷ After telling us that Jacob left Beersheba and went to Haran, Scripture returns and tells us what he encountered on the way to Haran.⁸ Jacob did not arrive in Haran on the day he left Beersheba,⁹ because Scripture explicitly tells us that he spent a night on the way.

11. [AND HE LIGHTED UPON THE PLACE.] The reason the *bet* of *ba-makom* (the place)¹⁰ is vocalized with a *pattach* is that Moses in writing the Torah did so in order to indicate *the place* that was well known in his time.¹¹ Similarly the prophet Hosea said, *And there* (at Beth-el) *he would speak with us* (Hos. 12:5).¹² Hosea said this because

⁶ Verse 10 literally reads: And Jacob went out of Beersheba and went to Haran. The verse thus tells us that Jacob arrived in Haran. If this is the case, why then do the verses that follow tell us what happened to Jacob on the way to Haran? Saadiah solves the problem by claiming that the Bible employs a perfect (*va-yelekh*) in place of an infinitive (*la-lekhet*), with the perfect having the meaning of an infinitive. Saadiah thus translates our verse: Jacob went out of Beersheba to go to Haran.

⁷ That is, and he went to Haran.

⁸ In other words, verse 10 is a general statement. The particulars then follow.

⁹ Contrary to the Midrash *Bereshit Rabbah* 68:9 which states that Jacob arrived in Haran on the same day that he left Beersheba.

¹⁰ There is a difference between *be-makom* and *ba-makom*. The former means in a place, the latter, in the place. "The place" implies a specific, well known place. When Jacob came to Beth-el there was as yet nothing significant about the place. Why then does Scripture say that Jacob alighted upon the place?

¹¹ I.E. suggests that after this incident Beth-el was "the place" and Moses wrote accordingly.

¹² We thus see that from the days of Moses onward, Beth-el was known as a holy place (Netter).

he prophesied in Beth-el concerning Jeroboam the son of Joash.¹³ Hosea used the term "with us" because Amos, too, prophesied in Beth-el.¹⁴ It is clear from the Book of Amos that Beth-el was a holy place.

According to the plain meaning of the text, *va-yifga* (and he lighted) is not to be translated as, and he prayed, as in *neither make intercession* (tifga) *to Me* (Jer. 7:16),¹⁵ because we never find in the entire Bible the word *makom* (place) meaning God.¹⁶ Do not pay any attention to the Midrashic interpretation that explains *makom*, in *makom acher* (Es. 4:14), as referring to God,¹⁷ because it most certainly does not. Proof of this is found in the word *acher* (another) which follows *makom*.¹⁸

OF THE STONES OF THE PLACE. Its meaning is: one of the stones of the place.¹⁹

¹³ Hosca prophesied there because Beth-el was known as a holy place where an angel appeared to Jacob (Weiser). Cf. I.E. on Hos. 12:5. It was for the same reason that King Jeroboam set up a royal shrine there. Cf. Am. 7:13, *Beth-el...is the king's sanctuary and it is a royal house*.

¹⁴ Cf. Am. 7:13.

¹⁵ Our verse reads: *va-yifga ba-makom* (and he lighted upon the place). The Talmud states that *va-yifga* means, and he prayed (*Berakhot*. 26b; *Ta'anit* 7b; *Sotah* 14a; *Sanhedrin* 95b). According to I.E., if *va-yifga* is interpreted as, and he prayed, *ba-makom* must be interpreted to mean God. However, this is not necessarily so. Indeed, the Talmud interprets *va-yifga ba-makom* to mean, he prayed in the place.

¹⁶ The Rabbinic sages refer to God as *Ha-makom*. I.E. points out that this a Rabbinic not a Biblical term for God. Hence *va-yifga ba-makom* cannot be translated as, and he prayed to God, and *va-yifga* cannot be rendered, and he prayed.

¹⁷ The Book of Esther does not mention God. In his introduction to Esther I.E. quotes an opinion that God is mentioned in this book in 4:14. I. E. rejects this interpretation as being Midrashic.

¹⁸ For then Es. 4:14 would read: then will relief and deliverance arise to the Jews from another God (*mi-makom acher*), an impossible rendition.

¹⁹ "Of the stones" can be taken to mean that Jacob took a number of stones. However, verse 18 indicates that it was one stone (Cherez).

UNDER HIS HEAD. *Me-ra'ashotav* (under his head) is a plural.²⁰ It is similar to *margelotav* (his feet) (Ruth 3:4; 14).²¹

It is surprising that Rabbi Samuel Ben Hofni confused the dreams of common men with prophetic dreams.²²

12. [AND HE DREAMED, AND BEHOLD A LADDER SET UP ON THE EARTH.] Those who say that the ladder seen by Jacob refers to a statue,²³ or that it refers to Sinai because it is numerically equivalent to it,²⁴ are indulging in Midrash. Rabbi Solomon ibn Gabirol, the Spaniard, says that Jacob's "ladder" alludes to man's heavenly soul,²⁵ and that "the angels of God" signify thoughts of wisdom.²⁶ Rabbi Joshua²⁷ explains the dream of the ladder to mean that Jacob's prayers ascended the Heavens via the ladder and in response to his supplications salvation was sent down to him. These commentators have apparently

²⁰ It is a plural having a singular meaning. This is so because this form does not appear in the singular (Weiser).

²¹ This form does not appear in the singular; the plural is used for singular and plural.

²² Cf. I.E.'s introduction to the Pentateuch where he notes that Rabbi Samuel ben Hofni, in commenting on this verse, wrote on dream interpretation. Rabbi Samuel thus treated this dream as non-prophetic and interpreted it along those lines (Cherez).

²³ Rearranging the letters of *sulam* (ladder) gives us *semel* (statue). According to the Midrash God showed Jacob the statue that Nebuchadnezzar would erect and the statue that King Manasseh would erect and place in the Temple. Cf. *Bereshit Rabbah* 68: 19-21.

²⁴ Both *sulam* and Sinai are numerically equivalent to 130. According to this interpretation it was prophetically shown that Jacob's descendants would receive the Torah at Sinai. Cf. *Bereshit Rabbah* 68:16.

²⁵ For Ibn Gabirol's concept of the human soul, see P.D. Bookstaber, *The Idea of Development of the Soul in Medieval Jewish Philosophy*, p. 39.

²⁶ See I.E.'s introduction to his commentary on the Torah, "man's intelligence is the angel which mediates between him and his God."

²⁷ A Karaite scholar. See note 15 to I.E.'s introduction to his commentary on the Pentateuch. *Vat. Ebr.* 38 does not have the title *rabbi* prefixed to Joshua. It appears that *Vat. Ebr.* 38 is correct, as it is highly unlikely that I.E. would call a Karaite scholar *rabbi*. The title *rabbi* was probably inserted by a scribe who was unaware that the reference is to a Karaite. Some of the editions omit Joshua's interpretation *in toto*.

not studied²⁸ the prophecies of Zechariah, Amos and Jeremiah.²⁹ The way to interpret Jacob's dream is to view it as a parable. It teaches that nothing is hidden from God and that what happens below is contingent on the decree from above.³⁰ There is thus, as it were, a ladder linking heaven and earth by which angels ascend to inform God what they have seen on earth after going over it. Scripture also states that other angels come down to fulfill God's commands. The imagery presented is that of a king and his servants.³¹

14. AND THOU SHALT SPREAD ABROAD. *U-faratzta* (and thou shalt spread abroad) is to be rendered: and thou shalt multiply. *Va-yifrotz ha-ish* (and the man increased) is similar (Gen. 30:43).

16. SURELY THE LORD IS IN THIS PLACE. The meaning of Jacob's statement is that there are places where miracles are seen.³² I cannot explain why this is so because it is a deep mystery.³³

17. THIS IS NONE OTHER THAN THE HOUSE OF GOD. This is a chosen place where a man in time of need will pray and his supplications will be accepted. Many ask, how could Jacob set up a

²⁸ A sarcastic barb. The scholars with whom I.E. takes issue obviously did study the prophets.

²⁹ The point is that the prophets spoke in parables. Cf. Zech. 1:4-11; 4; 5; 6; Am. 7:1-9, 8:1-2, 9:1; Jer. 1.

³⁰ It is hard to understand I.E.'s point. The other commentators also interpret the vision as a parable. It thus appears that I.E.'s main argument is from the Book of Zechariah which speaks of God sending angels to roam the earth. Amos and Jeremiah are mentioned for purposes of embellishment.

³¹ According to Filwarg the reference is to verse 12. According to Krinsky the reference is to Zech. 6:7.

³² The point is that there are some places where God's presence is more manifest than in others. Cf. I.E.'s comments on Ex. 25:40.

³³ It is beyond human comprehension (Weiser). Levine (Introduction to *Vat. Ebr.* 38) suggests that when I.E. says, I cannot explain, he means, I am not permitted to explain.

pillar?³⁴ However, they have forgotten that Moses set up twelve pillars.³⁵ Scripture does not prohibit a pillar set up to honor the Lord. Scripture merely states, *Neither shalt thou set thee up a pillar, which the Lord thy God hateth* (Deut. 16:22). I will explain the latter verse when I come to it.³⁶

18. AND POURED OIL UPON THE TOP OF IT. So that he would recognize it when he returned.

21. [THEN SHALL THE LORD BE MY GOD.] The Lord that shall be my God is the One known by the Tetragrammaton. Scripture clearly states, *And, behold the Lord* (spelled with the tetragrammaton) *stood beside him* (v. 13). You will find an explanation of this name of God in my comments on the first Torah portion of Exodus.³⁷

[22. GOD'S HOUSE.] The meaning of *shall be God's House* is: it will be a fixed place for my prayers and for my tithing; for out of all the money *that thou shalt give me*, I will give a tithe out of respect for God to one who is fit to receive it.³⁸ Those who say that the tithe refers to Levi³⁹ are indulging in Midrash. This is so because we do not find anywhere in the Torah that a man shall tithe his children. The only tithes that we find in the Pentateuch are cattle, sheep and produce.

³⁴ Deut. 16:22 prohibits setting up a pillar.

³⁵ Ex. 24:4.

³⁶ Ibn Ezra on Deut. 16:22 explains that Scripture only prohibits *A pillar which the Lord...hateth*, i.e., a pillar set up to an idol.

³⁷ Cf. I.E.'s comments to Ex. 3:15.

³⁸ Such as Melchizedek. Cf. I.E.'s comments on Gen. 14:20.

³⁹ According to the Midrash Jacob set aside his son Levi as a tithe to God. Cf. *Bereshit Rabbah* 70:7 and *Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer*, Chap. 37.

CHAPTER 29

2. AND HE LOOKED. *Va-yar* (and he looked)¹ is an irregular form, for though a *kal*, its *yod* is vocalized with a *pattach* notwithstanding the fact that it is not followed by a guttural, in which case the preceding letter is normally vocalized with a *pattach*.² Furthermore, this form (*va-yar*) cannot drop the conversive *vav*³ nor come with any conjugational prefix but the *yod*.⁴ I believe that when one wants to conjugate the root *resh*, *alef*, *heh* in the third person according to the paradigm of *va-yishb* in *and took some of them captive* (*va-yishb*) (Num. 21:1),⁵ the *heh* would be dropped⁶ and the *alef* unsounded.⁷ Nevertheless, the *chirik* would remain beneath the *yod*.⁸ The word would thus be pronounced *va-yir* and it would follow the paradigm of *va-yif*⁹ (thus was it fair) in *va-yif be-godlo* (thus was it fair in its greatness) (Ez. 31:7) and would be

¹ From the root *resh*, *alef*, *heh*, meaning to see.

² Compare, *va-ya'al* (and he went up) from the root *ayin*, *lamed*, *heh*; *va-ya'as* (and he made) from the root *ayin*, *sin*, *heh*.

³ One cannot say *yar*.

⁴ One says, *va-ere* (and I saw), *va-tere* (and you saw), *va-nere* (and we saw). One does not say, *va-ar*, *va-tar*, *va-nar*. Thus *va-yar* is not vocalized like the rest of the forms in its conjugational paradigm wherein the prefixes are vocalized with a *tzere* rather than a *pattach*.

⁵ The root of *va-yishb* is *shin*, *bet*, *heh*. The third person masculine perfect of this form is *yishbeh*, with a *vav* conversive, *va-yishbeh*; in the shortened form, *va-yishb*. Similarly *va-yar* is short for *va-yireh*.

⁶ As in all cases of the abridged form.

⁷ In *va-yishb* the second root letter receives a *sheva*, however, this cannot be done in *va-yar* as the *alef* cannot receive a *sheva*.

⁸ As in *va-yishb*.

⁹ From the root *yod*, *peh*, *heh*.

thought to mean, and he threw, from the root *yod, resh, heh* (throw). To avoid this possibility our word (*va-yar*) is vocalized with a *pattach* beneath the *yod*.

3. AND THEY ROLLED THE STONE. The shepherds rolled the stone.¹⁰

4. WHENCE. *Me-ayin* (whence) means what place are you from. The word *ayin* without the *mem* prefixed to it could not be used for whence, for *ayin* means nothing.¹¹ Nevertheless, we find the word *me-ayin* also used for nothing, as in *Behold, ye are nothing* (me-ayin) (Is. 41:24).

6. AND, BEHOLD, RACHEL HIS DAUGHTER COMETH. The accent is on the last syllable in the word *ba'ah* (cometh) because it is a participle. It is similar to words in the *po'el* form.¹²

9. RACHEL CAME. *Ba'ah* (came) is pentultimately accented. It is a verb in the perfect.

12. AND JACOB TOLD RACHEL. *And Jacob told Rachel* should have been written before *And Jacob kissed Rachel* (v. 11). Its meaning is: And Jacob had already told Rachel that he was her father's brother before he kissed her.¹³ There are many such instances in Scripture.¹⁴

¹⁰ The verse reads: *And thither were all the flocks gathered; and they rolled the stone. And they rolled* appears to refer to the flocks. However, this is impossible; hence I.E. points out that the subject (shepherds) is missing in the verse. The verse is thus abridged (Filwarg).

¹¹ *Ayin* means nothing; *me-ayin* whence.

¹² *Po'el* is the participle form of whole roots (*shelamim*) in the *kal*. The term used by I.E. for participle is *shem to'ar*, which literally means adjective. I.E. is of the opinion that all participles are also adjectives (Weiser). For an explanation of the participle in Biblical Hebrew, see *Biblical Hebrew* by R.K. Harrison. Filwarg renders this passage: "*ba'ah* is an adjective, adjectives having the same meaning in Hebrew as participles."

¹³ He would not have kissed her before this (Filwarg). Hence *And Jacob said* is a pluperfect.

¹⁴ See I.E. comments on Gen. 1:9; 2:8.

13. ALL THESE THINGS. The account of the blessings.¹⁵

14. THE SPACE OF A MONTH. I have already explained the meaning of *chodesh yamin* (the space of a month).¹⁶

15. THY WAGES. *Maskurtekha* (thy wages) follows the paradigm of *matkonet* in *And the tale* (*matkonet*) *of the bricks* (Ex. 5:8).¹⁷

17. WEAK. *Rakkot* is to be taken literally.¹⁸ Some ask, why were Leah's eyes weak? They raise this question because they believe God's thoughts are like their thoughts,¹⁹ and they think that all people have to be formed alike.²⁰ Ben Efraim said that an *alef* is missing in the word *rakkot* (weak), its meaning being *arukhot* (long).²¹ However, Ben Efraim himself was missing an *alef*.²²

OF BEAUTIFUL FORM. *To'ar* (form) is similar to *ta'ar* (drawn) in *And the border was drawn* (ve-ta'ar) (Jos. 15:9). The meaning of *beautiful form* is that each organ of her body such as her nose and mouth were beautifully drawn (formed).

¹⁵ That his father blessed him and on account of this he was forced to flee from his brother's wrath (Weiser).

¹⁶ According to I.E. it means a full month. Cf. I.E.'s comments to Gen. 4:4.

¹⁷ *Matkonet* with the second person pronominal suffix is *matkuntekha*; i.e., the *cholem* changes to a *kubbutz* when pronominal suffixes are added to *matkonet*. The same is true with *maskoret*. Also, like *matkonet*, a *tav* is added to the root (Krinsky).

¹⁸ It means weak (Krinsky, Weiser).

¹⁹ A play on Is. 55:8.

²⁰ Hence they ask, why were Leah's eyes different? I.E. obviously disagreed with the Midrashic interpretation to the effect that Leah's eyes were weak from crying because she had been told that she was destined to marry Esau. Cf. *Baba Batrah* 123a; *Bereshit Rabbah* 70:16; 71:2.

²¹ In other words *rakkot* is short for *arukhot*. *Arukhot* minus the *alef* spells *rakkot*.

²² Efraim minus the *alef* spells *parim* (cows). *Aluf* also means wisdom. Perhaps I.E. means Efraim lacked wisdom (Krinsky, Weiser).

[AND FAIR TO LOOK UPON.] Her whole body was fair to look upon,²³ or *And fair to look upon* refers to the complexion of her face.²⁴

20. AND JACOB SERVED SEVEN YEARS FOR RACHEL. *Be-rachel* (for Rachel) should be rendered because of Rachel.²⁵

27. FULFILL THE WEEK OF THIS ONE. The seven days of the marriage feast. *Zot* (this one) refers to Leah.²⁶

32. WILL LOVE ME. *Ye'ehavani* (will love me) is vocalized with a *pattach*²⁷ beneath the *bet*. It is similar to *tidbakani* (overtake me) in *lest the evil overtake me* (*tidbakani*) (Gen. 19:19).

34. WILL MY HUSBAND BE JOINED UNTO ME. *Yillaveh* (will be joined) is similar to *ve-nilvu* (and they shall be joined) in *And they shall be joined* (*ve-nilvu*) *unto thee*²⁸ (Num. 18:4).

35. THIS TIME WILL I PRAISE THE LORD. *Ha-pa'am*²⁹ should be explained as if written *ha-pa'am ha-zot* (this time). Its meaning is, now that I have four sons I will give thanks to the Lord for I will not desire any more children. One can paraphrase *This time will I praise the*

²³ According to I.E. *to'ar* refers to the shape of the individual body parts and *mareh* to the body as a whole.

²⁴ This is also Rashi's opinion.

²⁵ The prefix *bet* usually means in.

²⁶ The Hebrew reads *shevu'a zot*. One might think that *zot* refers to *shevu'a*, i.e., fulfill this week; hence I.E.'s comment that *zot* refers to Leah. The reason for the preceding is that *shevu'a* is vocalized with a *sheva*; hence it is in the construct with *zot*, i.e., the week of this one. If it meant this week it should have read: *shavu'a zot*. Furthermore, the Hebrew word for week is masculine; if the Bible wanted to say this week it would have read *shavu'a zeh* since *zot* is feminine (Krinsky).

²⁷ Rather than with a *tzere*. In such forms the last root letter is vocalized with a *tzere*; compare, *yishmereni*. Hence I.E.'s comment that there are exceptions.

²⁸ That is, *yillaveh* comes from the root *lamed, vav, heh*, meaning to join. Hence, *yillaveh* means will be joined.

²⁹ *Ha-pa'am* literally means the time, which makes no sense, hence I.E.'s comment that *ha-pa'am* is short for *ha-pa'am ha-zot*.

Lord by: I will praise the Lord because he has given me all this and has satisfied me. Therefore *she left off bearing*.³⁰

³⁰ God punished her by having her leave off from bearing for saying this (Krinsky). It was only after Leah prayed to God for children (Gen. 30:17) that she conceived again.

CHAPTER 30

1. GIVE ME CHILDREN. Pray to God as your father did.¹

2. AM I IN GOD'S STEAD. Am I in God's place. It is possible that Jacob prayed on behalf of Rachel but the time for the acceptance of his prayer on her behalf had not yet arrived.

3. AND I ALSO MAY BE BUILDED UP. I have explained the word *ve-ibbaneh* (and I also may be builded up) in my comments on Sarah's use of the same term.²

6. JUDGED ME. The second *nun* of *dananni* (judged me) has a *dagesh* to compensate for a missing suffixal *nun*.³

8. WRESTLINGS. *Naftule* (wrestlings) is a noun in the *nifal*.⁴ Its meaning is I strove, as a man who, when wrestling⁵ with another, twists (*yiftol*) in his effort to overpower his opponent in order to throw him to the ground.⁶ The word *tittappal* (Thou dost deal tortuously) (II Sam.

¹ Pray to God as your father did when your mother could not conceive. Cf. Gen. 25:21. This is what Rachel meant by give me children. Rashi explains similarly.

² See I.E.'s commentary on Gen. 16:2.

³ The suffix "me" is sometimes written with two *nuns* (*nni*). To make up for this missing *nun* a *dagesh* is placed in the suffix *ni* (Filwarg).

⁴ It is a noun from the root *peh, tav, lamed* following a *nifal* paradigm. From this root we get the verb *niftalti* (I wrestled). The same is the case with the proper name Naphtali (Weiser). Krinsky and Cherez maintain that what I.E. means is that *naphтали* is an infinitive.

⁵ *Naftulai* thus means twistings of (Weiser). I.E. uses twistings in a specific sense, twisting while fighting.

⁶ The point is that Rachel did not actually wrestle with her sister. She strove with her with the determination of a person trying to overpower his opponent. However, the literal meaning of *naftule* is twistings (wrestlings).

22:27) is similar.⁷ The reason Rachel mentioned God, (*naftule Elohim*),⁸ is either that out of respect for the Lord she had given her handmaiden to her husband,⁹ or that God helped her in her struggle.¹⁰

11. FORTUNE IS COME. *Bagad* (fortune is come) is really two words¹¹ with the *alef* missing. Similarly, *bavel*.¹² Also, *bamah* as is clearly explained in Ezekiel (20:29). The meaning of Gad is a troop. Leah said this because she now had a "troop" of sons.¹³ Others say that *gad* means good fortune as in the Arabic; and *that prepare a table for Fortune* (*gad*) (Is. 65:11), with the latter meaning Jupiter,¹⁴ is similar. Actually, however, *gad* in the latter verse refers to the troops of heaven.¹⁵

13. HAPPY AM I. *Be-oshri* means, on account of my happiness.¹⁶

⁷ The point of the verse is that God deals with a person measure for measure, viz., *With the pure Thou dost show thyself pure, And with the twisted (ikkesh) Thou dost deal tortuously (tittappal)*. In the latter verse *tittappal* (tortuously) is parallel to *ikkesh* (twisted). Hence *tittappal* implies crookedness or twisting. *Tittappal* is a variation of *titpattal* (Kimchi), and Ps. 18:27 which has the identical theme reads *titpattal*. Thus it seems that the root *peh, tav, lamed* and its variation *tav, peh, lamed* mean to twist (Weiser).

⁸ *Naftule Elohim*, wrestlings of God.

⁹ *Naftule Elohim* (with mighty wrestlings) is to be rendered: Godly wrestlings.

¹⁰ According to this interpretation *naftule Elohim* means wrestlings with God's help.

¹¹ It is a combination of two words *ba* (spelled *bet, alef*) and *gad* (Weiser). Thus, *bagad* is spelled *bet, gimel, daled*. Hence the *alef* of *ba* has been dropped.

¹² This is the reading in *Vat. Ebr.* 38 and many of the printed editions. Some editions read *ba-kol*. The latter is incorrect (Filwarg, Weiser). See I.E.'s comments on Gen. 11:9.

¹³ *Bagad* thus means: a troop has come.

¹⁴ Jupiter was believed to control men's fortune. Cf. I.E.'s commentary on Is. 65:11. This proves that *Gad* means Fortune, and *bagad*, Fortune has come.

¹⁵ The stars and planets. Therefore, Is. 65:11 does not contradict I.E.'s interpretation that *bagad* means a troop has come.

¹⁶ The *bet* of *be-oshri* is the *bet ha-sibbah* (Weiser). Filwarg renders it: so that I may be called happy, the thought expressed by our verse being, this one was born so that the women may praise me by calling me happy (*for the daughters will call me happy*).

14. MANDRAKES. Onkelos renders *dudaim yavruchin* (Aramaic for mandrakes). They are similarly called in Arabic. Mandrakes give off a pleasant scent. Thus it is written, *The mandrakes give forth fragrance* (Cant. 7:14). The mandrakes are shaped like humans. They have the shape of a head and hands.¹⁷ I do not know how they can help a woman conceive since their nature is cold.¹⁸

15. FOR THY SON'S MANDRAKES. *Tachet* (for) is to be rendered: in place of and as a reward for.¹⁹

20. GOD HATH ENDOWED ME. The meaning of *zevadani* (hath endowed me) is: has given me a portion. The word *zevadani* is not found elsewhere in Scripture.²⁰

WILL DWELL WITH ME. *Yizbeleni* means will dwell with me;²¹ i.e., his dwelling (*zevulo*) will always be with me. Compare, *I have surely built Thee a house of habitation* (bet zevul) (I Kings 8:13). *Yetza'uni* (are gone forth from me), in *banai yetza'uni* (my children are gone from me) (Jer. 10:20), and *vi-yevo'uni* (also come unto me) (Ps. 119:41) are similar. All of these are intransitive verbs with the pronominal suffix *ni*.

¹⁷ The roots of the mandrakes have this shape (Nahmanides).

¹⁸ According to medieval medical theory there are four humors, hot, cold, moist and dry. The body was believed to function according to the balance of these four humors. The humor that was hot was thought to stimulate sexual activity and cold to depress it. Cf. Maimonides, *Guide To the Perplexed*, Part I, Chap. 34.

¹⁹ The primary meaning of *tachet* (for) is beneath. However, this translation does not fit here, hence I.E.'s comments: that *tachet* is here to be rendered in place of and as a reward for (thy son's mandrakes).

²⁰ Hence its meaning can only be ascertained from the context.

²¹ The *ni* suffix at the end of a verse stands for *oti*. Hence *yizbeleni* should be translated: will dwell me, an impossible construction. Therefore I.E. points out that *ni* here does not have the meaning of *oti* (me) but *immi* (with me). Since the suffix *ni* means *oti* (me), it is usually combined only with a transitive verb, compare, *zevadani* (endowed me); *hikkani* (smite me), *yahargeni* (will kill me) and others (Weiser).

21. AND AFTERWARDS SHE BORE A DAUGHTER. Some say that Dinah was Zebulun's twin.²²

23. GOD HATH TAKEN AWAY MY REPROACH. *Asaf* (taken away) is to be rendered cut off. Compare, *And gladness and joy are taken away* (ve-ne'esaf) (Is. 16:10). Others interpret what Leah said as, God saw the insults which the women hurled at me because I was barren and by giving me a son He, as it were, gathered (*asaf*) and collected the insults.²³

It is clear from Scripture that Jacob's twelve children were born in seven years.²⁴ When the ancients numbered them they could only explain how this was possible by saying that each was born six months and some days after conception.²⁵ However, this was not necessarily so. It is possible that Leah gave her handmaiden to Jacob before

²² The Bible omits "and she conceived" with regard to Dinah (Weiser). "And afterwards she bore a daughter" implies one birth (Kimchi).

²³ According to this interpretation *asaf* means gathered rather than cut off.

²⁴ Cf. *Seder Olam* 2, "Jacob spent 20 years in Laban's house. Seven before marrying the matriarchs, and seven after marrying them and six years after the birth of the eleven tribes and Dinah. We thus find that the tribes with the exception of Benjamin were born in seven years, each one every seven months." That is, six months and some days (Weiser). The point is that Jacob had acquired eleven sons and Dinah by the time he had finished serving his 14 years for his wives (v. 25). The first seven years he had no wife (v. 20). Hence all his children, with the exception of Benjamin who was born after he had left Laban, were born during seven years.

²⁵ Scripture tells us that Jacob's children were born in sequence; Reuben, Simon, Levi, etc. Since Jacob had twelve children in seven years, he had to have had a child every seven months since there are 84 months in seven years and 84 divided by 12 is 7. The reason I.E. says that Jacob's sons were born six months and some days following conception is to allow for the days of "uncleanliness" following childbirth during which Jacob abstained from intercourse with those wives who conceived twice in one year (cf. *Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer*, Chap. 36). The *Seder Olam* quoted above employs a round number (Cherez).

Naphtali was born, that Rachel conceived before the birth of Zebulun,²⁶ and that we do not know when Dinah was born.

26. FOR WHOM I HAVE SERVED THEE. This refers to *my wives*, not *my children*.²⁷ It is similar to *and shed the blood of war in peace* (I Kings 2:5).²⁸

27. I HAVE OBSERVED THE SIGNS. *Nichashti* (I have observed the signs) means I have divined,²⁹ for Laban was an enchanter and had teraphim.³⁰

28. APPOINT. *Nokvah* (appoint) is an imperative.³¹ It follows the paradigm of *zokhrah* (remember) in *Remember (zokhrah) me, O my God, for good* (Neh. 13:31). The meaning of *nokvah* (appoint) is, clearly state, as we see from *Which the mouth of the Lord shall mark out*³² (*yikkovennu*) (Is. 62:2). The *dagesh* of *yikkovennu* (shall mark out) compensates for the missing *nun*.³³ We find the same with the word *yiddevennu* (make them willing) in *whose heart maketh him willing* (*yiddevennu*) (Ex. 25:2).³⁴

²⁶ Zilpah could have conceived Gad while Bilhah was pregnant with Naphtali, and Rachel could have conceived before Zebulun was born. The fact that Scripture tells us that Leah gave Zilpah to Jacob after Naphtali was born does not mean that that was the sequence of events. Cf. Cherez and Weiser. The point is there is no reason to assume that Jacob's children were born seven months apart.

²⁷ The verse reads, *Give me my wives and my children for whom I have served thee. For whom I have served thee* can conceivably apply to *my children*, hence I.E.'s comment.

²⁸ See notes to I.E.'s comments on Gen. 20:17.

²⁹ So according to Weiser.

³⁰ Instruments of sorcery. Cf. Gen. 31:34.

³¹ The usual imperative form is *nekov*. *Nokvah* is an elongated form.

³² Or clearly state.

³³ Thus *nokvah* and *yikkovennu* have the same root, *nun*, *kof*, *bet* and mean the same, viz., clearly state.

³⁴ *Yiddevennu* has a *dagesh* in the *dalet* to make up for the missing *nun*. Thus *yikkovennu* and *yiddevennu* are similar. Both have a *nun* as a first root letter and the *nun* drops out in the imperfect and is replaced by a *dagesh*.

30. WITHERSOEVER I TURNED. *Le-ragli* (withersoever I turned) is to be rendered: because of my foot.³⁵ It is the custom of people to say so and so has a good foot.³⁶ What Jacob was saying was: you have been blessed ever since I came to your house. The *heh* of *me'umah* (aught in v. 31) is superfluous.³⁷ The word is also found spelled without the *heh*.³⁸

31. STREAKED.³⁹ The streak was on the animal's foot. *Akuddim* (streaked) refers to a cord-like mark that bound the foot.⁴⁰

SPECKLED. *Nekuddim* means speckled.

GRIZZLED. *Beruddim* (grizzled) comes from the same root as *barad* (hail). It means having white spots.⁴¹

[SPOTTED.] *Talu* is a general term for all type of spots.⁴² It comes from the same root as *u-metulla'ot* (and clouted) in *and worn shoes and clouted* (*u-metulla'ot*) *upon their feet* (Josh. 9:5).⁴³ The meaning of *u-*

³⁵ *Ragli* literally means my foot. The *lamed* prefixed to it is a causal *lamed*, in Hebrew, *lamed ha-sibbah* (Weiser).

³⁶ So and so brings good fortune (Weiser).

³⁷ Hence it is penultimately accented.

³⁸ *Mum* in Job 31:7.

³⁹ The words upon which I.E. comments, i.e., *akuddim*, *nekuddim*, *beruddim* are found in Gen. 31:10. I.E. inserted it here because he wanted to clarify the type of marks that the Bible refers to before proceeding to comment on the account of Jacob's hire.

⁴⁰ The root *ayin*, *kof*, *dalet* means to bind. *Akuddim* is a mark resembling a cord going around the foot of the animal at the place where it is normally bound. This is what I.E. means by "a mark that bound the foot."

⁴¹ Like hail.

⁴² At various places in the body (Weiser).

⁴³ Its root is *tet*, *lamed*, *alef*.

metulla'ot is marked.⁴⁴ The term *seh* (v. 32), refers to he-goats.⁴⁵ It is similarly written *the sheep* (*seh kevasim*) and *the goat* (*seh izim*) (Deut. 14:4).⁴⁶ Now since *talú* (spotted) is a general term for all type of spots, the meaning of *every speckled and spotted (talú) one* is: every he-goat speckled, streaked and grizzled.⁴⁷

32. AND EVERY DARK ONE AMONG THE SHEEP. *Chum* means black. It is possible that *chum* means black because it is affected by heat (*chom*), for a black object gets hotter than a white object.⁴⁸

AND THE SPOTTED AND SPECKLED AMONG THE GOATS. Streaked, grizzled and speckled.

33. EVERY ONE THAT IS NOT SPECKLED AND SPOTTED AMONG THE GOATS. Speckled, grizzled and streaked.

AMONG THE GOATS. He and she-goats.⁴⁹

35. AND HE REMOVED THAT DAY THE HE-GOATS THAT WERE STREAKED AND SPOTTED. Spotted (*telu'im*) means speckled and grizzled.

[AND ALL THE SHE-GOATS THAT WERE SPECKLED AND SPOTTED.] The interpretation of *telu'ot* (spotted) is streaked and

⁴⁴ The patches (clouts) marked the shoes. We thus see that *talú* is a general term for spotted.

⁴⁵ According to I.E. this clause should be translated: removing from thence every speckled and spotted he-goat. I.E. explains that *seh* refers to he-goats because the sheep were not speckled and spotted but were *chum* (dark) and the she-goats are mentioned in the final part of the verse. Hence *seh* must refer to he-goats (Cherez).

⁴⁶ The term *seh* can thus apply to both goats and sheep. In the first part of our verse it applies to he-goats.

⁴⁷ I.E. explains that *nakod* means speckled and *talú* includes the other types of spots, i.e., a mark around the ankle, *akuddim* (streaked), and hail like spots, *beruddim*.

⁴⁸ What I.E. probably means is that black objects absorb heat from the sun more than do white objects. This shows that heat causes blackness.

⁴⁹ Since goats stand in contradistinction to sheep in our verse, it refers to all goats, both male and female.

grizzled.⁵⁰ This is what Scripture means by *everyone that had white in it*.⁵¹

AND ALL THE DARK ONES AMONG THE SHEEP. The black sheep. *Chum* (dark, black) is an adjective similar to a *pa'ul*. It follows the paradigm of *sug* (dissembler) in *The dissembler* (*sug*) in *heart* (Prov. 14:14).⁵² A great grammarian explained the word *haser* (removing)⁵³ in *removing* (*haser*) *from thence* (v. 32) as an infinitive, meaning to remove. The meaning of the aforementioned verse according to this scholar is: I will pass through all thy flock today to remove from thence every...and that which I remove will be my hire.⁵⁴ He further explained *And gave them into the hands of his sons* (v. 35) as referring to Jacob's sons.⁵⁵ However, he said that *he set three days journey betwixt himself and Jacob* (v. 36) pertains to Laban.⁵⁶ This comment is wrong in view of the fact that Jacob had no son older than Reuben, and he was not yet seven years old.⁵⁷ This is the way our passage is to be explained: *haser* (v. 32) is, as its form indicates, an imperative meaning "remove" and the

⁵⁰ Speckled is mentioned in the verse; hence *telu'ot* (spotted) refers to the other types of marks.

⁵¹ The verse should be read as follows: speckled and spotted, that is, every one that had white in it (Weiser). The spots were white. "Every one that had white in it" explains speckled and spotted (Weiser).

⁵² I.E. calls it similar to *pa'ul* because only transitive verbs come in the *pa'ul*. *Chum* is intransitive. Nevertheless, it is similar to *pa'ul* in that it is an adjective. The same is true of *sug* (Cherez). Weiser translates: It is an adjective in the *pu'al*, following the paradigm of *sug*; that is, it is an *ayin*, *vav* in the *pu'al*.

⁵³ *Haser* can be either an infinitive or an imperative. The grammarian explained it as an infinitive because of the difficulty of coordinating *I will pass* with the imperative *remove*.

⁵⁴ This is the meaning of: and of such shall be my hire.

⁵⁵ Since according to this interpretation Jacob did the removing, he is the subject of verse 35 which reads: *And he removed*; and *his sons* refers to Jacob's sons.

⁵⁶ This is obvious.

⁵⁷ The events described in our passage took place after the close of Jacob's 14 years of service to Laban. Reuben, his oldest, was then not yet seven years old. How, then, could Jacob give the sheep to his small children to keep?

meaning of *and of such shall be my hire* (v. 32) is: such as these which you now remove will in the future be my hire.⁵⁸

33. SO SHALL MY RIGHTEOUSNESS WITNESS AGAINST ME. My righteousness shall testify for me *before thee*,⁵⁹ when you come and look over my hire, viz., the flock that I have separated for myself. If you find among the latter a he and she-goat that is not streaked, speckled and grizzled or a sheep that is not black, then it *shall be counted stolen*. Behold you have already removed from the flock all goats streaked, speckled and grizzled and all black sheep.⁶⁰

34. AND LABAN SAID: BEHOLD. *Hen* (behold) is identical in meaning to *hinneh*, the *heh* being superfluous.⁶¹ It is similar in this regard to *ha-eleh* (these) and *ha-el* (these).⁶²

35. AND HE REMOVED. Laban removed.⁶³

36. AND HE SET. Here, too, Scripture speaks of Laban.⁶⁴

37. RODS OF. *Makkal* (rods of) is vocalized with a *pattach* because it is in the construct.

POPLAR...ALMOND...AND PLANE TREE. *Livneh* (poplar), *luz* (almond) and *armon* (plane tree) are names of trees. However, *lach*

⁵⁸ Verse 32 does not tell us that Jacob removed the sheep and kept them as his hire and then gave them to his children to keep (v. 35). Rather, it tells us that Jacob told Laban, "Remove the spotted...sheep and goats from your flock and keep them. However, in the future such as these shall be my hire." Verse 35 tells us that Laban removed them and gave them to his (Laban's sons) to keep.

⁵⁹ I.E. connects *before thee* with *so shall my righteousness witness against me*, rather than with *my hire*, which precedes it (Krinsky, Cherez).

⁶⁰ Hence all such animals found with me must be mine.

⁶¹ I.E. makes this comment because the usual term for behold in Scripture is *hinneh*.

⁶² See I.E.'s comment on Gen. 19:8. Both *ha-el* and *ha-eleh* mean the same, the *heh* being superfluous.

⁶³ I.E. makes this point because according to the grammarian quoted above, *And he removed* refers to Jacob.

⁶⁴ According to the grammarian quoted above, *And he removed* refers to Jacob and *And he set* refers to Laban. Hence I.E. points out that both refer to Laban.

(fresh) is an adjective.⁶⁵ Saadiah Gaon says that *luz* means almond since that is its meaning in Arabic, and Arabic, Hebrew and Aramaic belong to the same family.

MAKING THE WHITE APPEAR. He peeled the bark. Compare, *The Lord hath made bare* (chasaf) *His holy arm* (Is. 52:10).⁶⁶

38. PEELED. The word *pitzel* (peeled) means he made small cuts.⁶⁷

IN THE GUTTERS. Pools containing water for the sheep to drink from.⁶⁸

AND THEY CONCEIVED. *Va-yechamnah* (and they conceived) is a combination of masculine and feminine forms.⁶⁹ We find the same in the word *va-yisharnah* (and took...the straight way) in *And the kine took the straight way* (*va-yisharnah*) (I Sam. 6:12).⁷⁰

39. AND THE FLOCKS CONCEIVED. *Va-yechemu* means: and they conceived.⁷¹ This word is irregularly vocalized because of the *chet* which is a guttural. It should have been vocalized as *va-yeshevu* (and

⁶⁵ Scripture reads, *livneh lach*, *ve-luz ve-armon*. Conceivably *lach* could be taken to be the name of a tree. Hence I.E. points out that *lach* is an adjective modifying *livneh*, i.e., fresh

⁶⁶ We thus see that the root *chet*, *sin*, *peh* means to lay bare. Hence *machsof ha-lavan* means he laid bare the white (Weiser). He did this by peeling the bark. I.E. makes this point because the root *chet*, *sin*, *peh* can also mean to strip. Hence *machsof ha-laven* might be translated, stripping off the white.

⁶⁷ The verb *pitzel* is found in Scripture only in verses 37 and 38. According to I.E. it does not exactly mean to peel. See S.D. Luzzato's commentary on this verse.

⁶⁸ I.E. apparently interpreted *rehatim* (gutters) as being synonymous with *shikatot ha-mayim* (watering troughs) (Weiser).

⁶⁹ The feminine form third person plural is *va-techamnah*. The *yod* is a masculine prefix. Hence *va-yechamnah* combines the masculine (the *yod*) with the feminine.

⁷⁰ The correct feminine form is *va-tisharnah*. See note 69. The feminine should have been used since *kine* is feminine.

⁷¹ It comes from the root *yod*, *chet*, *mem*, meaning to be hot, that is, hot with sexual desire and by extension to conceive.

they sat down) in *And they sat down* (va-yeshevu) *to eat bread* (Gen. 37:25).⁷²

Don't be surprised at Scripture's use of the masculine⁷³ when referring to female sheep. Hebrew is strict in differentiating between the masculine and feminine forms only in the singular and not in the plural.

AT THE SIGHT OF THE RODS. *El ha-maklot* should be rendered at the sight of the rod. Many are amazed at what is reported in our verse⁷⁴ and say that it can only be described as an out of the ordinary phenomenon. Really, what Scripture describes is indeed one of the wonders of nature. However, it is a natural law. Even a woman who is created in the image of the angels affects her fetus by what she looks at while she is pregnant.⁷⁵

AND SPOTTED. Grizzled. This is so because *telu'im* (spotted) is a general term for all types of spots.⁷⁶

40. AND JACOB SEPARATED THE LAMBS. Jacob also did one more thing.⁷⁷ He separated the lambs and chose the streaked and the dark ones and set the faces of the flocks toward the streaked and dark ones so that they would produce similar offspring. This resulted in his having his own droves⁷⁸ which he did not *put unto Laban's flock*.

⁷² According to I.E. the root of *va-yechemu* is *yod, chet, mem*. Being a *peh yod* it should follow that paradigm. Thus the *yod* should be vocalized with a *tzere* as the *yod* of *va-yeshev*. However, since the *chet* is a guttural and is vocalized with a *chataf segol*, the *yod* is vocalized with a *segol* (Cherez).

⁷³ *Va-yechemu*. Females conceive, hence Scripture should have stated *va-techamna hatzon* rather than *va-yechemu hatzon*.

⁷⁴ That the sheep's fetuses were influenced by what the sheep looked at.

⁷⁵ I.E. believed that it is a law that applies to all females. Hence what is described in our verse is not a supernatural phenomenon.

⁷⁶ Since *telu'im* is a general term for speckled, streaked and grizzled, and speckled and streaked are specifically mentioned in our verse, *telu'im* can only refer to grizzled (Krinsky). The Bible sometimes uses a general term for the particular (Weiser).

⁷⁷ In addition to peeling the sticks and having the goats face them while coupling.

⁷⁸ Cherez.

Others say that Jacob separated the lambs from his own flock and that *and put his own droves apart* should have preceded *and Jacob separated the lambs*.⁷⁹

41. WHENSOEVER THE STRONGER OF THE FLOCK DID CONCEIVE. In the month of Nisan,⁸⁰ so that all those born would be strong and healthy.⁸¹

42. BUT WHEN THE FLOCK WERE FEEBLE. In the month of Tishri,⁸² Jacob did this so that Laban would not know that he was employing the sticks to produce spotted goats.⁸³

FEEBLE. *Atufim* means feeble; compare, *Their soul fainted* (titattaf) *in them* (Ps. 107:5).

⁷⁹ The verse should be read as if written: And (Jacob) put his own droves apart and put them not unto Laban's flock, and Jacob separated the lambs (from his own droves) and set the faces of the flocks (of Laban) toward the streaked and all the dark (of Jacob's flock), he did this to all the flocks of Laban. It should be noted that according to this interpretation the meaning of *be-tzon lavan* (in the flock of Laban) is, he did this to all of Laban's flock. See Filwarg and Chercz.

⁸⁰ Those born in the month of Nisan (Krinsky, Weiser).

⁸¹ The sun is strong then and the sheep born in this month are healthier.

⁸² Born in Tishri.

⁸³ Had Jacob not done this, all the sheep would have been black and all the goats spotted and Laban would have known that something was wrong. Thus Jacob had to produce sheep for Laban. He did so when the offspring would be of inferior quality.

CHAPTER 31

1. THE WORDS OF LABAN'S SONS. Laban had sons as Scripture explicitly tells us, *and (Laban) gave them into the hand of his sons* (Gen. 30:35).¹

5. YOUR FATHER'S COUNTENANCE. I can tell by looking at your father's countenance that he is not (*ennenu*) toward me as beforetime.² On the other hand, *enennu* (he is not) may refer to countenance (*pene*).³ Compare, *The anger (pene) of the Lord hath divided them* (*chillekam*) (Lam. 4:16).⁴

7. HATH MOCKED ME. *Hetel* is irregular in that it lacks a *dagesh*.⁵ It should have a *dagesh* like the word *va-yehattel* (and he mocked) in *that*

¹ See I.E.'s comment on Gen. 30:35.

² The verse reads: *Ro-eh anokhi et pene avichen ki enennu elai kitmol shilshom*. *Pene* (countenance) is a plural. The word *enennu* can be translated: he is not or it is not. If *enennu* is connected to *pene* the Bible should have employed *enam*, which is a plural, rather than *enennu* which is a singular. Hence *enennu* cannot refer to *pene*. It is rather connected to *avikhen* (your father) (Filwarg, Cherez). The verse is thus to be rendered: I see by your father's countenance that he is not toward me as beforetime.

³ In this case the meaning of the verse is: I see your father's countenance that it (the countenance) is not toward me as beforetime.

⁴ Where we find *pene*, a plural, connected to a singular. In this verse the verb pertaining to *pene*, *chillekam* (hath divided them) is in the singular. We thus see that while *pene* is a plural, it can be treated as a singular (Filwarg, Cherez). Hence *enennu* can refer to face. Weiser explains that *pene* is not really treated as a singular. It is a plural but a singular follows it for emphasis.

⁵ A *dagesh* should have been placed in the *tav*. According to I.E. *hetel* is a *pi'el*. The middle root letter of a *pi'el* perfect receives a *dagesh*, and the first root letter is vocalized with a *chirik*. Thus "mocked" should have been vocalized *hittel*. Hence *hetel* is irregular (Filwarg).

Elijah mocked (va-yehattel) them (I Kings 18:27).⁶ The meaning of *hetel* is mocked.⁷

TEN TIMES. The word *monin* (times) is akin to the word *meneh* (number) in *Go number (meneh) the people* (II Sam. 24:1).⁸ The meaning of our verse is: your father deceived me ten times. Or ten signifies many times.⁹ From the statement, *The streaked shall be thy wages*, it is clear that Laban changed Jacob's hire so that it was limited only to streaked goats.¹⁰ At other times Laban limited Jacob's hire to speckled goats.

9. THUS GOD HATH TAKEN AWAY. *Va-yatzel* (hath taken away) is similar in meaning to *va-yenatzelu* (and they despoiled) in *And they despoiled (va-yenatzelu) the Egyptians* (Ex. 12:36).¹¹ Both (*va-yatzel* and *va-yenatzelu*) come from the same root as *hatzileni* (deliver me)¹² (Gen. 32:12), although in the latter case the meaning of the word is a bit different from the first two examples.¹³

⁶ *Va-yehattel* is a *pi'el*, has a *dagesh* and follows the normal *pi'el* paradigm.

⁷ It means to mock by deceiving.

⁸ There is no such verse in the Bible. The reference is obviously to II Sam. 24:1. The text there reads, *Go, number Israel and Judah*. This is either a scribal error in the text of I.E., or it indicates that the author quoted verses from memory.

⁹ Cohen. Ten is a round number (Friedlander).

¹⁰ Jacob's wages were to consist of speckled, spotted and streaked goats. Laban, as this verse indicates, changed his original conditions and gave Jacob only one of this kind rather than all three.

¹¹ They both mean to take. However, there is a difference in nuance between them. In our verse the word is in the *hifil* and it connotes taking what rightfully belongs to one. In Ex. 12:36 it is in the *pi'el* (the intensive) and it means to take highhandedly, to despoil (Weiser).

¹² The root being *nun, tzadi, lamed*.

¹³ Here it means to save from death, take away from danger, to deliver.

What Jacob told his wives was also true.¹⁴ Jacob dreamed that God would aid him so that his sheep would increase and be strong even without the use of the peeled sticks.¹⁵

13. I AM THE GOD OF BETH-EL. Its meaning is: I am the God, God of Beth-el.¹⁶ The same is the case with *and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil* (Gen. 2:9), which is to be interpreted as if written: and the tree of the knowledge, knowledge of good and evil.¹⁷

15. FOR HE HATH SOLD US. It is as if he sold us¹⁸ in that he did not do with us what a father normally does with his daughters. What he did was to say to you, "Guard my flock and take my daughters as your hire."

18. HE HAD GATHERED. *Rakhash* (he had gathered) comes from the same root as *rekhus* (substance).¹⁹

19. NOW LABAN WAS GONE TO SHEAR HIS SHEEP. That were in the care of his sons who were three days journey away, as is reported by Scripture (Gen. 30:35, 36). Hence, *it was told Laban on the third day that Jacob was fled* (v. 22).²⁰

¹⁴ Not only is what Jacob reported concerning Laban's cheating true, but the report of the dream is also true. The Bible often omits events in a narrative but later reports what has been omitted in its recapitulation of the events (Weiser).

¹⁵ At those times God saw to it that the goats were born strong, streaked, speckled and spotted.

¹⁶ A word with the definite article prefixed to it cannot be in the construct. Since *ha-el* has the definite article prefixed to it, it cannot be in the construct with Beth-el. Hence what we are dealing with is an abridged phrase. See notes to I.E.'s comment on Gen. 2:9.

¹⁷ See I.E.'s comments on Gen. 2:9.

¹⁸ Laban did not actually sell them, hence I.E.'s comment.

¹⁹ *Rakhash* is a denominative of *rekhus* (Weiser).

²⁰ I.E.'s point is that since Laban was three days journey from Jacob, it took that long for him to learn that Jacob had fled.

THE TERAPHIM. Some say that the teraphim are copper objects used to tell time.²¹ Others say that astrologers have the power to make an image that speaks at certain times.²² They offer proof from *For the teraphim have spoken vanity* (Zech. 10:2).²³ However, this is not the meaning of the aforementioned verse.²⁴ I believe that the teraphim are human images made to draw power from above.²⁵ I am not permitted to explain this any further.²⁶ Proof that the teraphim are human forms can be found in the teraphim which Michal, the daughter of Saul, placed in David's bed thereby fooling the guards into thinking that the teraphim were really David.²⁷ As to the verse which states, *For the children of Israel shall sit solitary many days without king, and without prince, and without sacrifice, and without pillar, and without ephod or teraphim* (Hos. 3:4),²⁸ it can be explained in two ways. One, the prophet says, *Israel shall be without king, and without prince* because God chose only members of the Davidic family to be kings over Israel. Therefore the verse which follows says, *afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the Lord their God, and David their king* (v. 5). The verse continues, *and without sacrifice, and without pillar*; this refers to sacrifices and pillars to the idols. In a similar manner, *and without ephod* also refers to idolatry, because the worshippers of Baal made an

²¹ A copper sun dial that was also used for divination (Weiser).

²² *Vat. Ebr.* 38 reads: to make an image of certain known stars, and this image speaks.

²³ We thus see that the teraphim speak.

²⁴ The verse is not to be interpreted as meaning that the teraphim actually speak. It means that the signs they give are false. Speak is used figuratively, as in what do the cards say (cf. Krinsky).

²⁵ See I.E.'s comment on Ex. 20:20.

²⁶ Lest people learn to make them.

²⁷ Cf. I Sam. 19:13-17.

²⁸ This verse implies that there is nothing wrong with teraphim. Quite the contrary, it is juxtaposed with the ephod, a garment used in the service of the Lord.



imitation of the ephod that Moses made.²⁹ Hence Scripture reads *ephod* and not "the ephod" as in *Bring hither the ephod* (I Sam. 23:9).³⁰ Therefore *an ephod in his hand* (*Ibid.* v. 6) does not refer to the ephod made by Moses. I will explain the ephod and offer irrefutable proofs for my interpretation concerning it in the proper place if God will be kind to me and grant me life.³¹ The second interpretation is that *and without ephod or teraphim* means, they will neither serve God (*without ephod*) nor idols (*or teraphim*).³² That teraphim are idols can be ascertained by Laban's referring to them as gods (v. 30).³³

Some say that Rachel stole the teraphim in order to keep her father from idolatry.³⁴ If this were the case, why did she take them with her and not bury them on the way?³⁵ The most likely reason that Rachel stole the teraphim was that Laban, her father, was an astrologer, and Rachel feared that he would look at the stars and discover which way they fled.³⁶

²⁹ The two interpretations of Hos. 3:4 are: A. The verse deals with idol worship, hence the juxtaposition of ephod and teraphim. B. The verse deals both with the worship of God and with idolatry. According to the latter interpretation *and without ephod or teraphim* means neither the worship of God nor idolatry.

³⁰ According to I.E. ephod means *an ephod*. *The ephod*, with the definite article prefixed to it, is the ephod made by Moses.

³¹ Cf. I.E.'s "long commentary" on Ex. 28:6.

³² According to this interpretation the ephod mentioned in Hos. 3:4 refers to the one used in the worship of the Lord.

³³ We thus see that the teraphim were used in idol worship although they were not originally made for that purpose. This validates I.E.'s interpretation that the teraphim refer to idol worship. In Hosea I.E. explains this second interpretation as follows: *and without sacrifice* to God, *and without pillar* to Baal, *and without ephod* to God *or teraphim* to Baal.

³⁴ Cf. Rashi.

³⁵ As Jacob did with the idols his children had on them. Cf. Gen. 35:2-4.

³⁶ The teraphim, which were in human form, drew powers from the stars and revealed hidden things to Laban. Krinsky and Weiser suggest that I.E. is of the opinion that the teraphim had images of stars on them and through them Laban could divine hidden things.

20. AND JACOB OUTWITTED LABAN. Jacob stole nothing from Laban save his "wits." Scripture uses the term heart for wits because the heart is the seat of man's intelligence.³⁷

24. AND GOD CAME TO LABAN THE ARAMEAN. This occurred before *he overtook him* (v. 23). Therefore its (v. 4) meaning is, and God had already come to Laban the Aramean. I have already pointed out many similar instances.³⁸ God appeared to Laban out of respect for Jacob.³⁹

EITHER GOOD OR BAD. Do not speak to Jacob about returning even if you think it is for his good.⁴⁰

25. AND LABAN WITH HIS BRETHREN PITCHED. *Et echav* is to be rendered: with his brethren.⁴¹

The word tent written in reference to Jacob also carries over to Laban.⁴² That is, now Jacob had pitched his tent in the mountain, and Laban pitched his tent with his brethren in the mountain of Gilead.

³⁷ Verse 20 literally reads: And Jacob stole the heart of Laban the Aramean. I.E. points out that unlike Rachel, who stole the teraphim, Jacob stole only Laban's heart; i.e., he fooled him.

³⁸ Of the use of the pluperfect. See I.E.'s comments on Gen. 1:9. Would Laban spend the night doing nothing after overtaking Jacob, thereby give him a chance to escape? Thus we must assume that upon overtaking Jacob, he confronted him and that *And God came to Laban...in a dream* means, and God had come to Laban...in a dream.

³⁹ Laban was no prophet. It was only out of God's regard for Jacob that He appeared to Laban.

⁴⁰ This is what Scripture means by good. Laban obviously spoke to Jacob. Indeed, Scripture records their conversation. What God meant was, do not try to convince him to return by threats, or by promises, even if the latter are sincere (Weiser).

⁴¹ *Et* is the sign of the direct object. Hence *et echav* means his brethren. The verse thus might conceivably be rendered: Laban pitched his brethren. However, this is impossible since pitched refers to tents, hence I.E. points out that *et* here is not the sign of the direct object but is to be rendered with.

⁴² The object following pitched with reference to Laban is missing, hence I.E.'s comment.

28. NOW HAST THOU DONE FOOLISHLY. *Aso* (done) is an infinitive.⁴³ It is in the construct⁴⁴ with either this or so. However, they are missing.⁴⁵

29. IT IS IN THE POWER. *El* is to be rendered power. Compare, *I am become as a man that hath no help* (eyal) (Ps. 88:5).⁴⁶

30. LONGEST. *Nikhsof* (longest) is an infinitive in the *nifal*. It is similar to *nilchom* (fight) in *or did he ever fight* (nilchom) *against them* (Jud. 11:25). The word *nikhsafta* means thou longest. *Yikhsof* (eager) in *He is like a lion that is eager* (yikhsof) *to tear in pieces* (Ps. 17:12) is similar.

32. HE SHALL NOT LIVE. Because I will put him to death. Some say that this was a prayer⁴⁷ and it was because of this utterance that Rachel died on the way.⁴⁸ If this be so, let them tell us who prayed and thus caused the death of Phinehas' wife?⁴⁹

33. AND LABAN WENT INTO JACOB'S TENT, AND INTO LEAH'S TENT, AND INTO THE TENT OF THE TWO MAID-SERVANTS. Both maid-servants shared one tent. Or it (v. 33) means

⁴³ The infinitive of the root *ayin, sin, heh* is *asot*. *Aso* is short for *asot* (Weiser), or the *vav* of *aso* takes the place of the *tav* (Cherez).

⁴⁴ The *ayin* of *aso* is vocalized with a *chataf pattach*. This is the construct vocalization. Had it been in the absolute, it would have been vocalized with a *kamatz* (Weiser).

⁴⁵ The text is abridged. It should have read *hiskalta asot zeh* or *hiskalta asot ken*. I.E. thus renders *Now thou hast done foolishly* as: thou hast acted foolishly in doing this (deed) or, thou hast acted foolishly in doing so.

⁴⁶ *Eyal* (help) is rendered by I.E. as strength.

⁴⁷ Jacob prayed, "May God strike the one who stole the teraphim dead." This interpretation is offered by Rashi. It is found in the Talmud, *Berakhot* 56a; *Sanhedrin* 90b.

⁴⁸ In childbirth. *In the way* is a quote from Gen. 48:7.

⁴⁹ She, too, died in childbirth. Cf. I Sam. 4:19, 20.

into the tent of each one of the two maid-servants.⁵⁰ Afterward⁵¹ Laban entered Leah's tent a second time. Proof of this is Scripture's statement, *And he went out of Leah's tent*. It is also possible that Jacob's tent was between Leah's and Rachel's tents.⁵² However, it appears to me that the Bible tells us what happened in abridged form⁵³ and puts off the mention of Rachel's tent for last. The sequence of events was as follows. Laban searched Jacob's tent, then Leah's tent, then Rachel's tent and then the tent of the two maid-servants. The meaning of our verses (33 and 34) is that Laban searched Jacob's tent, Leah's tent and the tent of the two maid-servants and found nothing because there was nothing of his there. Scripture then tells us that when Laban went out of Leah's tent and into Rachel's tent where the teraphim had been, Rachel had by then taken them and put them in the saddle of the camel.⁵⁴

34. [IN THE SADDLE.] Some say that *kar* (saddle) is a kind of saddle cloth.⁵⁵ However, I believe that the term *kar ha-gamal* (saddle of

¹ *And into the tent of the two maid-servants* is short for: into the tent of each of the two maid-servants (Weiser).

After searching the tents of Jacob, Leah and the two maid-servants.

The question which I.E. deals with here is: Why did Laban search Rachel's tent last? We would expect him to search her tent after that of Leah. I.E. suggests that Jacob's tent was in the middle, between that of Rachel and Leah, and that to the side of Leah's tent stood the tent (or tents) of the maid servants. After searching Jacob's tent, Laban decided to search the tent of his older daughter first. Coming out of Leah's tent he found the tent of the maid servants and searched it. On his way back he stepped there time into Leah's tent, found nothing there and proceeded to search Rachel's tent. He did not search Rachel's tent after that of Leah because it was not next to it (Weiser).

It omits telling us that the search of Rachel's tent took place after the search of Leah's tent. Scripture first tells us about those tents where Laban found nothing. It then tells us what happened when Laban searched Rachel's tent.

Scripture puts off telling what happened when he searched Rachel's tent in order to be able to elaborate.

the camel)⁵⁶ means a camel, as in *Send ye the camel (kar) for the ruler of the land*⁵⁷ (Is. 16:1); and *u-va-kirkarot* (and upon the camels) (Is. 66:20).⁵⁸ I further hold that the driver or rider of the *kar* (camel) is called the *kari* (II Kings 11:19). Rachel took the teraphim and put them in the place where the camel (*kar ha-gamal*) was kept.⁵⁹

AND SAT UPON THEM. She was not in the tent.⁶⁰

36. THAT THOU HAST HOTLY PURSUED. *Dalakta* means pursued. *Yidlak* in *the poor is hotly pursued* (*yidlak*) (Ps. 10:2) is similar.

39. I BORE THE LOSS OF IT. If any of the flock was torn by beasts, I bore the guilt⁶¹ and I gave you its equivalent.

STOLEN BY DAY. The *yod* of *genuveti* (stolen) is superfluous. It is similar to the *yod* of *mele'ati* (full of) (Is. 1:21).⁶² The meaning of our verse is: whether stolen by day or by night,⁶³ *of my hand didst thou require it*.

⁵⁶ I.E. explains *kar ha-gamal* as a double word and that Scripture uses two words having the same meaning even though one word would suffice. See I.E.'s comment on Gen. 8:11 and the notes thereto.

⁵⁷ Translated according to I.E. According to I.E. a *kar* is a noble and especially swift species of camel. Cf. I.E.'s comments on Is. 16:1; 66:20.

⁵⁸ Translated according to I.E.

⁵⁹ Rather than: And she put them in the saddle of the camel.

⁶⁰ She was not in her tent but rather where the camel was. The reason I.E. does not interpret *kar* to mean cushion, or saddle, is that the word *kar* is not so used in Scripture. It is only so used in Rabbinic literature (Cherez).

⁶¹ I.E. points out that *achatennah* (I bore the loss of it) is a denominative of *chet* (sin). Hence *achatennah* means I was guilty for it, the sin, was on me and I thus had to make it up and replace it.

⁶² *Genuveti* has the same meaning as *genuvat*. *Mele'ati* has the same meaning as *mele'at*.

⁶³ The Hebrew reads *genuveti yom u-genuveti layelah* (stolen by day and stolen by night). I.E. points out that the *vav* does not mean "and" but that it means "or" or "whether." That is, it made no difference to you whether it was stolen during the day or night.

42. AND THE FEAR OF ISAAC. Isaac's fear of the Lord aided me, for the merits of a father help his son.

[EMPTY.] The *mem* of *rekam* (empty) is not a root letter.⁶⁴ The word is a noun.⁶⁵ The Bible employs this form (*rekam*)⁶⁶ with the masculine,⁶⁷ feminine⁶⁸ and the plural.⁶⁹ The *mems* of *omnam* (verily, truly)⁷⁰ and *chinnam* (for nothing, gratis) are similar.⁷¹

43. AND WHAT CAN I DO THIS DAY FOR THESE MY DAUGHTERS. Laban was being especially explicit.⁷² The verse should be understood thus: and to these my daughters, what can I do to them?⁷³

45. A PILLAR. Because he set it up.⁷⁴

⁶⁴ Its root is *resh yod kof*.

⁶⁵ It is an adverb, but I.E. included it among the nouns (Weiser).

⁶⁶ Hebrew nouns change according to gender and are written differently in the singular and the plural. However, since this word is an adverb, although I.E. classifies it as a noun, it is treated as an adverb.

⁶⁷ In our verse, *rekam shillachtani*.

⁶⁸ Ruth 1:21.

⁶⁹ Ex. 23:15.

⁷⁰ II Kings 19:17, Job 34:12. The root of *omnam* is *alef, mem, nun*. The final *mem* is not a root letter.

⁷¹ Gen. 29:15, Ex. 21:2, 11. Its root is *chet, nun, nun*, thus the final *mem* is not a root letter.

⁷² *These* is unnecessary. The text should have read, for my daughters.

⁷³ How could I think of doing harm to these my daughters. The Hebrew literally reads: And to my daughters, what can I do to these. Hence I.E.'s explanation as how the verse should be understood.

⁷⁴ Jacob called the pillar a *matzevah* because he set it up (*hitziv otah*) (Weiser). Cherez explains that a pillar is so called because it is set up.

46. A HEAP. A *gal* (heap) is so called because it is formed by rolling stones together.⁷⁵ He also called it Mizpah.⁷⁶

49. [THE LORD WATCH.] The meaning of *yitzef adonai* is : the Lord will watch. *I have appointed thee a watchman* (tzofeh) (Ez. 3:17) is similar.

[WHEN WE ARE ABSENT.] *Ki nissater* (when we are absent) is to be read as if written: *ki nissater anachnu*.⁷⁷ We will be distant one from another and will not be able to see each other. Nevertheless, God will see each one of us.

[FOR HE SAID.] This refers to Laban. Jacob called it⁷⁸ Mizpah because Laban said to him, the Lord will watch, etc.⁷⁹

50. IF THOU SHALT AFFLICT MY DAUGHTERS. Saadiah Gaon explains this to mean: if you will not cohabit with your wives.⁸⁰ Now this is a strange rendition of afflict. Nowhere in Scripture does afflict have this connotation.⁸¹ What problem is there in interpreting the term

⁷⁵ Hence the noun *gal* (heap) comes from the verb *galal* (to roll) (Weiser).

⁷⁶ Cf. verse 49. Weiser points out that the suffix of *kare'ah* (he called it) is feminine and cannot refer to *gal* (heap) which is masculine. It must therefore refer to *matzevah* (pillar) which is feminine. Weiser claims that I.E.'s comment was transposed from verse 49 by a scribe who mistakenly thought that *it* referred to the heap. What I.E. is saying is that the heap was called Galeed and the pillar Mizpah. Cherez claims that *it* refers to the place. He called the place by two names, Galeed and Mizpah (place here being treated as feminine).

⁷⁷ The text reads: *ki nissater ish me-re'ehu*. I.E. says that this should be read as if written: *ki nissater "anachnu" ish me-re'ehu*. The reason for inserting *anachnu* is that the context requires a first person plural pronoun (*anachnu*) following *nissater* (a verb in the first person plural imperfect) since what follows (*ish me-re'ehu*) is in the third person.

⁷⁸ The pillar (Weiser). According to Cherez, the place.

⁷⁹ *And Mizpah for he said: The Lord...* should be understood as follows: *and Mizpah*, i.e., Jacob called it (the stone) Mizpah because *and he said*, i.e., Laban said to him, *the Lord watch*, etc.

⁸⁰ So also *Yoma* 77b and Rashi.

⁸¹ It may mean to rape. Cf. Gen. 34:2. It is never used in the sense of withholding relations.

according to its plain sense?⁸² Its meaning is: do not do anything evil to my daughters or force them to do things against their will.

Jagar-sahadutha is Aramaic for Galeed.⁸³

51. WHICH I HAVE SET UP. Laban and his brethren.⁸⁴ They cast stones and formed the heap. *Yariti* comes from the same root as *arah*⁸⁵ (cast) in *hath He cast (arah) into the sea* (Ex. 15:4). He cast them into one place.⁸⁶

52. THAT I WILL NOT PASS OVER. The covenant made on this heap.⁸⁷ *E'evor* (pass over) in our verse has the meaning of violate,⁸⁸ as in *they have transgressed (averu) the statute* (Is. 24:5).⁸⁹

[FOR HARM.] To do harm. Others say that it means, thou shalt not pass over this heap to harm me and I will not pass over this heap to harm thee.⁹⁰

⁸² Causing pain.

⁸³ This comment has been misplaced. Its proper place is in verse 47 (Weiser).

⁸⁴ I.E. explains that *yariti* (which in Hebrew means I have cast) refers to the heap of stones since the pillar was set up by Jacob alone (v. 45). Laban said, *I have cast*, because it was Laban and his brethren who made the heap, for we read, *And they took stones and made a heap* (v. 46).

⁸⁵ Its root is *yod, resh, heh* and it means to cast.

⁸⁶ I.E. is explaining what to cast a heap means. It means to cast many stones in one place until a heap is formed.

⁸⁷ This heap thus means the covenant made on this heap.

⁸⁸ The root *ayin, bet, resh* means to pass over, hence to violate, to "pass over the law, or agreement." The meaning of our verse thus is: that I will not violate the covenant made on this heap.

⁸⁹ *Averu chok* (they have violated the statute) is not found in the Bible. The reference is probably to Is. 24:5, *they have transgressed the laws (averu torot), violated the statute (chalefu chok)*. For an explanation of the misquote, see above note 8.

⁹⁰ In this case the root *ayin, bet, resh* has its primary meaning of to pass over, and heap does not mean the covenant made at the heap but rather the heap which will serve as a border.

53. [THE GOD OF THEIR FATHER.] Each one said: the God of our Father *judge betwixt us*.⁹¹ However, Jacob referred to *the God of Abraham* and Laban *to the god of Nahor*, his grandfather who worshiped idols as is attested by Joshua.⁹²

AND JACOB SWORE BY THE FEAR OF HIS FATHER. *Fear of his father* means the One whom his father feared. Others say that this alludes to the day when Jacob's father Isaac was bound on the altar. The latter interpretation is not far-fetched.

⁹¹ The Bible says, *The God of Abraham, and the God of Nahor, the God of their Father, judge betwixt us*. One might thus think that both took the same oath and swore by the same Deity. I.E. points out that this is not so. Nahor served idols; hence his god was an idol.

⁹² Cf. Josh. 24:2, *Your fathers dwelt of old time beyond the River, even Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nahor; and they served other gods*. I.E., in his comments on Gen. 20:17 points out *that they served* refers to Terah and Nahor. We thus see that Nahor served idols.

CHAPTER 32

1. HIS SONS. His grandsons, the sons of his daughters.¹

2. AND THE ANGELS OF GOD MET HIM. To assist him on the way. Only Jacob saw the camp² of angels surrounding his camp. He called the name of the place *Mahanaim* (two camps), because of the two camps there, his and the angels'.

VA-YISHLACH

4. AND JACOB SENT. This verse teaches us that the land of Edom lies between Haran and the land of Israel. This disproves Saadiah Gaon's contention that Sinai, Seir and Paran are next to each other.³

[MESSENGERS.] From among his servants.⁴

¹ Laban was not bidding his sons adieu; hence *his sons* must refer to his grandsons.

² Scripture says *he saw them*; i.e., only Jacob saw them (Krinsky).

³ Since Jacob was on the way to the land of Israel from Haran, why did he send messengers to Edom? We must assume that Edom is between Syria (Haran) and Israel, and Jacob thus had to reconcile his brother before he passed through his territory. This disproves Saadiah's contention that Seir (Edom) is near Sinai, for Sinai is located southwest of Israel while Haran lies northeast of the land of Israel. The problem with I.E.'s note is that Edom was located southeast of Israel, while Haran, as just noted, lies northeast. This is another example of I.E.'s lack of knowledge concerning the geography of the Holy Land and its environs.

⁴ I.E. takes issue with the Midrash *Bereshit Rabbah* 75:3 and Rashi who interpret *malakhim* to mean angels rather than human messengers.

5. THUS SHALL YE SAY UNTO MY LORD. Jacob used this language so that it would be clear to them that Esau was his lord and they should address him as a servant addresses his master.

AND STAYED UNTIL NOW. The *alef* of *echar* (and stayed) is a first person imperfect prefix. It is vocalized with a *tzere* to make up for the missing *alef* of the root.⁵ *Ehav* (I love) in *I love them* (*ehav*) *that love me* (Prov. 8:17) is similar.⁶ The *alef* of the root is dropped because it is extremely difficult to pronounce two *alefs* back to back. *Echar* is a *kal*.

6. OXEN AND ASSES. These are nouns referring to the respective species.⁷

AND I HAVE SENT TO TELL MY LORD. That I wish to do whatever he commands me.⁸ This is the meaning of *that I may find favor in thy sight*⁹

7. AND MOREOVER HE COMETH TO MEET THEE. He was told that you are coming.

⁵ The root of *echar* is *alef, chet, resh*. In the first person imperfect an *alef* vocalized with a *segol* is prefixed to the root. Our word thus should have been written *e'echar* (two *alefs* respectively vocalized with a *segol* and a *chataf segol*). However, it is written *echar* and has only one *alef* and is vocalized with a *tzere*. I.E. points out that this *alef* is not a root letter. It is a first person imperfect prefix vocalized with a *tzere* rather than a *segol* to make up for the missing root letter.

⁶ The root of *ahav* (love) is *alef, heh, bet*. Thus the first person imperfect should be *e'ehav*. However, the verse has *ehav*, one *alef* vocalized with a *tzere*. See above note.

⁷ The Hebrew has an ox and an ass, hence I.E.'s comment.

⁸ The verse does not say what they were to tell Esau. I.E. points out that following *to tell my Lord*, we must insert: that I wish to do whatever he commands me.

⁹ Once we insert that I wish to do, etc., in the text, the meaning of *so that I may find favor in thy sight* becomes clear.

8. AND WAS DISTRESSED. This thing distressed him.¹⁰ *Va-yetzer* (and he was distressed) is in the *hifil*.¹¹ It is similar to *ve-hetzar*¹² (and he shall besiege) in *and he shall besiege (ve-hetzar) thee* (Deut. 28:52).

AND HE DIVIDED. The *yad* of *va-yachatz* (and he divided) is vocalized with a *pattach* because it precedes a guttural.¹³ Compare, (*va-ya'al*) in *And Moses went up (va-ya'al moshe)* (Ex. 19:20).¹⁴

9. CAMP. The word for camp (*machaneh*) can be either masculine or feminine¹⁵ like the word for house (*bayit*) and place (*makom*).

THEN THE CAMP WHICH IS LEFT SHALL ESCAPE. Perhaps¹⁶ the camp that is left shall flee, or perhaps my brother's anger shall be assuaged after smiting one of the camps, or perhaps God will send them

¹⁰ According to Filwarg. Others interpret slightly differently.

¹¹ Since *va-yetzer* is a *hifil* the word does not mean and he was distressed, but rather, it distressed him. Hence I.E. comments "this thing distressed him"; i.e., his brother's coming distressed him. Others maintain that *va-yetzer* is a *nifal* meaning and he was distressed. Filwarg asks, "If *va-yetzer* is a *hifil* why isn't it vocalized *va-yatzer* as is the rule with a double root (*tzadi, resh, resh* is the root of *va-yetzer*) in the *hifil*?" He suggests that *va-yetzer* is irregular. Weiser suggests that perhaps I.E.'s text of the Bible was vocalized *va-yatzer*. For a discussion of the problems concerning this comment of I.E., see Filwarg, Weiser and Cherez.

¹² Which is in the *hifil*.

¹³ The root of *va-yachatz* is *chet, tzadi, heh*. *Va-yachatz* is an abridged *kal* imperfect with a conversive *vav*. In such cases the *yod* is vocalized with a *chirik*. Compare, *ve-yifen* and *va-yiven*. Hence I.E.'s comment.

¹⁴ Here, too, we have an abridged imperfect with the *yod* vocalized with a *pattach* rather than a *chirik*. The reason is also that it precedes a guttural (the *ayin*). The root of *va-ya'al* is *ayin, lamed, heh*.

¹⁵ I.E. makes the point because the word is found in both the masculine and the feminine in our verse. *Machaneh ha-achat* (one camp) is feminine. However, the suffix of *ve-hikkahu* (smite it) is masculine, as is *machanah ha-nishar* (the camp which is left).

¹⁶ The point is that the *vav* of *ve-hayah* does not indicate certainty, for how could Jacob be certain one camp would escape? Its meaning is perhaps. Thus rather than translating our verse: then the camp which is left shall escape, it should be rendered: perhaps the camp that is left shall escape.

relief and deliverance. *If the Arameans be too strong for me, then thou shalt save me* (II Sam. 10:11) is similar.¹⁷ Rabbi Solomon's¹⁸ comment, to the effect that *then the camp that is left shall escape* means that the camp will be saved despite Esau's intention, is Midrashic.¹⁹ Although God promised Jacob, *And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth* (Gen. 28:14),²⁰ Jacob did not know whether it referred to the children he now had, or to children he would have in the future.²¹ A prophet does not know hidden things unless God reveals them to him.²² Jacob was alive when Joseph was sold into slavery and yet was unaware of it.²³ Similarly Elisha said, *and the Lord hath hid it from me* (II Kings 4:27). The above also answers those who ask, why was Jacob afraid considering that God promised that he would protect him, viz., God's assurance, *and I will be with thee* (Gen. 31:3)? The latter is also the promise referred to by Jacob when he said, *And thou saidest I will surely do thee good* (v. 13).²⁴ Jacob was afraid because of the possibility that he alone would escape. Furthermore, we know that the personality of the individual is taken into account when his sins are

¹⁷ Here, too, there was no certainty. What Joab said was, if the Arameans be too strong for me perhaps you will be able to save me. Thus *ve-hayita li li-shu'ah* (II Sam. 10:11) does not mean, then thou shalt save me.

¹⁸ Rashi.

¹⁹ Rashi apparently interpreted *ve-hayah* as indicating certainty, then (*ve-hayah*) the camp that is left shall escape, i.e., despite Esau's will, it shall be saved. I.E. claims that this is not the literal meaning of the verse (Cherez).

²⁰ This verse indicates that Jacob's children would not be destroyed. I.E. now argues that one cannot substantiate Rashi's interpretation that Jacob was certain, on the basis of God's promise to him in Gen. 28:14, that at least one of his camps would escape (Cherez).

²¹ How could Jacob be sure that one camp would escape, since the promise may not have applied to the children he now had (Cherez).

²² The fact that Jacob was a prophet does not mean that he knew that God's promise recorded in Gen 28:14 applied to his present children.

²³ He thought Joseph was dead and was unaware that he had been sold into slavery.

²⁴ We do not find God saying, *I will surely do thee good*. Hence when Jacob said, *And Thou saidest: I will surely do thee good*, he was restating, *and I will be with thee*.

considered, be they major or minor transgressions. Therefore, a minor sin committed by a great personality is considered a major transgression. Jacob was afraid that he may have sinned or inadvertently transgressed in his mind and as a result of this God no longer would be with him. Do not be amazed at what I write, for behold, Moses the greatest of men, whom God himself sent to bring Israel out of Egypt erred and God sent an angel to kill him.²⁵

11. I AM NOT WORTHY. *Katonti* (I am not worthy) is vocalized like *yakholti* (I have prevailed) in *gam yakholti* (Gen. 30:8).²⁶ The meaning of our verse is: I am insignificant and of little worth for you to have done all these merciful deeds for me.²⁷ I have already explained the meaning of mercy and truth.²⁸

12. AND SMITE ME. *And smite me* applies to two phrases.²⁹ It is similar to *And Saul's son had two men that were captains of bands* (II Sam. 4:2).³⁰ Our verse should be read as follows: and smite me and smite the mother and the children.

²⁵ Moses erred in not immediately circumcising his son. As a result God sent an angel to kill him (Ex. 4:24-26). God acted in this manner because a minor sin committed by a man of Moses' stature was considered by the Almighty to be a major transgression. Similarly Jacob was afraid that he might have committed a minor sin resulting in God's removal of His divine protection, hence his anxiety.

²⁶ A *kal* in the perfect is usually vocalized with a *pattach* beneath the middle root letter. However, *katonti* and *yacholti* are vocalized with a *cholam*.

²⁷ The verse literally reads: I am small. I.E. interprets this to mean I am insignificant. Cf. *Bereshit Rabbah* 76:4: *Katonti*. Rabbi Abba says, "This means I am not worthy."

²⁸ Cf. I.E.'s comments on Gen. 24:49.

²⁹ *Ve-hekkani* is in the singular and *prima facie* refers only to Jacob. Thus nothing is stated about what Esau will do to the mother and the children.

³⁰ The Hebrew literally reads: And two men, captains of bands were son of Saul. I.E. says that captains of should be read as if written twice, i.e., And two men, captains of bands, were captains of Saul's son. Cf. Kimchi's comment on this verse.

15. TWO HUNDRED SHE-GOATS. Jacob sent ten females for every male of the flock,³¹ four bulls for each cow, and two she-asses for every foal. He did this because he knew their nature.³²

17. AND PUT A SPACE. The word *revach* means a space. *Harevachah* (respite) in *That there was respite* (*harevachah*) (Ex. 8:11) is close in meaning to it. The meaning of the latter is, there was a separation between one plague and the other. It is similar to *ve-ravach* (found relief) in *so Saul found relief* (*ve-ravach le-sha'ul*) (I Sam. 16:23).³³

18. AND ASKETH THEE SAYING. *U-she'elekha*³⁴ (and asketh thee) is vocalized the same as *ahevekha* (he loveth thee).³⁵

20. AND ALL THAT FOLLOWED. Scripture says this because there were five groups.³⁶

³¹ Ten she-goats for every he-goat and 10 ewes for each ram.

³² He sent as many males as were needed to service the females.

³³ Saul had space. Figuratively speaking, he went out of his straits to an open space. Thus the root *resh*, *vav*, *chet* can refer to physical space, or space in time, to relief.

³⁴ When a *kal* in the third person has the suffix *kha* added to it, the second root letter is usually vocalized with a *kamatz*, hence I.E.'s comment.

³⁵ Deut. 15:16. It, too, is vocalized with a *tzere* rather than with a *kamatz* beneath the second root letter (the *heh*).

³⁶ Goats, sheep, camels, cattle and asses. Scripture notes that Jacob commanded the foremost, the second and the third group, *and all that followed* what to tell Esau because there were five groups and each group was instructed what to say.

WHEN YE FIND HIM. The *tzadi* of *be-motza'akhem* (when ye find) is vocalized with a *pattach* because it precedes a guttural.³⁷ This is so even though we do not find another example of this in the Bible.³⁸

21. FOR HE SAID. He said in his heart.³⁹ These are the words of Moses.⁴⁰

[I WILL APPEASE HIM.] *Akhapperah* (I will appease him) means I will cover or hide.⁴¹ *Panav* (him)⁴² means his anger. *Peneha* (her countenance) in *and her countenance* (u-faneha) *was no more sad*⁴³ (I Sam. 1:18) is similar.

³⁷ When an infinitive is combined with a pronominal suffix, the second root letter is vocalized with a *sheva*, as in *be-shovbekha* (Deut. 6:7) or *tofsekhem* (Josh. 8:8). However, in our case rather than being vocalized with a *sheva*, the second root letter is vocalized with a *pattach*. We thus read, *motza'akhem* rather than *motzakhem*. I.E. explains that this is so because the *tsadi* precedes a guttural (the *alef*) (Cherez).

³⁸ In all other similar cases, i.e., even preceding a guttural, the second root letter is vocalized with a *sheva*. Compare, *shomakhem* (Deut. 5:20), where the *mem* is vocalized with a *sheva* even though it precedes an *ayin*, a guttural (Cherez). Thus I.E. notes that while his explanation is correct with regard to our word it does not hold for similar words in Scripture.

³⁹ Jacob thought this. He did not instruct his messengers to say this to Esau, as one might gather from the verse.

⁴⁰ Moses in writing the Torah explained what motivated Jacob to send these gifts to Esau.

⁴¹ The root of *akhapperah* is *caf, peh, resh*, which means to cover.

⁴² *Panav* usually means face or countenance. Here it means anger. Jacob said, "I will cover his anger"; i.e., I will appease him. Weiser suggests that since anger is expressed in the face, face is, by extension, occasionally used as a synonym for anger.

⁴³ According to I.E. this should be rendered: her anger was no more, i.e., she was pacified.

23. AND PASSED OVER THE FORD OF THE JABBOK. Jacob passed over first.⁴⁴ He then returned and took his wives and children and brought them over the ford. Thus the meaning of *and passed over* is and he had already passed over. He then went back for a final look to see if anything was forgotten.⁴⁵

25. AND THERE WRESTLED A MAN. *Va-ye'avek* (and there wrestled) comes from the same root as *avak* (dust). They struggled so that dust arose between them.

UNTIL THE BREAKING OF THE DAY. *Ad alot ha-shachar* (until the breaking of the day) means until the darkness of the night went away.⁴⁶ Others say that *shachar* (dawn) refers to the image of light that appears in the clouds before sunrise.⁴⁷ *Shacher* (light) in *wherein there is no light* (*shacher*) (Is. 8:20) is similar.

26. THAT HE PREVAILED NOT AGAINST HIM. The angel against Jacob.

HE TOUCHED THE HOLLOW OF HIS THIGH. Jacob's thigh.

⁴⁴ Scripture reads: *And he rose up that night and took his two wives, and his two handmaids, and his eleven children, and (he) passed over the ford Jabbok* (v. 23). *And he took them, and sent them over the stream* (v. 24). This is difficult to understand. Why interrupt the sequence of the narrative with *and (he) passed over the ford Jabbok*? Furthermore, if Jacob passed over the ford by himself, how could he take his wives and children over? Hence I.E. interprets that Scripture tells us that Jacob took his wives and children over but prior to this he had gone over himself (to see if it was safe for the others to pass-Nachmanides). Scripture then resumes the narrative by relating, *And he took them and sent them over the stream, and sent over that which he had* (Cherez).

⁴⁵ After taking his family across the river Jacob went back for a final look. Hence he was left alone.

⁴⁶ I.E. interprets *alot* (breaking) to mean go up, i.e., to depart, and *shacher* (dawn) to mean darkness, for this is what the root of *shachar* means.

⁴⁷ According to this interpretation *shachar* means dawn and *alot* the rising. *Alot ha-shachar* thus means the breaking of dawn.

WAS STRAINED. *Va-teka* (was strained) is similar to *teka* (be moved)⁴⁸ in *Lest My soul be moved* (*teka*) *from thee* (Jer. 6:8). The hollow of Jacob's thigh moved out of its place.

33. THE SINEW OF THE THIGH-VEIN. The meaning of the term *gid ha-nasheh* (the sinew of the thigh-vein) is known from the tradition received and transmitted to us by the Talmudic sages.⁴⁹ No one but those lacking in understanding and knowledge of nature have any doubt as to its definition. The latter interpret *gid* (sinew) to refer to the penis and hold that *nassheh* (thigh-vein) comes from the same root as *nashim* (women).⁵⁰

Note, the angel that appeared to Jacob was corporeal.⁵¹ This will be explained to you, if God will enlighten you, in the chapter that begins, *for My name is in him* (Ex. 23:21).

⁴⁸ It comes from the root *yod, kof, ayin* and means was moved (Cherez, Weiser). J.P.S. renders it as alienated.

⁴⁹ *Chullin* 91a. The rabbis interpret *gid na-nasheh* to mean the sinew that slipped from its place.

⁵⁰ There was an anti-Rabbinic interpretation that explained the prohibition against eating the *gid ha-nasheh* as follows: Therefore the children of Israel do not engage (eat) in abnormal intercourse with women (*gid ha-nasheh*). According to Krinsky it is this interpretation which I.E. negates.

⁵¹ This translation follows *Vat. Ebr.* 38. It reads, *ve-da* (note). The printed text reads, *la-da'at* (to know).

CHAPTER 33

[2. AND RACHEL AND JOSEPH HINDERMOST.] He placed Rachel and Joseph last so that they might possibly escape. Jacob did this because of his great love for them.

[4. AND KISSED HIM.] The Midrashic interpretation concerning the dots on *ve-yishakehu*¹ (and kissed him) is good for *them that are drawn from the breasts*.² It is obvious from the plain meaning of the text that Esau did not intend to harm Jacob, the proof being *and they wept*, as Joseph did with his brethren.³

5. WHO ARE THESE WITH THEE. *Mi eleh lakh* can be interpreted as meaning who are these with thee, or who are these who are yours.⁴

¹ *Va-yishakehu* has dots over it. According to a Midrashic opinion this indicates that Esau did not kiss Jacob wholeheartedly. Cf. *Yalkut Shimoni* on this verse.

² That is, children. The term used by I.E. is taken from Is. 28:9.

³ He kissed them and cried (Gen. 45:15). An alternate interpretation is, as Joseph did with his brother Benjamin (*Ibid.* v. 14).

⁴ That is, who are these who are obviously yours. I.E. points out that *lakh* can be interpreted as meaning *immekha* (with you) or *shellekha* (yours). Esau knew that these women and children belonged to Jacob. What he wanted to know was their relationship to him; were they servants or children (Cherez).

GRACIOUSLY GIVEN. *Chanan* means gave graciously.⁵ *Grant them graciously* (channunu) unto us (Jud. 21:22) is similar.⁶ The word *chinnam*⁷ (gratuitously) comes from the same root.⁸

8. WHAT MEANEST THOU. The word *mi* (what)⁹ always refers to a person. The meaning of our clause¹⁰ is: to whom did you send this gift, or whom were you thinking of when you sent this gift.

10. NAY, I PRAY THEE. I pray my lord not to so speak.¹¹ I have previously noted Rabbi Samuel Ha-Nagid's interpretation of the term *al* (nay).¹²

AS ONE SEETH THE FACE OF GOD. The face of an angel. Many of the commentators explain that the angel with whom Jacob wrestled came to encourage him not to lose heart and fear Esau. For if an angel could not overcome him, certainly no human could.

⁵ *Chanan* usually means to show favor to, to be gracious to. Hence I.E. explains that here *chanan* means gave graciously.

⁶ Here, too, *chanan* has the meaning of to graciously give.

⁷ This is the reading of *Vat. Ebr.* 38. Most of the printed texts have *chanan*. This reading is impossible to interpret. I.E.'s point is that *chinnam* comes from the root *chet, nun, nun* and means something gotten gratis (Filwarg, Weiser).

⁸ *Chanan* and *chinnam* both come from the root *chet, nun, nun*. See note 7.

⁹ *Mi* (what) usually means who.

¹⁰ *Mi le-khah kol ha-machneh ha-zeh* literally means: who to thee all this camp? This lends itself to the two interpretations offered by I.E.

¹¹ *Al na* (nay, I pray thee) is short for *al na yomar adoni ken* (I pray my lord not to so speak) (Weiser).

¹² Cf. I.E.'s comments on Gen. 19:18.

The word *sarita* (thou hast striven), in *thou hast striven* (*sarita*) *with* (im) *God* (Gen. 32:29),¹³ does not mean the same as *va-yaser*¹⁴ (was prince) in *And Abimelech was prince* (*va-yasar*) *over* (al) *Israel* (Jud. 9:22), because *im* (with) is not the same as *al* (over). Our phrase (Gen. 32:29) means that you are considered a prince among the angels, and also among human princes.¹⁵

Some ask, what does Scripture mean by *And the sun rose upon him* (Gen. 32:32) when the sun rises all over the world at the same time?¹⁶ This is a nonsensical question because the sun rises at different times in different places. For example, there is a difference of one and a third hours in sunrise and also twelve degrees in latitude between Jerusalem and the place where I wrote this commentary, namely the city of Lucca.¹⁷ This thing is certain and beyond doubt.

The meaning of *tzole'a* (and he limped) (Gen. 32:32) is, he walked on one side.¹⁸ The meaning of *al ken* (therefore) (Gen. 32:33) is, in commemoration of this thing.¹⁹

¹³ It does not mean prince over. It means thou has become a prince. I.E. does not interpret *sarita* to mean strove. Since Jacob alluded to the angel in his comments to Esau, I.E. now goes back and concludes his comments on that incident which is reported in the previous chapter.

¹⁴ Although both roots are related. Cf. D.B.G., *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Hebrew Language*, Oxford, 1968.

¹⁵ I.E. interprets *sarita* as, you have become a *sar*, a prince; *im Elohim*, among angels; *ve-im anashim*, and among human princes.

¹⁶ The Hebrew implies it shone upon him but not upon other places. Cf. *Bereshit Rabbah* 78:8, "Did the sun rise only for him?"

¹⁷ A northern Italian city and capital of a Lombard duchy. Its Jewish community was among the most important in northern Italy, and it was one of the three northern Italian communities mentioned by Benjamin of Tudela (c. 1165). See Introduction.

¹⁸ I.E. explains *tzela* as a side (see his comments on Gen. 2:21). *Tzole'a* is a denominative. A healthy person walks straight, a sick person leans on one side (Chercz).

¹⁹ In commemoration of Jacob's victory over the angel, or of God's saving Jacob from being overcome by the angel (Krinsky).

12. LET US TAKE OUR JOURNEY. Some say that *nisah* (let us take our journey) is an imperative.²⁰ It is similar to *shilchah* (send) in *Send* (shilchah) *the lad* (Gen. 43:8)²¹ and *niflu* (fall) in *Fall* (niflu) *on us* (Hos. 10:8).²²

AND LET US GO. All of us.²³ *And I will go before thee*; i.e., I will not move away from you. However, it is possible that *nisah* is similar to *va-nisse'ah*²⁴ (then we departed) in *Then we departed* (va-nisse'ah) *from the river of Ahava* (Ezra 8:31). The meaning of our verse thus is: Let us all take our journey,²⁵ and I will go before thee.

²⁰ According to this interpretation *nisah* (let us take our journey) means, take your journey. The usual form for let us take our journey is *nissa* with a *dagesh* in the *samakh*, not *nisah* which does not have a *dagesh* in the *samekh* and has a *heh* at the end. The usual imperative form for take your journey is *sa*. The commentators quoted by I.E. point out that in the elongated imperative the first letter of the root is vocalized with a *chirik* and the last with a *kamatz*, as in *shilchah*. Cf. Rashi.

²¹ An elongated imperative. The usual form of the imperative for send is *shelach*.

²² Most roots having a *nun* as their first root letter drop the *nun* in the imperative, thus the imperative of *nun*, *samekh*, *ayin* is *sa*. I.E. points out that in *nun*, *peh*, *lamed*, the *nun* does not drop in the imperative. Hence while in *nasa* the *nun* normally drops out in the imperative, it does not in the elongated imperative. Hence *nisah* is similar to *niflu*.

²³ In contradistinction to *nisah*, *ve-nelekhah* (and let us go) which is a plural. I.E. further points out that the meaning of *and I will go before thee* is: I will not move away from thee (Weiser). Compare Rashi, *and I will go before thee*, equally with thee. Krinsky suggests that I.E.'s interpretation is: even if I perchance go before thee, I will not go far from thee but will keep up with thee.

²⁴ *Nisse'ah* in Ezra 8:31 is an elongated first person plural imperfect meaning: we will depart, we will take our journey. The *vav* prefixed to it changes it to a perfect. Hence *va-nisse'ah* means: then we departed. I.E. now says *nisah* in our verse, too, is a first person plural imperfect meaning: let us take our journey. However, he does not explain why there is no *dagesh* in the *samekh*.

²⁵ That is, *nisah* is a first person plural imperfect. According to the first interpretation our verse reads: Take your journey, and let us go, and I will go before thee; according to the second: Let us take our journey, and let us go, and I will go before thee.

13. THE CHILDREN ARE TENDER. The oldest was twelve years and some days old.²⁶

GIVING SUCK. *Alot* (giving suck) is similar to *alot* (pregnant) in *and gently leadeth those that are pregnant* (*alot*) (Is. 40:11).²⁷ It means pregnant cattle. They are called *alot* because the he-goats went up (*alu*) on them.²⁸ The meaning of *alai*²⁹ (are a care to me) is that I have to care for them that no harm befall them.

AND IF THEY OVERDRIVE THEM. If the drivers³⁰ overdrive them, then all the flock will die.

14. AND I WILL JOURNEY ON. This is to be understood as, and I will journey on with them.

GENTLY. The *yod* of *le'itti* (gently) is either superfluous³¹ or is a first person pronominal suffix.³²

ACCORDING TO THE PACE OF THE CATTLE. Because of the cattle, whose care is my work.³³ I believe that the meaning of *melakhah*

²⁶ Jacob spent 20 years in Laban's house. He was unmarried for the first seven years, after which he married Leah. Thus Reuben, Jacob's eldest son, could not have been much older than 12.

²⁷ This is how I.E. renders *alot*. The usual translation of *alot* is: those that give suck.

²⁸ Mounted them. This applies to the other kinds as well. I.E. is merely using the language of Scripture, viz., *the he-goats which leaped (mounted) upon the flock* (Gen. 31:10). The point is that pregnant animals are called *alot* because they were mounted by male animals.

²⁹ The Hebrew literally reads: upon me.

³⁰ The "they" is not identified in the text. Hence I.E. points out that it refers to the drivers.

³¹ The word for gently or slowly being *le'at*. Hence the *yod* of *le'itti* is superfluous.

³² Meaning at my ease or at my slow pace.

³³ *Melakhah* usually means work. I.E. explains why it refers to cattle here.

is what a person can do by himself or through his agent.³⁴ Also, on property is called *melakhah*, as in *whether he have not put his hand on his neighbor's goods* (melekhet) (Ex. 22:7). The word messenger (*malakh*) comes from the same root. A *malakh* (messenger) is so called because he is under the control of the one who sends him. The meaning of the word *regel* (the pace) is the same as *le-ragli* (because of me),³⁵ as in *and the Lord hath blessed thee because of me* (le-ragli) (Gen 30:30).³⁶ However, it is possible that *le-regel* should be taken literally since Jacob led the animals on foot.³⁷

15. [WHAT NEEDETH IT?] I have no need of it.³⁸

18. AND JACOB CAME IN PEACE. *Shalem* (peace) is an adjective.³⁹ The meaning of our clause is, Jacob came in peace to Shechem; i.e., no misfortune befell him on the way. Scripture notes this because it is about to tell of what happened to Dinah.⁴⁰

³⁴ I.E. does not disagree with his original point that *melakhah* here refers to cattle. He now expands on the meaning of the word (Filwarg). According to the first interpretation "work" refers to cattle because Jacob's work was taking care of cattle. According to the second interpretation "work" can refer directly to cattle, for one's possessions are one's work.

³⁵ *Le-regel* (according to the pace) means because. Although the basic meaning of *melakhah* is changed in the second interpretation, the meaning of *le-regel* (because) remains unchanged.

³⁶ I.E.'s interpretation of Gen. 30:30.

³⁷ Since *melakhah* means cattle, why not interpret *regel* literally as meaning feet, since the animals walked, viz., according to the pace (foot) of the cattle.

³⁸ The Hebrew reads, *lammah zeh emtza chen be-ene adoni*. This can be rendered: why then shall I find favor in the eyes of my lord? I.E. explains that this is not the way to interpret the verse. *Lammah zeh* is not to be connected to *emtza chen*, etc. The verse is to be interpreted: *lammah zeh*, why this? That is, why do this when I have no need of it? *Emtza chen be-ene adoni* is another clause meaning: I merely want to find favor in your eyes (Weiser, Krinsky). Cf. Rashi.

³⁹ *Shalem* can be taken to be the name of a place, Salem. Hence I.E.'s comment.

⁴⁰ That is why Scripture notes that up to now no misfortune befell him.

19. THE PARCEL OF GROUND. A portion in the field.⁴¹ Scripture mentions this⁴² to inform us of the greatness of the land of Israel. Whosoever has a portion in it is as though he had a portion in the world to come.

20. [AND CALLED IT EL-ELOHE-ISRAEL.]⁴³ Saadiah explained that *and called it El-elohe-Israel* means, He called to the Lord, "El-elohe-Israel."⁴⁴ However, the correct interpretation is that he called the altar El-elohe-Israel (God, the God of Israel). Moses similarly called the altar he erected *Adonai-nissi* (the Lord is my banner) (Ex. 17:15) because of the miracle God performed in that place. Similarly, when the Divine Presence will once again return to Jerusalem, the city will be called *Adonai-shammah* (the Lord is there) (Ezek. 48:35). Jacob similarly called the altar whereupon he served the Lord, El-elohe-Israel (God, the God of Israel) because God came to his aid. The name *El* (God) means the One who is powerful and mighty.⁴⁵

ELOHE-ISRAEL. He saved him on the way and ensured his safe arrival in Canaan, where Succoth⁴⁶ and Shechem are located.⁴⁷ I believe that Jacob spent many years in the city of Shechem, for at the time of

⁴¹ I.E. explains that Jacob did not buy the *parcel of ground where he had spread his tent*. He rather bought a portion in the field *where he had spread his tent*.

⁴² That Jacob bought, not rented, a parcel of land.

⁴³ God, the God of Israel.

⁴⁴ The word *lo* can mean either it or him. Saadiah had difficulty in accepting that Jacob called the altar God, the God of Israel. Hence he did not interpret *lo* as meaning it, i.e., the altar, but rather as Him, i.e., God. He interprets our verse as: And called to Him, God, God of Israel (Krinsky). For a slightly different interpretation see Cherez.

⁴⁵ God thereby demonstrated His might. Therefore, Jacob called him El, mighty and powerful.

⁴⁶ Verse 17.

⁴⁷ Where Jacob now camped.

Jacob's arrival in Shechem, Dinah was less than seven years old and also Simeon and Levi were yet small children.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ Jacob stayed in Laban's house for 20 years. He married Leah and Rachel after seven years, and with the exception of Benjamin, all of his children were born in the next seven years (cf. I.E. on Gen. 30:23). Reuben, his eldest, was a little over 12. Simeon and Levi, the next two in order, a bit younger. Dinah, who was born in the 14th year of Jacob's service to Laban, had to be under seven. The question thus arises, could what is described in Chapter 34 apply to such a little girl? Dinah is described as a young lady of age. Furthermore, could children of Simeon and Levi's age, preadolescents, overcome and slay a city? Could pre-adolescents act and talk the way Jacob's sons are described as doing in Chapter 34? I.E. thus suggests that many years passed between the end of Chapter 33 and Chapter 34. During these years Jacob's children had grown. It should be noted that in putting forth this interpretation I.E. is taking issue with the Midrash which states that Simeon and Levi were 13 when they destroyed Shechem. Cf. *Bereshit Rabbah* 80.

CHAPTER 34

1. AND DINAH WENT OUT. Of her own accord.¹

2. AND HUMBLÉD HER. He had normal intercourse with her.² Scripture uses the term *va-ye'anneha* (and humbled her)³ because she was a virgin.⁴

3. AND SPOKE COMFORTINGLY UNTO THE DAMSEL. He spoke tenderly and comfortingly to her.

5. THAT HE HAD DEFILED. That Shechem had defiled.

14. A REPROACH. It will be a reproach for generations.⁵ This is the meaning of *because he had wrought a vile deed in Israel* (v. 7).⁶

¹ She did not ask her parents' permission (Krinsky). Filwarg asks, "How does I.E. know this?"

² Contra Rashi who interprets humbled as sodomized.

³ The root *ayin, nun, heh* means to afflict. Thus *va-ye'anneha* (and he humbled her) means he afflicted her. Hence I.E.'s interpretation.

⁴ Intercourse was thus painful, hence the term afflicted her.

⁵ Cherez interprets I.E. to mean that future generations will look down upon us. They will ask, how could they give their sister to an uncircumcised man?

⁶ According to I.E. the vile deed refers to having intercourse with an uncircumcised male (Weiser). Israel in verse 7 refers to a later time when there was a people of Israel. It was then shameful to recall that Dinah had slept with an uncircumcised man (Joseph ben Eliezer Ha-Sephardi).

[13. AND SPOKE BECAUSE HE HAD DEFILED.] And spoke to Shechem who had (*asher*) defiled their sister.⁷ We may interpret our verse in this manner because we find Scripture stating, *dabbero le-shalom* (Gen. 37:4), which is to be rendered: speak peaceably unto him (Gen. 37:4).⁸ On the other hand *asher* may mean because. In this case the Bible is telling us that they answered with guile because (*asher*) he had defiled Dinah their sister.⁹

TO ONE THAT IS UNCIRCUMCISED. One whose sexual member is uncircumcised.¹⁰ The meaning of the term *orlah* (uncircumcised) is something which is heavy. *Aral* (uncircumcised), in *uncircumcised* (aral) lips (Ex. 6:12), and *arelah* (dull), in *their ear is dull* (arelah) (Jer. 6:10), are similar. An *orlah* is something which lays heavy because it is an unnecessary appendage.¹¹ Those who say that Abraham blemished himself by undergoing circumcision, and thereby violated God's charge to him, *and be thou whole* (Gen. 17:1), err. The opposite is true.¹² Proof of this can be offered from the animal kingdom.¹³ As to their

⁷ The Hebrew reads: *va-yedabberu, asher timme et dinah ahotam* which literally means: and they spoke who had defiled Dinah their sister. This makes no sense. Hence I.E. points out that Shechem, who is mentioned in the first part of the verse (*et shechem*), is also the object here. We should thus read it as if it were written: *va-yedabberu et shechem asher timme et dinah ahotam*, viz., and spoke to Shechem who had defiled their sister. It should be noted that according to this interpretation, *asher* means who.

⁸ I.E. claims that *dabber et Shechem* is grammatically similar to *dabbero*. For an explanation of their linguistic similarity see Filwarg. See also notes to Gen. 37:4. For alternate interpretations see Weiser, Cherez and Krinsky.

⁹ Cherez.

¹⁰ The Hebrew literally reads: to one who has an *orlah*, hence I.E.'s interpretation.

¹¹ Krinsky. In the case of the foreskin the heaviness is physical. In the case of lips and ears, metaphoric. I.E. renders "uncircumcised lips" as heavy lips. There is, as it were, a burden on the lips which makes speaking difficult. The same applies to the ears.

¹² By circumcision Abraham became "whole." His impediment was removed. So Cherez and Filwarg. For an alternate interpretation see Weiser.

¹³ Animals have no foreskin. We thus see that it is an unnecessary appendage.

query, why remove that which God created, we respond that God also created the umbilical cord.¹⁴

17. OUR DAUGHTER. They spoke thus because she was a minor.¹⁵ They referred to Dinah as our daughter because they spoke on behalf of Jacob.

19. DEFERRED NOT. *Echar* (deferred) is not of the same grammatical form as *va-echar* (and stayed) in *and stayed* (*va-echar*) *until now* (Gen. 32:5).¹⁶ Our word is a third person *pi'el* perfect following the paradigm of *berakh* (did curse) in *Naboth did curse* (*berakh*) *God and the King* (I Kings 21:13).¹⁷

21. PEACEABLE. They are at peace.¹⁸

LARGE ENOUGH. *Yadayim* (enough)¹⁹ is to be rendered places, as in *Thou shalt have a place* (*yad*) (Deut. 23:13).

22. WILL THE MEN CONSENT. *Ye'otu* (consent) comes from the same root as *ya'atah* (befitteth) in *For it befitteth* (*ya'atah*) *Thee* (Jer. 10:7).²⁰ The *yod* prefix is vocalized with a *tzere*²¹ to compensate for the missing first root letter.²²

¹⁴ We thus see that God created appendages that require removal (Weiser).

¹⁵ Since Dinah was a minor they could threaten, *then we will take our daughter, and we will be gone*.

¹⁶ Both words look alike and are identically vocalized.

¹⁷ However, *echar* in Gen. 32:5 is a first person *kal* imperfect (Weiser). Here the *alef* is a root letter. In Gen. 32:5 the root *alef* is missing, for the *alef* therein is a first person *kal* prefix (Filwarg).

¹⁸ In other words, *shelemim* (peaceable) is an adjective (Weiser, Krinsky).

¹⁹ I.E. renders *rachavat yadayim* (large enough) as large places, i.e., the land is large enough for both of us.

²⁰ According to I.E. its root is *yod, alef, tav* (Krinsky).

²¹ Rather than a *chirik* (Cherez).

²² The *yod*.

BE CIRCUMCISED. The word *be-himmol* (be circumcised) has already been explained.²³

Shechem and Hamor had evil designs on Jacob and his sons for they said, *Shall not their cattle and their substance and all their beasts be ours* (v. 22)?²⁴

25. ON THE THIRD DAY. The third day is always a difficult day because it is half of a monthly quarter.²⁵

Simeon and Levi acted with the full consent of their brothers. This is clear from *And the sons of Jacob answered Shechem and Hamor his father with guile* (v. 13). The "sons of Jacob"²⁶ refers to all of the brothers. Jacob spilled his anger on Simeon and Levi because they killed the men of Shechem²⁷

29. EVEN ALL THAT WAS IN THE HOUSE. This refers either to the house of Shechem or Hamor.²⁸

30. FEW IN NUMBER. *Mete* (few) means men. Anything that can be numbered is deemed a few.²⁹ Hence Rabbi Aaron Ha-Kohen, dean of

²³ Cf. I.E.'s comments on Gen. 17:10.

²⁴ They had intentions of later robbing them of their possessions. Thus both sides plotted against each other (Weiser).

²⁵ It is half a week which is a quarter of the month (Weiser). The astrologers count the days from the afternoon. Hence the fourth day begins after the noon of the third day has passed. The time between noon and sunset of the third day is called half the monthly quarter (Krinsky).

²⁶ The reference is to verse 13 (Krinsky, Cherez). Weiser suggests that the reference is to verse 27 wherein it is stated, *The sons of Jacob came upon the slain and spoiled the city*.

²⁷ While the others merely looted the city, Simeon and Levi killed its male inhabitants (Weiser). Cherez explains that the others merely wanted to save Dinah. They did not intend to kill the men of Shechem.

²⁸ "House" is in the singular, hence I.E.'s comment (Krinsky).

²⁹ I.E. renders *mete mispar* (few in number) as men of number, i.e., few men.

the Yeshiva,³⁰ errs in rendering literally *vi-yehi metav mispar* (in that his men became few) (Deut. 33:6).³¹

TO MAKE ME ODIUS.³² They will hate me as one loathes something which gives off a horrible odor.

AND THEY SAID. Simeon and Levi.

SHOULD ONE DEAL WITH OUR SISTER AS WITH A HARLOT. Should Shechem deal with our sister as with a harlot.³³

³⁰ Head of the academy in Pumpeditha. Hai Gaon was among his students (Weiser).

³¹ Rabbi Aaron renders Deut. 33:6, and let his men be numbered. I.E. renders this verse: and let his men not be men who can be numbered.

³² Literally, to make me stink, hence I.E.'s comment.

³³ The subject is missing in the sentence, hence I.E.'s comment.

CHAPTER 35

2. PUT AWAY THE STRANGE GODS. Heaven forbid that the prophet would live with women who served strange gods.¹ The explanation of this verse will be found in the Torah portion *va-yelekh moshe* (And Moses went).²

AND PURIFY YOURSELVES. Wash your bodies.

AND CHANGE YOUR GARMENTS. From this verse we learn that an Israelite must have a clean body and spotless garments when he goes to pray in a place set aside for worship.

5. A TERROR OF. The *tav* of *chittat* (terror of) receives a *dagesh* to compensate for the missing root letter, the *tav*.³

7. [BECAUSE THERE GOD WAS REVEALED TO HIM.] *Elohim* (God) refers to angels.⁴ Compare, *And behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it* (Gen. 28:12).⁵

10. THY NAME SHALL NOT BE CALLED ANYMORE JACOB. You shall no longer be called only Jacob but also Israel.

¹ Our verse reads: *Then Jacob said unto his household, and to all that were with him, "Put away the strange gods that are among you."* This implies that his wives had strange gods.

² Cf. I.E.'s comments on Deut. 31:16.

³ The root of *chittat* is *chet*, *tav*, *tav*, but it is spelled with one *tav*. The *dagesh* compensates for the missing letter.

⁴ Revealed (*niglu*) is in the plural. If *elohim* meant God then revealed would be in the singular (Cherez).

⁵ *Elohim* in our verse refers to the same angels whom Jacob saw in Beth-el (Gen. 28:12).

11. BE FRUITFUL AND MULTIPLY. This is a blessing as in the account of the Creation.⁶

14. [AND JACOB SET UP A PILLAR.] This may be a pluperfect meaning Jacob had already set up a pillar.⁷ On the other hand, Jacob may now have set up a pillar a second time. I prefer the first interpretation.⁸

AND HE POURED OUT A DRINK-OFFERING THEREON. He poured wine or water on the pillar. Jacob first washed the pillar with wine or water⁹ and then *poured oil thereon*. Here at Beth-el Jacob kept his vow¹⁰ and gave a tithe of his wealth in honor of God to a contemporary who was worthy to receive it.¹¹

16. SOME WAY. It is possible that the *caf* of *kivrat* (some way) is a preposition meaning similar to¹² and that *brat* is a distance measured by walking.¹³ The word does not appear elsewhere in Scripture.¹⁴

17. WHEN SHE WAS IN HARD LABOR. *Be-hakshotah* (when she was in hard) is a *hifil*. The meaning of *be-hakshotah be-lidtah* (when she was in hard labor) is: the delivery caused her pain.¹⁵ *Va-tekash* (and

⁶ Cf. I.E.'s comments on Gen. 1:26.

⁷ Cf. Gen. 28:18, 22.

⁸ I.E. prefers to believe that Jacob used the pillar which he had set up previously in Beth-el.

⁹ I.E.'s interpretation of *and poured out a drink-offering thereon*.

¹⁰ Cf. Gen. 28:20. This is not explicitly stated in Scripture. I.E. assumes that it must have been so.

¹¹ Cf. I.E.'s comments on Gen. 28:22.

¹² In other words, *kivrat* (some way) is to be interpreted *ki-verat*, as a *brat*.

¹³ This is the reading in *Vat. Ebr.* 38. The printed editions read: a king's measure.

¹⁴ The word *kivrat* does appear in II Kings 5:19. Krinsky suggests that I.E. means it doesn't appear elsewhere in the Pentateuch. Cherez maintains that I.E. means that the word *berat* is not found in Scripture.

¹⁵ *Hifil* is a causative form. If this is the case then *be-hakshotah* must be transitive, hence I.E.'s comment that it means caused her hardship. Cf. Kimchi.

she had hard labor, in v. 16) is similar.¹⁶ However the latter is a *pi'el*. *Va-tekash* is similar to *va-tekhal* (and she was done) in *And when she had done* (*va-tekhal*) *giving him drink* (Gen. 24:19).¹⁷

18. BEN-ONI. *Ben-oni* means the son of my mourning. *Onim* (mourners) in *as the bread of mourners* (*onim*) (Hos. 9:4) and *be-oni* (my mourning) in *I have not eaten thereof in my mourning* (*be-oni*) (Deut. 26:14) are similar.

20. HER GRAVE. *Kevuratah* (her grave) and *kivrah* (her grave) mean the same.¹⁸

22. THAT REUBEN WENT. Our sages explained this beautifully;¹⁹ *for a prudent man concealeth shame* (Prov. 12:16).

26. THAT WERE BORN TO HIM IN PADDAN-ARAM. Actually only eleven sons were born to Jacob in Paddan-aram²⁰ for Benjamin was born in the land of Canaan. Scripture speaks of the majority of his sons.²¹ I will in the future point out many similar cases.²²

¹⁶ It, too, is an active form and is to be explained as in note 15.

¹⁷ Both words are shortened forms of the *pi'el*. *Va-tekash* is short for *va-tekasheh* as *va-tekhal* is short for *va-tekhalleh*.

¹⁸ *Kever* means a grave, *kevurah* a burial, and *kevuratah* her burial. Thus our verse should have read *kivrah* (her grave) and not *kevuratah* (her burial) since Jacob erected a monument over Rachel's grave. I.E. points out that *kevuratah* can also have the same meaning as *kivrah* (Krinsky).

¹⁹ According to the rabbis Reuben did not actually lay with Billah but rather removed his father's couch from her tent and placed it in the tent of his mother Leah. Scripture considers this act of audacity as if he had actually slept with her. Cf. *Sabbath* 55b.

²⁰ The problem is that our verse states that all of Jacob's sons were born in Paddan-aram, when in fact this was not so.

²¹ *These are the sons of Jacob, that were born to him in Paddan-aram* refers to the majority of his sons.

²² Cf. I.E.'s comments on Gen. 47:27.

29. AND ISAAC EXPIRED. When Isaac died and was gathered to his people Easu and Jacob buried him.²³ Scripture mentions Esau²⁴ before Jacob because the Pentateuch follows the order of their birth. However, in relating the burial of Abraham the Bible reads, *And Isaac and Ishmael*²⁵ *his sons buried him* (Gen. 25:9) because Ishmael was the son of a handmaid.

²³ Chronologically speaking Isaac did not die at this point for he lived until Joseph was 29 years of age (see I.E. on Gen. 37:35). Scripture notes the death of Isaac here because it will no longer deal with him (Filwarg). Thus *And Isaac expired, and died* should be rendered: And when Isaac expired and died, etc. (Krinsky).

²⁴ Even though Esau sold his birthright to Jacob and was no longer technically the eldest.

²⁵ If the Torah follows the order of birth then Ishmael should be mentioned first.

CHAPTER 36

1. THE SAME IS EDM. He is the father of Edom.¹ Do not be surprised that Scripture here calls *the daughter of Elon the Hittite* whom Esau married Adah, while earlier it refers to her by the name of Basemath (Gen. 26:34), for she had two names.² We find the same with the mother of Abijah.³ Indeed, Abijah himself (II Chron. 11:20) is called Abijam in the Book of Kings (I Kings 15:1) and Abijah in Chronicles (II Chron. 11:20).⁴ The Bible refers to them by two different names because both Abijah and his mother had two names each.

These are the names of Esau's sons (v. 10) refers to his grandchildren.⁵

2. AND OHOLIBAMAH THE DAUGHTER OF ANAH, THE DAUGHTER OF ZIBEON THE HIVITE. We find in our chapter a man called Anah who is the brother of Zibeon (v. 20). We further read that Zibeon had a son called Anah (v. 24). Our verse thus relates that Zibeon and his son Anah, or perhaps Zibeon and his brother Anah, slept with

¹ The Hebrew literally reads, *he is Edom*, which I.E., based on verse 9, interprets as, *he is the father of Edom* (Krinsky). Filwarg interprets it as, both Esau and his descendants are called Edom. Our verse teaches that Esau is Edom and verse 9 (which reads, *Esau the father of the Edomites*) that Esau's descendants are called Edom.

² See I.E.'s comments on Gen. 26:34.

³ I Kings 15:2 and II Chron. 11:20 gives her name as Maacah; II Chron. 13:2 gives her name as Micaiah.

⁴ According to Krinsky. For an alternate interpretation see Weiser and Cherez.

⁵ Esau's children are listed in verses 4 and 5, his descendants in verses 10-18. Hence the introduction to this list, viz., *These are the names of Esau's sons*, must refer to his grandchildren. Krinsky suggests that there is a scribal error and that the reference is to *And these are the generations of Esau* in verse 9.

the same woman and the offspring did not know who their father was.⁶ However, it is also possible that Oholibamah was the daughter of Anah the son of Zibeon, and Scripture lists her as being the daughter of Anah and Zibeon in order to distinguish between Anah the son of Zibeon and Anah the brother of Zibeon.⁷

Some say that our chapter speaks of a Korah the son of Adah⁸ and Korah the son of Oholibamah.⁹ However, I believe that both are one and the same person. Korah was the son of Oholibamah. The reason he is listed among the chiefs of Eliphaz¹⁰ is that he lived among them. It is also possible, since he was Oholibamah's youngest son, that his mother died when he was still a child and that Adah raised him along with her own family and Scripture includes him with her children. Our case is similar to *the five sons of Michal* (II Sam. 21:8).¹¹ Korah thus became

⁶ Hence the Bible lists two men, Anah and Zibeon, as being Oholibamah's father.

⁷ Had Scripture merely said, "Oholibamah daughter of Anah" we would not know which Anah the Bible is talking about. Cherez explains that Scripture could state that Oholibamah was Zibeon's daughter, when in fact she was his granddaughter because grandchildren are considered children.

⁸ Verses 15 and 16 list the chiefs of the sons of Esau from his wife Adah, among them *the chief of Korah*. Thus Korah must be Adah's son.

⁹ In verse 14 it is related that Oholibamah bore Korah. Thus our chapter speaks of two Korahs.

¹⁰ Adah's son. See note 8.

¹¹ The five sons of Michal were really the children of Merab. Cf. *San.* 19b., "Michal bore these five children? Did not Merab give birth to them?" The Talmud answers, "Merab bore them but Michal raised them. Hence they are called her children."

Adah's son. Scripture similarly says that Amalek was a son of Adah¹² because he was the son of the handmaid of her husband.¹³

[CHIEF.] The meaning of *alluf* is a prince or chief. However, this is not the meaning of *alluf* (docile)¹⁴ in *ke-kheves alluf* (like a docile lamb) (Jer. 11:19). In the latter verse the *caf* prefixed to *keves* (lamb) also pertains to *alluf*; i.e., the verse is to be read as if written *ke-kheves ke-alluf* (like a lamb, like an ox). The latter is normal Hebrew usage,¹⁵ as can be seen in *I went about as though it had been my friend* (ke-re'a) or *my brother* (ke-ach) (Ps. 35:14).

20. SEIR. We do not know his pedigree. Scripture lists the children of Seir to inform us that they were of a different lineage from the children of Esau. The Bible notes this because Israel was prohibited from contending with the children of Esau.¹⁶

THE HORITE. *Chori* (Horite) means nobles. It is similar to *chore* (nobles) in *the nobles (chore) of Judah* (Jer. 27:20).¹⁷ It is possible that *chori* (Horites) comes from the same root as *chorai* in *And they that*

¹² Verse 16 lists the chief of Amalek among the children of Adah. However, verse 12 states, *And Timna was concubine to Eliphaz Esau's son and she bore to Eliphaz Amalek*. Thus Amalek was the son of Timna, not the son of Adah.

¹³ This comment presents a problem. Verse 12 state that Timna was Eliphaz's concubine, not Esau's concubine. Cherez posits a scribal error; i.e., in place of *her husband*, read her son. Weiser suggests that I.E. had a tradition that Timna was first Esau's concubine and then Eliphaz's concubine, hence I.E.'s statement, "concubine of her husband." The Bible lists Amalek among Adah's children because Adah helped raise him (Weiser).

¹⁴ I.E. translates *alluf* as ox. *Ke-kheves alluf* does not mean like a great sheep, but rather like a lamb or like an ox.

¹⁵ It is normal Hebrew usage to place two *cafs* in succession, meaning like this or like that.

¹⁶ Cf. Deut. 2:4-5. This prohibition did not apply to the Scirites. Both nations inhabited the same country. However, the children of Esau displaced them (Deut. 2:22).

¹⁷ According to I.E. *These are the sons of Seir the Horite* (ha-chori) should be translated: These are the sons of Seir the noble (the chief).

weave cotton (chorai) (Is. 19:9), in which *chorai* means white stuff. Onkelos similarly renders white by *chivvar*.¹⁸ Nobles are called *chorim* (the white ones) because they are metaphorically speaking, like the color white,¹⁹ a color which resembles light.²⁰ In contrast to *chorim*, mean men are called *chashukkim* (dark ones), as we read in *He shall not stand before mean men* (*chashukkim*) (Prov. 22:29).²¹

24. AIAH AND ANAH. The *vav* prefixed to Aiah has the same meaning as the Arabic *fa*.²² We have a similar clause without a *vav* prefixed to Aiah²³ in Chronicles (I Chron. 1:40).

THE HOT SPRINGS. Onkelos renders *yemim* (hot springs) mighty men as in *The Emim dwelt therein aforetime, a people great, and many, and tall* (Deut. 2:10).²⁴ It is possible to compare the two because we find the *yod* and *alef* interchanging²⁵ as with the word *yityammeru* (bear themselves loftily) (Ps. 94:4).²⁶ However, Saadiah Gaon translates

¹⁸ So Cherez. Weiser renders I.E. as follows: the Targum (Jonathan) similarly translates *chore* to mean nobles.

¹⁹ It is the most beautiful color.

²⁰ A symbol of good and purity.

²¹ In Prov. 22:29 *chashukkim* is the antithesis of *kings*. *Chashukkim* comes from the word *choshekh* (black or dark). We thus see that white is a symbol of nobility, and black of poverty (Cherez) or of non-nobility, of meanness (Weiser).

²² The Hebrew has a *vav* before Aiah. If this *vav* is a connective *vav* we should translate: And these are the children of Zibeon and Aiah and Anah. I.E. points out that the *vav* before Aiah is not to be translated. It is superfluous and is placed for emphasis (Weiser).

²³ I Chron. 1:40 reads, *And the sons of Zibeon: Aiah and Anah*.

²⁴ The Emim were mighty men. Onkelos identifies the *Yemin* with them.

²⁵ Hence *yemim* equals *emim*. Nachmanides explains that Onkelos held that Anah was attacked by Emem, who wanted to rob his father's asses, and overcame them. Thus he found the Emim in *the wilderness as he fed the asses of Zibeon, his father*.

²⁶ There is no such word in Scripture. However, we do find *tityammaru* (shall ye revel) (Is. 61:6). Either we have a scribal error (Krinsky) and what I.E. is saying is that *tityammaru* could have been written *titammeru* since Ps. 94:4 employs the term *yitammeru* (bear themselves loftily), or I.E. is saying that Ps. 94:4 could have read *yityammeru* since Is. 61:6 reads *tityammaru* (Weiser). Spelled with a *yod* or an *alef* it means to exalt.

yemim as mules. He interprets *who found* to mean who crossbred.²⁷ It is also possible that *who found* means who first discovered the technique of crossbreeding, since two different species cannot produce offspring.²⁸ The latter interpretation is substantiated by Scripture's stating, *as he fed the asses of Zibeaon his father*.²⁹

If the meaning of *yemim* is plants, as is maintained by many commentators, why should Scripture mention *as he fed the asses of Zibeaon his father*?³⁰

25. AND THESE ARE THE CHILDREN OF ANAH: DISHON AND OHOLIBAMAH THE DAUGHTER OF ANAH. Anah the father of Oholibamah is not the same Anah mentioned in the first part of our verse,³¹ because if he is, there would be no need to mention him again. He is rather to be identified with the Anah mentioned in the preceding verse.³²

²⁷ He crossbred a horse and an ass and "found" mules. This is also the opinion of the Talmud. Cf. Jerusalem Talmud, *Berakhot* 8:5.

²⁸ Hence crossbreeding was a new discovery.

²⁹ Since he was occupied with taking care of the asses, he experimented and discovered this technique.

³⁰ If the Bible wants to tell us that Anah found a certain type of plant (*yemim*) in the desert, what need is there to tell us that he did this *as he fed the asses of Zibeaon his father*?

³¹ If they are one and the same person Scripture should have read: And these are the children of Anah: Dishon and Oholibamah.

³² Anah the son of Zibeaon mentioned in verse 24. The Anah mentioned in the first part of our verse is Anah the brother of Zibeaon mentioned in verse 20. Thus Oholibamah was Zibeaon's granddaughter (Krinsky). Cf. I.E.'s comments on verse 2.

31. AND THESE ARE THE KINGS. Some say that this chapter records a prophecy.³³ However, Yitzchaki³⁴ claims in his book that this chapter was composed during the reign of King Jehoshaphat.³⁵ He explained the generations as he saw fit. Was he not rightly named Yitzchak?³⁶ Everyone that heareth his interpretation will laugh at him.³⁷ For he identified Hadar (v. 39) with Hadad the Edomite (I Kings 11:14)³⁸ and also said that Mehetabel (v. 39) is to be identified with the sister of Tahpenes the queen of Egypt.³⁹ Far be it for one to believe that our chapter was written in the days of Jehoshaphat as Yitzchaki maintains. Indeed his book is fit to be burned. Why did Yitzchaki maintain that it is impossible for eight Edomite kings to have reigned before Moses⁴⁰ when we find double the number of kings in Israel in

³³ Our verse reads, *before there reigned any king over the children of Israel*. Saul was Israel's first king. Thus our chapter appears to deal with the post Mosaic period. These commentaries explain that Moses wrote our chapter as prophecy.

³⁴ Some identify him with Isaac ben Solomon Israeli (c. 850-950). He was a philosopher, Biblical commentator and court physician to the caliphs in Egypt and Kairouan.

³⁵ A ninth-century king of Judah. Jehoshaphat was the eighth Hebrew king to reign starting from Saul. In his days the Edomites no longer had kings for they were subject to Judah. This is the reason that once the eighth Hebrew king ascended the throne it was written that the Edomites, too, had eight kings.

³⁶ A play on Gen. 27:36.

³⁷ A play on Gen. 21:6.

³⁸ A contemporary of King Solomon.

³⁹ Pharaoh gave his wife Tahpenes' sister to Hadad in marriage.

⁴⁰ Yitzchaki claimed that there were too few years between the establishment of the Edomite kingdom and Moses for eight Edomite kings to reign, for from Esau's death, when the Edomite kingdom was established, until the Revelation at Sinai, when Moses reigned, only 193 years passed. The computation of the 193 years is as follows: The Israelites spent 210 years in Egypt, starting with Jacob's descent to Egypt. Jacob lived there 17 years before he died. Esau died on the very day that Jacob did (*Sotah* 13a). We thus subtract 17 from 210 and we get 193 (Cherez).

about the same number of years?⁴¹ Furthermore, there were also proportionally many more kings of Judah in the same time period than the eight Edomite kings who reigned till the age of Moses.⁴² The truth is that king, in *before there reigned any king over the children of Israel*, refers to Moses who was king over Israel, and so it is written, *And there was a king in Jeshurun* (Deut. 33:5).

32. AND BELA THE SON OF BEOR. Bela is not to be identified with Balaam the son of Beor,⁴³ and neither is Baalam the son of Laban the Aramean.⁴⁴ The Midrash which states that Baalam is the son of Laban is probably based on the fact that both were sorcerers⁴⁵ because "none of the words of our sages of blessed memory ever fall to the ground."⁴⁶ We cannot identify Baalam with Bela because Bela was an Edomite and Baalam an Aramean.⁴⁷ We are also not to identify Jobab the son of Zerah (v. 33) with Job, as Yitzchaki⁴⁸ the windbag does.

⁴¹ The kingdom of Israel lasted for 241 years during which time Israel had 19 kings (Krinsky). I.E. says that Israel had double the number of kings of the Edomites. Either he uses a round number or does not count Zimri (I Kings 16:15) who reigned seven days; Zechariah (II Kings 15:8) who reigned six months; and Shallum who reigned a month (*Ibid.*, v. 13). Thus Israel had 16 kings in 241 years. Why, then, is it so hard to believe that eight Edomite kings reigned in 193 years (Krinsky)? Cherez explains that the first 16 kings of Israel reigned 210 years. Thus Israel had 16 kings in 210 years.

⁴² Judah had 21 kings in 500 years (Krinsky). Hence why couldn't the Edomites have eight kings in 193 years.

⁴³ Cf. Num. 22:5. Adding a *mem* to Bela spells Baalam. Because of this and their father having the same name, some consider them to be the same. Cf. *Targum Jonathan* on this verse.

⁴⁴ The rabbis identify Beor with Laban. Cf. *Sanhedrin* 105a.

⁴⁵ So Cherez. The point is that since Baalam was a sorcerer and Laban was one, too, Balaam was a "son" (spiritual not actual) of Laban. For an alternate interpretation see Krinsky.

⁴⁶ A paraphrase of I Sam. 3:19.

⁴⁷ According to Cherez.

⁴⁸ This is the same Yitzchaki mentioned in I.E.'s comments on verse 31 (Weiser).

39. MEHETABEL THE DAUGHTER OF MATRED, THE DAUGHTER OF ME-ZAHAB. This is to be explained⁴⁹ in the same manner as we interpret *Oholibamah the daughter of Anah, the daughter of Zibeon* (v. 2).⁵⁰ On the other hand Scripture may be listing Mehetabel's mother and father.⁵¹

ME-ZAHAB. This was his name.⁵² However, Saadiah Gaon says that Me-Zahab means a goldsmith.⁵³ Others say Me-zahab alludes to those who make gold out of copper.⁵⁴ However, the latter is sheer nonsense.⁵⁵

40. [AND THESE ARE THE NAMES OF THE CHIEFS THAT CAME OF ESAU...AFTER THEIR PLACES] This means that their territories are well-known today (in the days of Moses). These are the words of Moses.⁵⁶ Those now mentioned are the offspring of the chiefs

⁴⁹ Scripture lists her as having two fathers, Metrad and Me-zahab.

⁵⁰ See I.E.'s comments on verse 2. Metrad was her father and Me-zahab her grandfather (Krinsky).

⁵¹ I.E. does not identify which one was the father and which one the mother (Krinsky).

⁵² That is, Me-zahab is a proper name.

⁵³ Our verse should thus be rendered: Mehetabel the daughter of Matred, the daughter of a goldsmith. Cf. Onkelos.

⁵⁴ That is, Me-zahab means an alchemist.

⁵⁵ The interpretation is nonsense (Cherez) or the belief in alchemy is nonsense (Krinsky).

⁵⁶ That is, verses 40-43. Until now Moses reported what had been Divinely revealed to him concerning Edom's past. In verses 40-43 he turns to his own generation and in *his own words* adds that the 11 chiefs of Edom (enumerated in verses 40-43) are now ruling each in his own territory.

mentioned above.⁵⁷ Only those that had their own territories are mentioned.⁵⁸

TIMNA. Here it refers to a male.⁵⁹ For we have many names which are used both for male and females. The same holds true for Oholibamah.⁶⁰ It is also possible that the word chief is superfluous,⁶¹ the interpretation of *the chief of Timna, the chief of Alvah, the chief Jetheth* being, the following are the chiefs of Timna, Eliphaz's concubine, Alvah and Jetheth. Alvah and Jetheth were chiefs of Amelek.⁶² There were seven chiefs of Oholibamah in the day of Moses. Each of these chiefs had his own territory. Hence Moses was explicit and added, *according to their habitations*.⁶³

⁵⁷ Verses 15-18 (Cherez).

⁵⁸ In verses 15-18, 14 chiefs are mentioned. In verses 40-43, 11 chiefs are mentioned. The names in verses 40-43 are not the same as those in 15-18. Hence I.E. points out that they were their sons. To explain why only 11 are mentioned in 40-43, I.E. posits that only those with a territory of their own are mentioned. After the death of the 14 mentioned in 15-18 their sons, mentioned in 40-43, became chiefs. Another possibility is that after the 14 mentioned above died, eight kings reigned and then the 11 mentioned in 40-43 became chiefs (Cherez). If the latter is correct, then when I.E. says that those in 40-43 are the offspring of those in 15-18 he means their descendants.

⁵⁹ Timna was the name of Eliphaz's concubine (v. 12); hence it is a female name. However, *the chief of Timna* was a male. Hence Timna can be either a male or female name.

⁶⁰ Oholibamah was the name of one of Esau's wives (v. 2). Hence it is a female name. However, *the chief of Oholibamah* was a male.

⁶¹ That is, Timna is a female name and refers to Timna, Eliphaz's concubine. The superfluous *chief* refers to the word *chief* prefixed to Alvah and Jetheth. The verse should thus be read: the chief of Timna, Alvah and Jetheth. The same applies to Oholibamah (Krinsky) or the word *chief* prefixed to Timna is superfluous. The verse should be read: Timna, the chief of Alva, the chief of Jetheth. The same applies to Oholibamah (Weiser).

⁶² Timna bore to Eliphaz Amalek (v. 12). Hence the chiefs of Timna, Alvah and Jetheth were chiefs of Amalek.

⁶³ Each of these chiefs had territories which bore their names and this was noted by Moses.

CHAPTER 37

VA-YESHEV

1. AND JACOB DWELT. The Bible tells us¹ that the chiefs of Esau dwelt on the mountain of Seir but that Jacob dwelt in the chosen land.²

[2.] The meaning of *These are the generations of Jacob* is: these are the events which befell him and the incidents which came upon him. *Toledot* (generations) comes from the same root as *yeled* (bring forth) in *What a day may bring forth* (*yeled*) (Prov. 27:1).³

BEING STILL A LAD, EVEN WITH THE SONS OF BILHAH, AND WITH THE SONS OF ZILPAH. The sons of the concubines (the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah) made Joseph their attendant (servant) since he was their younger brother. This was the *evil report of them* which he brought unto their father. Had the children of Leah, the mistress of the house, made Joseph their attendant, then no wrong would have been done.⁴ The view that *evil report* pertains to limbs torn from living

¹ In the previous chapter, verse 8.

² The purpose of our verse is to teach us that Jacob, in contrast to Esau, dwelt in the land of Israel.

³ *Toledot* is not rendered generations but events, as evidenced by the word of the same root, *yod, lamed, dalet* in Prov. 27:1.

⁴ Joseph would thus not have had any *evil report* of his brothers to bring unto their father.

animals is a Midrashic interpretation.⁵ That Joseph did not bring an evil report to Jacob concerning Leah's children is clear from the fact that Scripture only mentions the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah in our verse.⁶

3. BECAUSE HE WAS THE SON OF HIS OLD AGE. This is to be taken literally since Joseph was born to Jacob when the latter was ninety-one years old.⁷ Also, Benjamin, his brother, is referred to by Scripture as *a child of his⁸ old age* (Gen. 44:20). After Joseph and Benjamin no other children were born to Jacob.⁹

A COAT OF MANY COLORS. *Ketonet passim* means an embroidered coat.¹⁰

[MANY COLORS.] The word *passim* (many colors) is similar to the Aramaic word *pas* (part) in *part of* (*pas*) *a hand* (Dan. 5:5).

⁵ According to the Midrash Joseph told his father that his brothers ate limbs torn from living animals. Cf. *Bereshit Rabbah* 84:7.

⁶ Our verse mentions only the sons of Zilpah and the sons of Bilhah. Hence the pronominal suffix of *dibbtam* (report of them) must refer to Zilpah and Bilhah's sons. This comment is either a proof of what I.E. wrote above, viz., that Joseph spoke only about the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah (Krinsky), or its purpose is to negate a Midrashic statement to the effect that Joseph spoke ill only of Leah's children, viz., that he told Jacob that Leah's children refer to the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah as the children of slave girls (Filwarg).

⁷ Joseph was 30 when Pharaoh appointed him vizier over Egypt. Jacob came to Egypt nine years later, after the seven years of plenty and two of famine (Gen. 45:11). At that time Jacob was 130 years old (*Ibid.*, 47:9) and Joseph 39. Thus Jacob was 91 years older than Joseph (Cherez). I.E. notes that *ben zekunim* is to be taken literally, viz., son of old age, because the Midrash and Onkelos interpret it to mean a wise son. Cf. *Bereshit Rabbah* 84:8 and Rashi.

⁸ That is, Jacob's.

⁹ Hence these two are referred to as children of his old age (Krinsky).

¹⁰ *Vat. Ebr.* 38 reads: a coat made of embroidered parts. Some texts omit *embroidered coat*. According to I.E. *passim* means parts. The coat was made up of embroidered parts (strips) each of which was of a different color (Filwarg). For an alternate interpretation see Cherez.

4. SPEAK UNTO HIM. *Dabbero* is to be rendered speak unto him.¹¹

[PEACEABLY.] Even peaceably.¹²

7. BINDING. *Me'allemin* (binding) comes from the same root as *alummim* (sheaves). The noun sheave is also found in the feminine,¹³ compare, *bearing his sheaves* (*alummotav*) (Ps. 126:6).¹⁴

CAME ROUND ABOUT. *Tesubbenah* (came round about) comes from a root whose second and third letters are identical.¹⁵ The *bet* receives a *dagesh* to compensate for a missing *bet*.¹⁶

8. SHALT THOU INDEED REIGN OVER US? OR SHALT THOU INDEED HAVE DOMINION OVER US? Shall we set thee up as a king over us?¹⁷ Or shalt thou rule over us by force.¹⁸

[10.] AND HIS FATHER REBUKED HIM. When the word *ga'ar* (rebuked) is followed by a *bet* it means to rebuke.¹⁹ When it is not followed by a *bet* it means to destroy. Compare, *Behold, I will destroy* (*go'er*) *the seed for your hurt* (Mal. 2:3). On the other hand, it is

¹¹ *Dabbero* is the verb *dabber* (speak) plus the pronoun *oto* (him). However, they cannot be combined since one cannot say speak him. Hence I.E.'s comment that *dabbero* should be interpreted *dabber lo* (speak to him) (Filwarg). Cherez suggests that what I.E. means is that *dabbero* is not a combination of *dabber oto* but *dabber immo* (speak with him). See notes to Gen. 34:14.

¹² They did not speak to him concerning things about which they agreed (Weiser) or they did not even say how are you, to him (Filwarg).

¹³ *Alummim* (sheaves) is masculine.

¹⁴ *Alummotav* (his sheaves) is feminine.

¹⁵ Its root is *samekh, bet, bet*.

¹⁶ *Tesubbenah* is spelled with one *bet*. Thus a root letter is missing. The *dagesh* doubles the letter and thus compensates for the missing letter.

¹⁷ A king is chosen by the people. Hence I.E.'s comment (Krinsky).

¹⁸ A ruler is not chosen, he seizes power. Hence I.E.'s comment (Krinsky).

¹⁹ Our verse reads *va-yigar bo aviv* (and his father rebuked him). In our verse *ga'ar* thus precedes a *bet* and henceforth is to be translated as rebuked.

possible that the word *go'er* is used metaphorically in the aforementioned verse, its meaning being God will rebuke the seed and it will become frightened and not arise out of the ground.²⁰

I AND THY MOTHER. Thy mother refers to Bilhah his mother's handmaiden who raised him.²¹

11. KEPT THE SAYING. In his mind. This is also the correct meaning of *kept* in *They kept His testimonies* (Ps. 99:7).²²

13. HERE AM I. I will do as you say.²³

15. AND A CERTAIN MAN FOUND HIM. According to the plain meaning of the text a passer by found him.²⁴

16. WHERE THEY ARE FEEDING THE FLOCK. If you know.²⁵

17. TO DOTHAN. Dothan is spelled both with and without a *yod* in our verse. In either case it refers to one and the same place.

18. THEY CONSPIRED. *Va-yitnakkelu* (they conspired) means they had evil designs. *Nokhel* (dealeth craftily) in *But cursed be he that dealeth craftily* (*nokhel*) (Mal. 1:14) is similar.

²⁰ In other words the term *ga'ar* always means to rebuke.

²¹ Rachel was dead by then.

²² The meaning of Ps. 22:7 is that they kept the testimonies in mind so that they would at the appropriate time teach them to the children of Israel.

²³ If Jacob called Joseph then the proper response would be here am I, as in *Here am I, for thou didst call me* (I Sam. 3:6). However, in our verse it comes as a response to Jacob's command. Hence I.E.'s point that in our verse it has the meaning of: I am at your service (*Filwarg*).

²⁴ According to the Midrash it was an angel. Some Midrashim identify the angel as Gabriel. Cf. *Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer*, Chap. 38; *Targum Jonathan*, and Rashi.

²⁵ *If you know* either is implied or was actually said by Joseph and is left out of the text, our verse being abridged. The above has to be the case because otherwise why did Joseph assume the man knew where his brothers were keeping the sheep?

21. LET US NOT TAKE HIS LIFE. Our verse is similar to²⁶ *but his minister Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man* (Ex. 33:11), the meaning of which is: but his minister Joshua, the son of Nun, did the ministry²⁷ of a young man. The aforementioned verse must be so understood because Joshua was not at that time a young man.²⁸ Similarly our verse should be read as if written: let us not strike him a mortal blow thus taking his life.

23. THAT THEY STRIPPED. *Va-yafshitu* (that they stripped)²⁹ is a causative. They told him to take the coat off by himself.³⁰ *Ketonet* (coat) in Hebrew refers to a garment worn next to the skin. The brothers thus stripped Joseph of his garments and threw him naked into the pit.³¹

25. AND THEY SAT DOWN TO EAT BREAD. The nine brothers.³²

A CARAVAN OF ISHMAELITES. *Orechat* is to be rendered caravan as Onkelos does. A caravan is so called because it travels on the roads (*orechot*).

²⁶ Our verse literally reads: *lo nakkennu nefesh* (let us not take his life) which literally means, let us not strike him life. I.E. holds that this is short for, let us not strike him (*lo nakkennu*) a mortal blow (*makkat nefesh*).

²⁷ This has to be added to the text.

²⁸ Thus a *young man* is short for: did the service of a young man.

²⁹ *Va-yafshitu* is a *hifil*. *Hifil* is the causative form. Hence I.E. renders it: and they caused him to strip (Krinsky, Weiser and Cherez). For an alternate interpretation see Filwarg.

³⁰ Hence they caused him to strip.

³¹ According to Cherez, I.E. interprets the verse as follows: that they stripped Joseph of his coat (*ketonet*), i.e., of the garment worn next to the skin, and also of the coat of many colors. Joseph was thus left standing naked (Cherez). Cf. Rashi. However, Cherez's interpretation seems forced. It appears that I.E. identified the *ketonet passim* with the garment worn next to the skin.

³² Neither Reuben nor Benjamin was there.

SPICERY. Rabbi Moses Ha-Kohen the Spaniard³³ explains *nekhót* (spicery) to mean a precious thing. *Bet nekhót* (his treasure house) in *and showed them all his treasure-house* (*bet nekhót*) (II Kings 20:13) is similar. *Nekhót*³⁴ and *nekhót*³⁵ are similar because the *vav* and the *alef* are interchangeable since they are quiescent letters.³⁶

AND BALM. The word for balm is encountered in Scripture vocalized with a quiescent *sheva* beneath the *tzadi* (*utzri*).³⁷ We also find it vocalized with a *chataf kamatz* beneath the *tzadi*, viz., *Is there no balm* (*ha-tzori*) *in Gilead?* (Jer. 8:22). It also appears with the *tzadi* vocalized with a *cholem*, viz., *and honey, and oil, and balm* (*ve-tzori*) (Ezek. 27:17). Saadiah Gaon explained that *tzeri* (balm)³⁸ is a mixture of 75 roots. Others say that *tzeri* is a type of fruit. Still others say that it is either a fruit or the oil of a tree³⁹ that, according to Joseph ben Gurion,⁴⁰

³³ See notes to I.E.'s comments on Gen. 1:26.

³⁴ Spelled *nun, caf, alef, tav*.

³⁵ Spelled *nun, caf, vav, tav*. The problem is that the word is not so spelled in II Kings 20:13. Krinsky and Cherez suggest that since the word is pronounced *nekhót*, it is as if a *vav* is placed after the *caf*.

³⁶ The *alef* and *vav* in *nekhót* are not pronounced. Hence they are quiescent. I.E. refers to the *alef, vav, heh, yod* as quiescent letters (*otiyot ha-nach*) because they are not always enunciated.

³⁷ It is so found in our verse but not so found elsewhere in Scripture. I.E.'s basic point is that balm is spelled with a *sheva* in our verse, *tzeri*. However, there is an important grammatical aside in this note. I.E. calls our *sheva* a quiescent *sheva*, a *sheva nach*. However, according to standard grammatical usage a *sheva* following a long vowel is vocal. Thus our *sheva* should be a vocal *sheva*, a *sheva na*, and not a quiescent one. Therefore our word should be read *u-tzeri* and not *utzri*. William Chomsky points out that the vocal pronunciation of the *sheva* following a long vowel was introduced by the Kimchis and that the pre-Kimchi grammarians had no such concept. I.E.'s note seems to bear this out. Cf. W. Chomsky, "The pronunciation of the Sheva," *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, Vol. LXII, October, 1971. For an alternate interpretation see Cherez.

³⁸ He said that it is identical to an Arabic medicine called *triak* (Weiser).

³⁹ Balsam (Weiser).

⁴⁰ Jossipon. A medieval work based on Josephus.

was brought from Jericho to Egypt. However, Rabbi Ishmael⁴¹ says that it means resin. We will rely on the latter opinion.

AND LADANUM. Saadiah Gaon says that *lot* (ladanum) is the same fruit that in Arabic is similarly called with the addition of a *bet*.⁴² Perhaps it is so.

26. WHAT PROFIT. *Mah betza* means what profit. *Betza* (profit) is close in meaning to *chefetz* (desire). *What profit* (betza) *is there in my blood* (Ps. 30:10) is similar.⁴³

27. HE IS OUR BROTHER OUR FLESH. He is as our flesh⁴⁴ since we all came from one flesh.⁴⁵

28. AND THERE PASSED BY. When the Ishmaelite merchantmen passed by them.⁴⁶ Scripture refers to the Ishmaelites as Midianites because the Midianites are called Ishmaelites. The Book of Judges similarly says concerning the kings of Midian, *because they were Ishmaelites* (Jud. 8:24).

⁴¹ Cf. *Kritot* 6a; *Shabbat* 26a. However, in the Talmud this opinion is quoted in the name of Rabbi Simeon. Either there is a scribal error in our text or I.E. was quoting from memory.

⁴² *Belut* (Weiser).

⁴³ Ps. 30:10 continues, *Shall the dust praise Thee? Shall it declare Thy truth?* Hence what desire (*mah betza*) is there in my death? Similarly the meaning of *mah betza* in our verse is: what desire is there in slaying our brother.

⁴⁴ They obviously were not all one flesh. Hence what Judah meant was: he is as our flesh, even though he did not use the word as (Weiser).

⁴⁵ We all come from the same parents who became one flesh, as in I.E.'s comment on Gen. 2:22 (Weiser). However, they did not all have the same mother. Therefore the interpretation must be as follows: we all came from the same father.

⁴⁶ The *vav* of *va-ya'avru* (and there passed by) is to be rendered when rather than and. The meaning of the verse is: when the Midianite (Ishmaelite) merchantmen passed by, they drew and lifted Joseph out of the pit (Krinky). I.E.'s point is that the Midianites in our verse refers to the caravan of Ishmaelites of verse 25. Thus *va-ya'avru* does not introduce new material. Hence I.E.'s paraphrase: when, etc. (Filwarg).

30. AND AS FOR ME, WHITHER SHALL I GO? *Ani* (I) is used twice in this clause⁴⁷ even though one *ani* would have sufficed.⁴⁸ The latter is in keeping with Hebrew style.

33. WITHOUT DOUBT TORN IN PIECES. *Toraf* (torn) is a *pu'al*. The *tet* is vocalized with a *cholam*⁴⁹ because it precedes a *resh* which cannot receive a *dagesh*.⁵⁰ *Morak*⁵¹ (scoured) in *it shall be scoured* (u-morek), *and rinsed in water* (Lev. 6:21) is similar.

35. AND HIS FATHER WEPT FOR HIM. Our sages interpreted this as referring to Isaac.⁵² The truth is that Isaac did not die until Joseph reached the age of twenty-nine.⁵³ Some say that the prophetic spirit was removed from both Jacob and Isaac because of their mourning.⁵⁴ They offer proof from Elisha.⁵⁵

⁴⁷ The Hebrew literally reads: And I, whither shall I go.

⁴⁸ Scripture could have read: and whither shall I go.

⁴⁹ Rather than a *kubbutz* as is the rule in the *pu'al*. Hence the reading *toraf* rather than *turaf*.

⁵⁰ All middle root letters in the *pu'al* receive a *dagesh*. However, the *resh* cannot receive a *dagesh*; thus the preceding vowel changes from a *kubbutz* to a *cholam*.

⁵¹ It, too, is a *pu'al*, and because the middle letter is a *resh* the preceding letter is vocalized with a *cholam*.

⁵² *Bereshit Rabbah* 84:19. According to the Midrash *his father* refers to Jacob's father. Isaac was overcome with grief over Jacob's trouble.

⁵³ Thus from this point of view the Midrashic interpretation is possible. I.E.'s accounting is as follows: Isaac was 60 when Jacob was born (Gen. 25:26). Jacob was 91 when Joseph was born (see note 7). Thus Isaac was 151 when Joseph was born. Isaac died at the age of 180 (Gen. 35:28), at which time Joseph was 29 years old as Isaac was 151 years older than Joseph. Joseph was 17 when he was sold. Thus Isaac lived 12 years past the year in which Joseph was sold (Weiser).

⁵⁴ The question arises, why didn't Jacob and Isaac, two prophets, know that Joseph was alive?

⁵⁵ That a prophet cannot prophesy when in a state of depression. Cf. II Kings 3:15. Before Elisha, who was then depressed (see Kimchi, *ad hoc*), prophesied he said, *But now bring me a minstrel. And it came to pass, when the minstrel played that the hand of the Lord came upon him.*



AND ALL HIS DAUGHTERS. His daughter and granddaughter.⁵⁶

[TO THE GRAVE.] *She'olah* means down below, i.e., to the grave. Here the one who translated the Bible for those who err⁵⁷ erred in translating *she'olah* as to hell.⁵⁸ Proof of his mistranslation is, *For the nether-world (she'ol) cannot praise Thee...They that go down into the pit cannot hope for Thy truth* (Is. 38:18).⁵⁹ Also in Ps. 139:8, heaven is the antithesis of *she'ol*,⁶⁰ viz., *If I ascend up into heaven, Thou art there; If I make my bed in the nether-world (she'ol) behold Thou art there*. Similarly Job states, *The nether-world (she'ol) is naked before Him* (Job 26:6).⁶¹ There are many other verses which prove that *she'ol* does not refer to hell.

36. THE CAPTAIN OF THE GUARD. The term *tabbach* (guard) is used both with reference to killing⁶² and with reference to cooking.⁶³ Onkelos' rendition is correct.⁶⁴

⁵⁶ Dinah his daughter and Sarah the daughter of Asher, as grandchildren are considered children. I.E. comments so because Jacob had only one daughter.

⁵⁷ Jerome who translated the Bible into Latin for the Christians.

⁵⁸ Jerome renders *she'ol* as inferno. However, see Rashi who writes, "The Midrashic interpretation of *she'ol* is gehenna."

⁵⁹ In this verse pit is parallel to *she'ol*. *She'ol* thus must mean pit.

⁶⁰ Thus *she'ol* is the opposite of heaven (sky); it refers to a place on the earth, i.e., the grave.

⁶¹ The verse concludes, *And destruction (the grave) hath no covering*. Now *she'ol* is parallel to destruction (grave). Hence it, too, must mean grave.

⁶² Cf. Dan. 2:14, *The captain of the king's guard (rav tabbachyya) who was gone forth to slay the wise men of Babylon*.

⁶³ Cf. I Sam. 9:24 where the term *tabbach* means cook, viz., *And the cook (ha-tabbach) took up the thigh*.

⁶⁴ Onkelos renders *sar ha-tabbachim* as the chief executioner.

CHAPTER 38

1. AND IT CAME TO PASS AT THAT TIME. This does not refer to the time that Joseph was sold.¹ It refers to the events that happen prior to that time. *From thence they journeyed unto Gudgod...At that time the Lord separated the tribe of Levi, to bear the ark of the covenant of the Lord, to stand before the Lord to minister unto Him, and to bless in His name, unto this day* (Deut. 10:7, 8) is similar.² The tribe of Levi was chosen to minister unto the Lord in the second year while Israel journeyed to Gudgod in the fortieth year.³ I will explain the latter verses in their proper place. Why, then, did Scripture insert this chapter (Chap. 38) at this point when logic dictates that *And Joseph was brought down to Egypt* (Gen. 39:1) should follow *And the Midianites sold him (Joseph) into Egypt* (Gen. 37:36)?⁴ The Bible placed this chapter (38) here to contrast the behavior of Joseph vis-a-vis his master's wife with that of Judah toward his daughter-in-law.⁵ What forced me to offer this interpretation is the fact that only twenty-two years passed between the sale of Joseph and the descent of our ancestors into Egypt.⁶ Now we

¹ As the sequence of chapters would tend to indicate.

² The two events described in the latter verse did not take place at the same time even though Deut. 10:8 says, *At that time*.

³ Following the Exodus.

⁴ That is, Chap. 39 should follow Chap. 37.

⁵ Joseph controlled his passions. When Potiphar's wife said to him, *Lie with me* (Gen. 39:7) he refused. On the other hand when Judah saw the harlot in the entrance to Enaim he said to her, *Come, I pray thee, let me come in unto thee* (Gen. 38:16).

⁶ Joseph was 17 when sold. He was 30 when appointed vizier over Egypt. Jacob came to Egypt after seven years of plenty and two of hunger passed. Thus a total of 22 years passed from the sale of Joseph to Jacob's descent into Egypt (Cherez). It is impossible for the events described in Chap. 38 to have occurred in such a short time.



learn in this chapter of the birth of Onan, Judah's second son,⁷ and his reaching the age of procreation, which at the very earliest starts at the age of 12. Scripture goes on to state, *And in the process of time* (v. 12).⁸ The chapter then tells us that Tamar conceived and gave birth to Perez. This same Perez came to Egypt with two sons of his own (Gen. 46:12).⁹ Do not be disturbed by the question of Bezalel,¹⁰ for I will explain it when I come to it.

⁷ The point is that not only does Scripture tell of the birth of Er, the eldest son of Judah, it also tells of the birth of and marriage of his second son, Onan, as well. Er was at least close to a year older than Onan. Thus at least 13 years had to pass between the sale of Joseph and the marriage of Onan and Tamar.

⁸ The Hebrew literally reads, *and the days became many*. That is, following Onan's death Tamar, his widow, dwelt in her father's house for a long time.

⁹ We thus have to allow at least 13 years for the birth and marriage of Onan. We have to allow for the years that Tamar spent in her father's house. We have to allow 12 years for Perez's coming of age and two each for the birth of his sons. All of this could not have happened in 22 years, even assuming the above minimum figures.

¹⁰ According to the Talmud the early generations produced children at the age of eight. If this is the case then it is possible for all of the above to have taken place in 22 years: namely, Er was married in the ninth year after Joseph's sale. A year later Onan married. Tamar then stayed for many days in her father's house. We can interpret many days to mean a year. Eight years later Perez gave birth to a son and a year later to a second one. Thus it is possible for all that is reported in Chap. 38 to have taken place between the sale of Joseph and the descent into Egypt.

The Talmud concludes from the account of Bezalel that the early generations had children at the age of eight. We read in *Sanhedrin* 69b: "Whence do we know that the first generations produced children at eight years? This is to be inferred from the following: *Bezalel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah* (Ex. 35:30), and it is written: *And Caleb (the son of Hezron) took unto him Ephrath, who bore him Hur. And Hur begot Uri, and Uri begot Bezalel* (I Chron. 2:19, 20). When Bezalel was engaged in building the Tabernacle he was at least 13 years old as it is written, *came every man from his work which they wrought* (Ex. 36:4) and one is not called a man before the age of 13. And there is a Baraitha which states: The first year Moses prepared all that was necessary for the Tabernacle, and in the second year he erected it and sent the spies. And it is written: *And Caleb the son of Jephunneh said...Forty years old was I when Moses the servant of the Lord sent me from Kadesh-barnea* (Josh. 14:6, 7) Now deduct 14, the age of Bezalel, from the age of Caleb when he was sent as a spy and there remains 26. Deduct two years for the three pregnancies with Uri and Hur and Bezalel, and there remains 24. Hence each of them produced children at the age of 8." It should be noted that the above is based on identifying Caleb ben Hezron (I Chron. 2:18-20) as Caleb ben Jephunneh (Josh. 14:6, 7). However, according to I.E. these two Calebs were not the same. Hence, the entire Talmudic passage quoted above is Aggadic and not in keeping with the plain meaning of the text.

2. A CERTAIN CANAANITE. Some say that *kena'ani* (Canaanite) means a merchant,¹¹ as in *As for the trafficker* (*kena'an*), *the balances of deceit are in his hand* (Hos. 12:8) and in, *and in that day there shall be no more a trafficker* (*kena'ani*) *in the house of the Lord of Hosts* (Zech. 14:21), wherein the word trafficker is spelled with a *yod* as in our verse. However, it is possible that the word *kena'ani* is to be taken literally.¹²

Our sages said, *that Judah went down* (v. 1) means that Judah was demoted from his leadership.¹³ However, this is a Midrashic interpretation. The Bible says that Judah went down because whoever goes from north to south is going down.¹⁴ Those acquainted with science will understand that what I say is correct.

5. AT CHEZIB. Chezib is the name of a place.

8. AND PERFORM THE DUTY OF A HUSBAND'S BROTHER UNTO HER. This means, since you are her husband's brother, show yourself to be a husband's brother¹⁵ by going *unto thy brother's wife*. I will expound a little on levirate marriage when I come to the portion, *If brethren dwell together* (Deut. 25:5), if God prolongs my life till then.

9. THAT THE SEED WOULD NOT BE HIS. The seed would not be called by his name,¹⁶ as we find in *And it shall be, that the first-born*

¹¹ The commentators were bothered by Judah marrying a Canaanite woman. Hence their interpretation.

¹² It means a Canaanite.

¹³ He thus went down from his exalted position. Cf. *Soteh* 13b.

¹⁴ North is above south. I.E. was of the opinion that Jacob and his family dwelt north of Adullam (Weiser).

¹⁵ The verse reads, *ve-yabbem* (and perform the duty of a husband's brother). A brother-in-law is called a *yavam*. *Yabbem* is its verbal form. It does not make sense to translate *ve-yabbem*, and be a husband's brother, when in fact he is a husband's brother. Thus *ve-yabbem* has to be rendered, show yourself to be a husband's brother (Filwarg).

¹⁶ The child would be called the son of Er (Krinsky).



that she beareth shall succeed in the name of his brother that is dead (Deut. 25:6).

THAT HE SPILLED IT ON THE GROUND. He destroyed¹⁷ the seed of his semen by pouring it outside of the vagina, on the ground. I am shocked by Ben Tamim Ha-Mizrachi¹⁸ who interpreted *ve-shichet artzah* (that he spilled it on the ground) to mean that Er had unnatural intercourse with Tamar so that she would not conceive.¹⁹ Er thus *shichet artzah* (corrupted her ground),²⁰ i.e., the place upon which she sits on the ground.²¹ This interpretation is sheer madness.²² Heaven forbid that the holy seed become defiled with such filth.

GIVE SEED. *Neton* (give) is here conjugated according to the paradigm of a regular verb.²³

11. REMAIN A WIDOW IN THY FATHER'S HOUSE. The prepositional *bet* has been omitted from before the *bet* of the word

¹⁷ The Hebrew literally reads: *ve-shichet* (and he destroyed) *artzah* (to the ground). I.E. interprets this to mean he destroyed his semen by pouring it on the ground.

¹⁸ Adoniyahu ben Tamim Ha-Mizrachi, a grammarian and Bible commentator who lived in Iraq. He is also mentioned by I.E. in Eccles. 12:5.

¹⁹ He had anal intercourse with her.

²⁰ Ben Tamim renders, *ve-shichet artzah*, he dealt corruptly with her ground.

²¹ Ground is a euphemism for anus (Weiser).

²² *Artzah* means toward the ground. If there was a *mappik* in the *heh* it would mean her ground. But there is no such *mappik* in the *heh* (Krinsky).

²³ The root of *neton* is *nun, tav, nun*. In the infinitive the first and last *nuns* are usually dropped; i.e., the infinitive of this root is *tet*, as in Gen. 4:12. However, in *neton* the *nuns* are present. Hence in this case the root *nun, tav, nun* is conjugated as a *shelamim*, a regular verb.

use.²⁴ We find the same type of omission in *that was found in the use (bet) of the Lord* (II Kings 18:15).²⁵

12. AND JUDAH WAS COMFORTED. After Judah received condolences²⁶ for his wife's death he *went up unto (al) his sheep arers*. *Al* is to be understood as *el* (unto).²⁷

14. AND COVERED HERSELF. *Ve-tekhas* is a transitive verb. It is and covered herself.²⁸

AND WRAPPED HERSELF. The meaning of *va-titallaf* (she wrapped herself) is she hid her face. *Va-yitallaf* (Jonah 4:8) is similar. Meaning is, Jonah hid his face in his garments. Similar in meaning to our verse and Jon. (4:8) is the word *me'ullefet* (overlaid) in *aid* (me'ullefet) *with sapphires* (Cant. 5:14).

AT THE ENTRANCE OF ENAIM. Enaim is the name of a place. I say that there were two springs with a door-like entrance on the which Judah had to pass on his return to his home.²⁹

verse literally reads: Remain a widow, your father's house. I.E. points out that optional *bet* is omitted from before the word *bet* (house) and has to be supplied by the reader. Thus *bet* (house of) had to be read as if written *be-vet* (in the

verse literally reads: that was found house of the Lord. Here, too, the optional *bet* has to be supplied by the reader and the word to be read as if written

parently explains comforted in a technical rather than an emotional sense. his wife's burial Judah's friends expressed condolences and comforted him. thus comforted.

as on. Our verse literally reads: And went up on (*al*) his sheep-shearers, I comment.

nsitive verb is not followed by the object. In our verse *va-tekhas* (covered) covered by the object. I.E. points out that even though *va-tekhas* is not the object it is transitive and the object has to be supplied by the reader, *va-tekhas*, and she covered herself.

g to this interpretation *enaim* is the plural of *ayin* (a spring) and *petach* should thus be rendered: at the entrance of the wells.

15. FOR SHE HAD COVERED HER FACE. This explains the meaning of *va-titallaf* (and wrapped herself) (v. 14).³⁰ Someone who explains *for she had covered her face* to mean that she covered her face with a variety of colored cosmetics and brought proof of this from his daughter³¹ is speaking nonsense, for one ought not to offer proof from fools.³² That which our sages say concerning Tamar's chastity in her father-in-law's house is also correct.³³

18. THY SIGNET. Because of Judah's great lust he gave three objects as a pledge for something insignificant. I will explain the meaning of *kedeshah* (harlot) (v. 21) in my comments on *There shall be no harlot (kedeshah) of the daughters of Israel, neither shall there be a sodomite (kadesh) of the sons of Israel* (Deut. 23:18).

23. LET HER TAKE IT. Forget about her and let her keep the pledge.

LEST WE BE PUT TO SHAME. Lest I be a laughing stock, for giving a signet, cord and staff for something so insignificant.

[BEHOLD, I SENT THIS KID, AND THOU HAST NOT FOUND HER.] This is a sign that she wants to keep the pledge.³⁴

⁰ We can ascertain that the meaning of *va-titallaf* means to cover the face from our lause, as it is the manner of Scripture to explain later a previously used term (Weiser).

¹ She wore cosmetics (Filwarg). His daughter put so much cosmetics on her face at she was unrecognizable. Tamar acted similarly.

² If she put on so much make up that she was unrecognizable then she was a fool d one is not to bring proof from her.

Cf. *Sotah* 10b: "She covered herself in her father-in-law's house." Judah thus had never seen her face and therefore could not now recognize her (Nahmanides).

Her not making herself available for payment is a sign that she intends to keep the

24. ABOUT THREE MONTHS LATER. When one speaks of three months a *mem* is prefixed to the word three.³⁵ When one speaks of three days a *mem* is suffixed to the word three.³⁶

25. WHEN SHE WAS BROUGHT FORTH. If the *alef* of *mutzet* was not quiescent as is the grammatical rule, the word would have followed the paradigm of *muda'at* (made known) in *This is made known* (*muda'at*) (Is. 12:5).³⁷

26. FORASMUCH AS I GAVE HER NOT. The expression *ki al ken* (for as much) has the same meaning as the Rabbinic term *ho'il* (since), as in *forasmuch* (*ki al ken*) *as I have seen thy face* (Gen. 33:10). The meaning of our clause is: since I gave her not to Shelah my son. Or its meaning is, she did this because I gave her not to Shelah my son.³⁸

AND HE KNEW HER AGAIN NO MORE. He did not sleep with her again.

28. THAT ONE PUT OUT A HAND. One of them put out a hand. The latter is not identified by name because he was not yet named. This birth, too,³⁹ was out of the ordinary in that both placentas opened simultaneously and when this one drew back his hand, his brother came out.

³⁵ Hence the term *mishlosh* (three months) in our verse.

³⁶ Hence the term *shilshom* (three days ago) (Cherez). The Hebrew word for three is *shalosh*.

³⁷ If a *chet* or *ayin* would have been used then our word would be so vocalized since it is a *hofal* participle. The *alef* is vocalized with a *tzere* because it is a quiescent letter (Cherez).

³⁸ In other words, the words *she did this because* are missing from the text. The verse should be read as if written *ki al ken asetah zot ki*, for therefore she did this thing because, etc. According to this interpretation, *ki al ken* has the meaning *for therefore* i.e., it is an idiom pleonastically emphasizing the ground for an action.

³⁹ As the birth of Jacob and Esau were.

29. WHEREFORE HAST THOU MADE A BREACH. *Mah paratzta, alekhah paretz* means, wherefore hast thou acted like a man who breaches a fence and goes through it. You are now responsible for the breach.⁴⁰ Others say that *paratzta* is the same as *u-faratzta* (and thou shalt spread abroad) (Gen. 28:14).⁴¹

Saadiyah Gaon explains that *paratzta* is to be interpreted literally as meaning to make a breach but that *paretz* in *alekhah paretz* has the same meaning as *va-yifrotz* (it hath increased) in *and hath increased* (*va-yifrotz*) *abundantly* (Gen. 30:30).⁴²

⁴⁰ "You are responsible for the breach" means that should any harm befall your twin because of your audacity you will bear responsibility (Krinsky).

⁴¹ The meaning of *mah paratzta, alekhah paretz* (wherefore hast thou made a breach for thyself) being, wherefore hast thou spread abroad, indeed thou wilt spread abroad (Filwarg).

⁴² According to Saadiyah, the meaning of *mah paratzta, alekhah paretz* is, wherefore hast thou made a breach, indeed thou wilt increase (Filwarg).

CHAPTER 39

6. HE KNEW NOT AUGHT SAVE THE BREAD WHICH HE DID EAT. Some say that *the bread which he did eat* is a euphemism for a conjugal relationship.¹ However, this interpretation is far-fetched. Furthermore, Potiphar was a eunuch.² I believe that what this verse says is that Potiphar put Joseph in charge of everything that he had except for his bread, which Joseph was not permitted even to touch because he was a Hebrew, as we see from the verse *because the Egyptians might not eat bread with the Hebrews; for that is an abomination unto the Egyptians* (Gen. 43:32). Potiphar knew that Joseph was a Hebrew. Potiphar's wife similarly said, *See, he hath brought in a Hebrew unto us to mock us* (v. 14).³

AND JOSEPH WAS OF BEAUTIFUL FORM. Like his mother.

[10. TO LIE BY HER.] To just lie next to her,⁴ or *to be with her*, to converse with her.

11. AND IT CAME TO PASS ON A CERTAIN DAY. On the same day that she had first asked him to lay with her.⁵ It was on this same day

¹ Cf. Rashi.

² Cf. verse 1, *Potiphar seris parah*. I.E. interprets *seris parah* (an officer of Pharaoh) as Pharaoh's eunuch. If he was a eunuch then *the bread which he did eat* obviously cannot refer to sexual intercourse.

³ Which proves that his master knew that Joseph was a Hebrew.

⁴ That is, just to lie next to her, "to lie next to her while both are fully clothed" (Nahmanides).

⁵ The Hebrew literally reads: And a day like this came to pass, i.e., a day like the one described above, that is, the day that she said, "lie with me."

a week later, or a month later or a full year later. The latter appears correct to me.

TO DO HIS WORK. To supervise the housework or to oversee his master's wealth, for Joseph was in charge of everything. The Midrash pertaining to *and there was none of the men*⁶ is an individual opinion.⁷

14. HE HATH BROUGHT UNTO US. That is, my husband.⁸

19. THAT HIS WRATH WAS KINDLED. Potiphar nevertheless did not kill Joseph because he wasn't certain as to the truth of his wife's accusation.

21. PRISON. We can not ascertain whether *bet ha-sohar* (the prison) is a Hebrew or Egyptian word in view of the fact that the Bible goes on to explain its meaning⁹ as it does with the Persian word *ha-achashteranim* (that were used in the King's service) which is followed by the Hebrew *bene ha-rammakhim* (bred of the stud)¹⁰ (Est. 8:10).

22. AND WHATSOEVER THEY DID THERE, HE WAS THE DOER OF IT. Some interpret this to mean that Joseph, like all the other prisoners, was engaged in work to support himself.¹¹ However, I believe that the meaning of our verse is: and whatsoever they had to do

⁶ The Hebrew literally reads: and there was no man. According to *Tanchuma, Va-yeshev*, 9, Joseph wanted to have intercourse with Potiphar's wife but found himself impotent (Weiser and Krinsky according to one interpretation). Or the reference may be to *Soteh* 36b, that he wanted to have intercourse with Potiphar's wife but his father's image appeared before him and as a result Joseph refrained from sinning. Thus *and there was none of the men of the house there within* but his father's image was there.

⁷ Hence it is not binding.

⁸ Our verse is short for: my husband hath brought unto us (Weiser).

⁹ Were it a Hebrew word there would be no reason to explain *the place where the King's prisoners were bound*.

¹⁰ According to I.E. *bene ha-rammakhim* is Hebrew for *achashteranim*.

¹¹ That is, whatever they did he did.

there he was, as it were, the doer of it, because he was their supervisor. The next verse bears out the latter interpretation.¹²

¹² Verse 23 relates that *the keeper of the prison looked not to anything that was under his hand*, which implies that Joseph did not actually do any work, but supervised the others.

CHAPTER 40

1. OFFENDED. They committed an offense (*chet*) in a matter of state.¹ The fact that the *samekh* of *sarisav* (his officers) retains its *kamatz* is proof that the *resh* of *saris* (officer) should have received a *dagesh*, and since it cannot the *samekh* was vocalized with a long *kamatz* to compensate for the missing *dagesh*.²

3. AND HE PUT THEM IN WARD IN THE HOUSE OF THE CAPTAIN OF THE GUARD. A place where they would be guarded so they would not escape.

4. AND THE CAPTAIN OF THE GUARD CHARGED. When these two officers were put in a ward in the house of the captain of the guard, the latter remembered (*pakad*)³ Joseph; i.e., he recalled his

¹ According to Cherez. Weiser suggests rendering: They committed an offense punishable by the state.

² Words vocalized with a *kamatz* beneath their first letter in the singular are vocalized with a *sheva* under their first letter in the plural; i.e., *nagid* becomes *negidim*. *Saris* does not follow this rule. Its plural is *sarisim*, not *serisim*. Hence the word presents a problem. I.E. suggests that *saris* belongs to the group of nouns vocalized *pattach-chirik*. The latter retain their *pattach* in the plural; i.e., *kabbir* becomes *kabbirim*. I.E. points out that *saris* should have been vocalized with a *pattach* beneath the *samekh* but due to the fact that a *resh* cannot receive a *dagesh* (a *dagesh* usually follows a *pattach*), the *samekh* was vocalized with a *kamatz* to compensate for the missing *dagesh*. Hence *saris* retains its *kamatz* in the plural.

³ In this interpretation *va-yifkod* (charged) is translated as remembered. Thus according to this interpretation, *And the captain of the guard charged* (*va-yifkod*) *Joseph* is to be rendered: *And the captain of the guard remembered* (*va-yifkod*) *Joseph*.

abilities⁴ and brought him to his house⁵ and placed him in a dungeon⁶ which is the ward spoken of in our verse. The latter is the opinion of the great grammarian.⁷ However, I believe that the prison was in the house of the captain of the guard and Joseph was there to begin with. Proof of this is Scripture's explicit statement, *And he put them...into the prison, the place where Joseph was bound*. What our verse relates is that the captain of the guard commanded (charged)⁸ Joseph to be with the butler and baker and serve them because they had high status in Pharaoh's palace insomuch as they were officers of the king.

5. AND THEY DREAMED. The meaning⁹ of *each man according to the interpretation of his dream* is that each one of them saw in his dream details that could be interpreted to foretell what would happen in the future.¹⁰

⁴ He remembered that Joseph was able to relate to nobles (Weiser). Filwarg interprets: remembered the Joseph episode, i.e., that Joseph, like the butler and the baker, offended his master. Krinsky explains: he remembered Joseph's words protesting his innocence and decided to place him in a prison whose conditions were better. The Hebrew reading of I.E. is *zakhar devarav*.

⁵ According to this interpretation Joseph was originally in a different prison and was now brought to the one in the home of the captain of the guard.

⁶ Cf. verse 15.

⁷ Jonah Ibn Janah.

⁸ I.E. so translates *va-yifkod* as charged.

⁹ Reading *ta'am* rather than *ke-ta'am* (Filwarg, Krinsky). The aforementioned is borne out by *Vat. Ebr.* 38 which reads, *ve-ta'am*.

¹⁰ There was no part of the dream that did not allude to something. There was no nonsensical part in the dream. Every part of the dream had a meaning and was interpretable (Filwarg based on the reading of I.E. quoted by Nahmanides which is borne out by *Vat. Ebr.* 38). Our printed texts read, "Each one saw the interpretation of the dream and what happened to him" The problem with this reading is, if they saw the interpretation of their dream in their nocturnal vision why, then, did they turn to Joseph for its interpretation? Hence we have translated according to *Vat. Ebr.* 38.

6. SAD. *Zo'afim* (sad) means agitated, as is the meaning of the word *zapo* (its rage) in *and the sea ceased from its raging* (mi-zapo) (Jon. 1:15).¹¹

AND JOSEPH CAME IN UNTO THEM. It is possible that Joseph used to sleep in the dungeon at night.¹²

8. [DO NOT INTERPRETATIONS BELONG TO GOD.] Its meaning is that the interpretations of dreams belong to the Lord because He knows the future. He has revealed what is going to come to pass in a dream to one whom He selected and it therefore makes no difference whether I interpret the dream for good or ill. Since this is so, and all interpretations belong to God, do not be concerned about telling me your dreams.¹³ The Rabbinic statement that all dreams follow the interpretation is the opinion of an individual sage.¹⁴

10. ITS BLOSSOMS SHOT FORTH. *Nitzah* (its blossoms) is the same as *henetzu* (be in flower) in *And the pomegranates be in flower* (hanetzu) (Cant. 7:13).

AND THE CLUSTERS THEREOF BROUGHT FORTH RIPE GRAPES. *Hivshilu* (brought forth ripe) is the opposite of *boser* (sour grapes).¹⁵ *Bashal* (is ripe) in *For the harvest is ripe* (bashal) (Joel 4:13)

¹¹ Both words come from the same root.

¹² The prison had a number of levels. Joseph's quarters were in the lowest. He spent his nights in the dungeon and his days with the other prisoners (Krinsky).

¹³ The point is, only God knows the future and what He knows will come to pass. Hence my interpretation can in no way influence the outcome of your dream. What will be, will be.

¹⁴ Rabbi Elazar in *Berakhot* 55b. According to the latter a dream's meaning depends on its interpretation. This contradicts I.E. Hence, I.E. says that Rabbi Elazar's opinion is not binding.

¹⁵ I.E. could not find a synonym for ripe. The only way he could define it was by contrasting it with its opposite.

is similar. The two words are similar even though *hivshilu* in our verse and *bashal* belong to different conjugational paradigms.¹⁶

11. AND PRESSED THEM. *Va-eschat* (pressed) is similar to *shochate* (slay) in *That slay (shochate) the children in the valleys* (Is. 57:5). Saadia Gaon's interpretation of *va-eschat* is wrong.¹⁷

12. THE INTERPRETATION OF IT. *Pitrono* (the interpretation of it) means its explanation. The term *pitrono* is not found in Scripture except in reference to a dream.¹⁸

Some ask, how did Joseph know that the three branches refer to three days and not to three months or three years? Because *yom hulledet et paroh* (v. 20)¹⁹ possibly means the day on which Pharaoh was born.²⁰ For today there are kings who make a party on their birthday and invite their servants and distribute gifts to them. It is also possible that the queen was pregnant.²¹ The first interpretation appeals to me.

¹⁶ *Hivshilu* is in the *hifil*, *bashal* is in the *kal*. Both mean ripened.

¹⁷ This is a very difficult comment to unravel. The most acceptable interpretation is offered by Filwarg. According to Filwarg, I.E. maintains that *va-eschat* does not mean to press or squeeze as Saadia Gaon says (this interpretation is accepted by J.P.S. and all others) since the word is not found elsewhere in the Bible. The word *sachat*, meaning to squeeze, is found in Rabbinic literature, but there it is spelled with a *samakh* and not with a *sin*. I.E. notes that the word *shachat* spelled with a *shin* or *sachat* spelled with a *sin* as in our verse means the same, to cut, hence to slay by cutting the throat. Thus our verse should be rendered: And I cut the grape so that its juice ran. It is also possible that in I.E.'s copy of Isaiah *shochate* was spelled with a *sin*, i.e., he read *sochate*, and what I.E. is doing is noting that *va-eschat* is like *sochate*. For additional interpretations see Cherez and Weiser.

¹⁸ Hence it means the interpretation of a dream. It cannot be used in any other context (Cherez).

¹⁹ Translated according to Filwarg, Weiser and Cherez. According to Krinsky the question raised in I.E. is not answered. The way Krinsky read I.E. is: I.E. asks, "How did Joseph know that the three branches refer to three days?" He then goes on to explain the meaning of the clause *yom hulledet et paroh*.

²⁰ Joseph knew that Pharaoh's birthday would be in three days and it was obvious to him that the branches referred to this festive event (Filwarg, Weiser, Cherez).

²¹ And that *yom hulledet et paroh* means the day that a child was born to Pharaoh. It was known that the queen was in her ninth month and Joseph reasoned that the "three branches" referred to the days left till she delivered.

13. SHALL PHARAOH LIFT UP THY HEAD. *Yissa* means shall lift up.²² In its correct sense, *yissa* means to lift up by counting.²³ Proof of this is Scripture stating, *and he lifted up (va-yissa) the head of the chief butler and the head of the chief baker among his servants* (v. 20).²⁴ I will explain this term in my comments on the Torah portion *Ki Tissa* (Ex. 30:12).²⁵

THINE OFFICE. *Kannekha* means thy previous station, thy place,²⁶ thy state.²⁷ *Kannekha* most likely comes from the same root as *ken* (a base, a pedestal) (I Kings 7:29). The word *kanno* (in his place) in *Then shall stand up in his place* (*kanno*) (Dan. 11:20) is analogous.

15. OUT OF THE LAND OF THE HEBREWS. I will explain this in my comments on *If thou buy a Hebrew servant* (Ex. 21:2).

When the term *hinneh* (behold) is found in Scripture following a dream, its meaning is *as it were*.²⁸

²² Pharaoh will raise the chief butler from his fallen state.

²³ See note 25.

²⁴ Here the term *va-yissa* must mean and he counted because Pharaoh did not exalt the chief baker.

²⁵ In his short commentary on Ex. 30:12, I.E. points out that one who counts people lists them in a row and places the most important at the top. Thus when Pharaoh will count his servants he will have a list of his butlers and bakers made. The name of the chief butler will head the list of butlers and that of the baker the list of bakers. Thus to "lift up" means to count. However, it does so only in a specific sense. It is not a mere synonym for counting. It should be noted that some commentaries maintain that I.E. is of the opinion that to lift up is another way of saying to count. Cf. Krinsky and Cherez.

²⁶ Hebrew *mekhunatekha*. Compare, *mekhunatah* in Zech. 5:11.

²⁷ Hebrew *matkuntekha*. Compare, *matkunto* in II Chron. 24:13. I.E. is saying is that *kannekha* (thine office) is similar to *mekhunatah* and *matkunto*. However, I.E. changes the pronominal suffixes.

²⁸ *Hinneh* (behold) applies to something real. However, when used to describe what one saw in a dream it means: as it were, as if. Cf. Gen. 28:12; 37:7-10; 41:2-6, 18-23.

16. THREE BASKETS OF WHITE BREAD. Saadiah Gaon says that *chori* means white bread, as in *the nobles* (chore)²⁹ of Judah (Neh. 6:17).

[19.] WITHIN YET. *Be'od* (within yet) is to be translated before again.³⁰ Its meaning is: such a time³¹ will not again pass without this happening.

SHALL PHARAOH LIFT UP THY HEAD FROM OFF THEE. He will lift it up from its place. It means he will remove it or raise it up on a pole.³²

20. BIRTHDAY. *Hulledet* (birth) is an infinitive in the *hofal*.

21. UNTO HIS BUTLERSHIP. *Mashkehu* (his butlership) here is a noun.³³ However, *mashkehu* in *when thou wast his butler* (*mashkehu*) (v. 13) is a verb.

23. YET DID NOT THE CHIEF BUTLER REMEMBER JOSEPH. He did not verbally mention him to Pharaoh.³⁴ The words *tizkeru* (shall ye mention) and *zakhar* (he remembered), in *And the burden of the Lord*

²⁹ Cf. I.E.'s comment on Gen. 36:20 where he writes, "Nobles are called *chorim* (literally, the white ones) because they are metaphorically speaking as the color white which resembles light."

³⁰ *Od* means again. The *bet* prefixed to it means before. Thus *be'od* means before again (within yet), and the meaning of *be'od sheloshet yamim* (within yet three days) is before three days again pass. I.E. makes this point because Onkelos translates *be'od*, after yet. Thus Onkelos renders *be'od sheloshet yamim* at the end of three days.

³¹ Three days.

³² The point is that the Hebrew word *yissa* may mean to remove or to raise up (*Cherez*).

³³ Here *mashkehu* means his drink. The meaning of our verse is: And he restored the chief butler back to being in charge of his drink. In verse 13 it means, gives him to drink.

³⁴ According to I.E. *zakhar* (usually translated remembered) here means mentioned, as in *make mention of me* (ve-hizkartani) unto Pharaoh (v. 14).

shall ye mention (tizkeru)³⁵ *no more* (Jer. 23:36) and *he remembered* (zakhar) *Vashti* (Est. 2:1), are similar.

BUT FORGOT HIM. In his heart.³⁶

³⁵ Literally, shall ye remember.

³⁶ Thus the verse tells us that the butler not only failed to mention Joseph to Pharaoh, he totally forgot about him.

MI-KETZ

1. AND IT CAME TO PASS AT THE END OF TWO FULL YEARS. Scripture does not indicate the point from which these two years are reckoned. *And it came to pass at the end of forty years* (II Sam. 15:7), *And within threescore and five years* (Is. 7:8), and *Now it came to pass in the thirtieth year* (Ezek. 1:1)¹ are similar. However, it is possible that Scripture's point of reckoning is the chief butler's release from prison or the day that Joseph was put into prison.

[FULL.] I have already explained the meaning of *yamim* (full).²

THAT PHARAOH DREAMED. That is, was dreaming. Compare, *And Rebekah heard* (Gen. 27:5).³

2. IN THE REED-GRASS. Some say that *achu* (reed-grass) means a valley with plants.⁴ Others say that *achu* is the name of a certain type of

¹ In all these verses Scripture doesn't indicate the point from which the reckoning starts.

² Cf. I.E.'s comments on Gen. 4:4.

³ The Hebrew literally reads: that Pharaoh dreams (*u-faroh cholem*), hence I.E.'s comment. See I.E.'s comments on Gen. 27:5 and the notes thereto.

⁴ Hence our phrase is to be rendered: they fed in the growth covered valley.

plant and⁵ the *bet* of *ba-achu* is superfluous.⁶ It is similar to the *bet* of *va-merorim* in, *He hath filled me with bitterness* (*va-merorim*) (Lam. 3:15).⁷ According to both of these interpretations *achu* here and *achim* in *For though he be fruitful among the reed-plants* (*achim*) (Hos. 13:15) are related and come from one root.⁸

5. EARS OF CORN. *Shibbolim* (ears of corn) is a feminine plural even though it ends in a *mem*.⁹ It is similar to *nashim* (women) and *pilagshim* (concubines).¹⁰

6. AND BLASTED. *U-shedufot kadim* means they were blasted by a wind coming from the east for *kadim* means east. East is so termed because the sun rises there first.¹¹

Ha-mele'ot (full) has the same meaning as *ha-beri'ot* (rank).¹²

⁵ So *Vat. Ebr.* 38.

⁶ If we interpret *achu* as valley then the *bet* of *ba-achu* serves a purpose; it stands for "in the." Thus *ba-achu* means in the growth covered valley. However, if *achu* is the name of a plant then the *bet* is superfluous, for one cannot say they fed in the plant (whatever plant *achu* might be). According to the latter interpretation our verse is to be translated: and they fed upon *achu*.

⁷ Hebrew usage requires the verse to read *merorim* rather than *va-merorim*.

⁸ I.E. literally reads, "It (*achim* in Hosea) is its brother (*achiv*) the son of his mother." I.E. plays with *achim* (valley or plant) and *ach* (brother). His point is that both come from the same root, that our word is in the singular, and that in Hosea it is in the plural (Cherez).

⁹ Which ordinarily indicates that a word is a masculine plural.

¹⁰ Both of which are feminine plural nouns with masculine endings.

¹¹ *Kedem* means first. Cf. Is. 23:7; Ezek. 38:17. I.E. makes this point because *kedem* can also mean front. However, a circular object (the earth) has no front (Krinsky). *Shedufot kadim* can be rendered as blasted by the east. Hence I.E. points out that east refers to an east wind.

¹² Verse 5 reads *beri'ot ve-tovot* (rank and good). Similarly verse 7 reads, *ha-beri'ot ve-ha-mele'ot* (rank and full). I.E. points out that *beri'ot* when referring to ears of corn means full because the term *bari* (rank), which means fat, can only be used when referring to animals; i.e., one cannot speak of a fat plant. Hence I.E. points out that here *bari* means full (Filwarg). Thus *beri'ot ve-tovot* means the same as *mele'ot ve-tovot*. On the other hand I.E.'s comment may pertain only to verse 7. In this case I.E. is pointing out that the Bible there uses two synonyms, *mele'ot* and *beri'ot*, for full (Weiser).

8. THAT HIS SPIRIT WAS TROUBLED. *Va-tippa'em* (was troubled) is a *nifal*. It is similar to *nifamti*¹³ in *I am troubled* (*nifamti*) and cannot speak (Ps. 77:5). Others say¹⁴ that both *va-tippa'em* and *nifamti* come from the same root as *pa'am* (anvil)¹⁵ in *that smiteth the anvil* (*pa'am*) (Is. 41:7). Its meaning is that his spirit was like a beaten body.¹⁶

MAGICIANS OF. *Chartume* (magicians of) comes from a quadrilateral root.¹⁷ However, it is possibly an Aramaic or Egyptian word. It means a scientist.¹⁸

AND ALL THE WISE MEN THEREOF. Men learned in astrology and dream interpretation.

9. MY FAULTS. Even though I will recall my faults.¹⁹

10. PHARAOH WAS WROTH WITH HIS SERVANTS. I believe that Pharaoh is an adjective²⁰ and not a proper name. It is an Egyptian

¹³ Which is a *nifal*. The *nun* of the *nifal* is missing in *va-tippa'em* because it is an imperfect with a conversive *vav*, and the *nun* of the *nifal* is dropped in the future and is compensated by a *dagesh* in the first letter of the root.

¹⁴ The "others" do not dispute what has been said until now. They explain the meaning of the word, whereas the first interpretation gave the conjugation of the word (*Cherez*).

¹⁵ The meaning of *va-tippa'em rucho* (that his spirit was troubled) thus is: that his spirit was beaten.

¹⁶ It was pained and troubled. Spirit is immaterial and cannot be beaten. However, it may be compared to a beaten body. His spirit was beaten as if it were a body (Weiser). Hence the verb *va-tippa'em* (was beaten) can govern *rucho* (his spirit).

¹⁷ Its root being *chet, resh, tet, mem*.

¹⁸ Weiser.

¹⁹ It is not fitting to recall one's offenses before the king. Nevertheless, in this case I must (Krinsky). I will tell you of an interpreter, even though I have to recall my faults (Cohen).

²⁰ What I.E. means by "adjective" is an adjectival noun, a descriptive term like *melekh* (king). Cf. I.E.'s comments on Gen. 1:1 and the notes thereto.



word. It is a title as Hiram in Tyre.²¹ Similarly in our day all great Arab kings are called "prince of the believers." Hence we find a Pharaoh in the days of Abraham and a Pharaoh in the days of Joseph.²² We also read that a Pharaoh died and a new Pharaoh arose.²³ Similarly we find a Pharaoh in the days of Jeremiah.²⁴ Do you not see that Scripture itself explains that Pharaoh is a term for the king of Egypt,²⁵ as evidenced by the terms Pharaoh Hophra and Pharaoh Neco,²⁶ wherein Hophra and Neco are proper nouns.²⁷ Do not raise any objection from the Midrash concerning Solomon's throne,²⁸ for the king of Egypt did not take it to Egypt.²⁹ Additional proof³⁰ is found in the statement of the chief butler, *Pharaoh was wroth*, and in Joseph's statements, *God will give Pharaoh an answer of peace* (v. 16); *He hath shown unto Pharaoh* (v. 28); and

²¹ According to I.E., Hiram is not a proper noun. It is a term like Pharaoh or *melekh*. We thus find a Hiram in the days of David (II Sam. 5:11) and in the days of Solomon (I Kings 5:15) (Krinsky).

²² They obviously were not the same person.

²³ Ex. 1:8.

²⁴ Jer. 44:30.

²⁵ The Bible in a number of places explains that Pharaoh is a king of Egypt. Cf. Ex. 6:13, 29; Jer. 44:30. Filwarg questions this reading and suggests emending it. According to Filwarg we should translate, "Do you not see that Scripture does not explain the term Pharaoh. It does not do so because Pharaoh is a title for the kings of Egypt." According to Filwarg, I.E.'s point is that the Bible usually does not identify the Pharaoh because it is known to be a title for the king of Egypt. If Pharaoh was a proper name, king of Egypt would follow it.

²⁶ Jer. 44:30; 46:2.

²⁷ Therefore Pharaoh must be an adjective.

²⁸ According to the Midrash, *Va-yikra Rabbah* 20, Pharaoh Neco means Pharaoh the lame. Thus *Neco* is an adjective. According to the Midrash this Pharaoh tried to sit on Solomon's throne, which had been brought to Egypt by an earlier Pharaoh named Shishak, and had his leg bitten and broken by a lion, hence the name Pharaoh Neco, Pharaoh the lame.

²⁹ King Solomon's throne was never brought to Egypt as it is not included among the spoil taken by Shishak. Cf. I Kings 14:25, 26.

³⁰ That Pharaoh is not a proper noun.

Let Pharaoh do this (v. 34).³¹ It is not in keeping with proper etiquette to mention the king by name.

ME AND THE CHIEF BAKER. The word *me* is mentioned twice in this verse in keeping with Hebrew usage. Compare, *and as for me, whither shall I go* (Gen. 37:30).³²

11. EACH MAN ACCORDING TO THE INTERPRETATION OF HIS DREAM. I have previously explained this.³³

13. I WAS RESTORED. By Pharaoh.³⁴ Or its meaning is, Joseph's word³⁵ or Joseph's interpretation restored me and hanged him.³⁶

14. AND THEY BROUGHT HIM HASTILY. Pharaoh's messengers.

AND HE SHAVED HIMSELF. Someone shaved him.³⁷

³¹ Thus these verses prove that Pharaoh is not a proper noun.

³² See I.E.'s comments on Gen. 37:30 and the notes thereto. Our verse reads, *and put me...me and the chief baker*.

³³ I.E. explains the meaning of *each man according to the interpretation of his dreams* in his comments on Gen. 40:5.

³⁴ The verse literally reads: *me he restored (oti heshiv), him he hanged (oto talah)*. The question is, to whom does "he" refer. According to the first interpretation it refers to Pharaoh, according to the second, to Joseph.

³⁵ Since Joseph said it, it was as if he had done it (Filwarg). Or Joseph's saying it was the cause of it (Krinsky).

³⁶ Joseph, by so interpreting, caused it to happen (Krinsky).

³⁷ Our verse reads, *va-yegakkach*. If Joseph shaved himself Scripture would have used the *hitpa'el va-yitgallach* rather than the *pi'el va-yegallach* (Cherez), the meaning of which is, and he shaved. However, *va-yegallach* presents a problem. The subject is missing. Hence I.E. notes that it should be rendered: and someone shaved him. According to Krinsky, I.E. is of the opinion (for the aforementioned reasons) that our verse is abridged and the reader has to supply the subject. Our verse should thus be rendered: and the shaver shaved him. I.E.'s note consists of one word, *ha-megalle'ach* (the shaver).

16. IT IS NOT IN ME. *Biladai* (it is not in me) is a compound of two words.³⁸ *It is not in me* refers to *And I have heard say of thee that when thou hearest a dream thou canst interpret it* (v. 15). When Joseph heard Pharaoh say this he replied, *it is not in me, but God will give Pharaoh an answer of peace via my interpretation*.³⁹ Others say that when Joseph heard Pharaoh say, *thou canst interpret dreams*, Joseph replied, I am not (it is not in me) the interpreter; God is, and He will give the king an answer of peace.⁴⁰

[WILL GIVE AN ANSWER.] The meaning of *ya'aneh* (will give an answer) is, He will always provide. Compare, *ma'aneh in for God answereth him* (*ma'aneh*) *in the joy of his heart* (Eccles. 5:19), and *ta'aneh in And the earth shall respond* (*ta'aneh*) (Hos. 2:24). Nevertheless, the word is close to its primary meaning.⁴¹

[19. POOR AND VERY ILL-FAVORED.] In relating the dream Pharaoh added the word *dallot* (poor), and in place of *mareh* (favored) he used the term *to'ar* (favored) because their meanings are similar.⁴²

³⁸ It is a compound of *bal* (not) and *ade* (unto).

³⁹ The problem is what does *biladai* (it is not in me) refer to. According to this explanation *biladai* refers to the power to interpret dreams. The power to interpret dreams is not in me, it comes from God (Cherez).

⁴⁰ According to this interpretation *biladai* means not I, and refers to the interpreter (Cherez). It should be noted that I.E. is vague and that Krinsky, Kaputa and others interpret differently.

⁴¹ Its primary meaning is to answer. When one provides, he, as it were, answers (Cherez). For an alternate translation see Weiser.

⁴² In verse 3 we read that Pharaoh saw *ill-favored* (*ra'ot mareh*) and *lean fleshed* kine in his dream. In our verse Pharaoh describes them as *poor and very ill-favored* (*ve-ra'ot to'ar me'od*) and *lean fleshed*. I.E. says there is no discrepancy in the descriptions because adding a word or using a synonym does not change the meaning. He further expands on this point in his comments on Ex. 20:1 where he uses this argument to explain why there are two different versions of the Ten Commandments in the Pentateuch.

21. BUT THEY WERE STILL ILL-FAVORED. Each one of the kine was ill-favored.⁴³ Here Pharaoh expanded in his description of his dream and added that after the ill-favored kine had eaten the fat kine, *they were still ill-favored as at the beginning*.⁴⁴

23. WITHERED. The word *tzenumot* (withered) is not found elsewhere in Scripture. Its meaning is the same as that of *rekot* (empty).⁴⁵ Others say that *tzenumot* means images,⁴⁶ for that is its meaning in Arabic.

29. GREAT PLENTY. *Sava* (plenty) is a noun. It is like *ra'av* (famine).⁴⁷ Hence the one who says in his Sabbath prayers⁴⁸ *u-ve-sova kilkaltanu* errs because *sova* spelled with a *vav* is an infinitive.⁴⁹ The correct way to read this prayer is without a *vav*, viz., *u-ve-sava* (and in plenty) *kilkaltanu* (thou sustained us).

⁴³ *Marehen* (favored) is a plural; *ra* (ill) is a singular. Thus *marehen ra* is a combination of singular and plural. I.E. explains this by noting that it means each one of the kine was ill-favored. This is how the medieval grammarians explained this type of combination (Weiser).

⁴⁴ When the dream was first described in verse 4, it was not indicated that after swallowing the seven fat kine, the seven lean ones *were still ill-favored as at the beginning*. Here, unlike verse 19, the addition is significant. The entire verse consists of Pharaoh's elaboration of his dream.

⁴⁵ Joseph in verse 27 refers to the ears as *rekot* (empty). In our verse they are described as *tzenumot*. According to I.E., Joseph substituted a synonym. I.E. explains these substitutions in his comments on verse 19.

⁴⁶ In a manner of speaking images are imitations. Similarly applying this concept these things were in the shape of ears but empty on the inside (Krinsky). Or images have no practical use, neither did these ears (Cherez). Weiser suggests that what I.E. says is that images are hard; these, too, were hard and could not serve as food. According to the latter interpretation I.E. agrees with Rashi who interprets *tzenumot* as hard.

⁴⁷ Both *sava* and *ra'av* are nouns.

⁴⁸ In the *nishmat* prayer.

⁴⁹ The prayer reads, *during famine* (*ra'av*) *thou didst feed us, and didst sustain us in plenty* (p. 419, *The Authorized Prayer Book*, trans. by J. H. Hertz). Plenty is parallel to famine. As *ra'av* is a noun so its parallel must be a noun. Hence the correct reading is *sava* and not *sova*.

31. [AND THE PLENTY SHALL NOT BE KNOWN IN THE LAND.] Joseph based this on *but they were still ill-favored as at the beginning* (v. 21).

32. AND FOR THAT THE DREAM WAS DOUBLED. *Hishanot* (was doubled) is a *nifal*. It comes from the same root as *shenayim* (two). Its meaning is the dream coming twice, once with kine as its symbol and then with ears of corn as its symbol, also attests⁵⁰ that *the thing is established by God*. Furthermore, the occurrence of the two dreams in one night is proof that *God will shortly bring it to pass*.⁵¹

34. LET PHARAOH DO THIS. *Ya'aseh paro* (literally let Pharaoh do) is short for let Pharaoh do according to the following council. Or *ya'aseh* (do) means get, like *asah* in *My power and the might of my hand hath gotten* (*asah*) *me this wealth* (Deut. 8:17).⁵²

AND TAKE UP THE FIFTH PART OF THE LAND. Let him buy a fifth of the produce of the land.

35. AND LAY UP CORN. The overseers.

Some say that *bar* (corn) refers to corn in its ears.⁵³ However, I think that *bar* is the term applied to the corn after it has been fanned and

⁵⁰ Not only do the kine and the ears allude to seven years of plenty and famine, they also indicate that the decree is established by God; i.e., it is unchangeable.

⁵¹ The dream could have come on two different nights. The fact that it occurred twice in one night is proof that God is bringing it about soon. Our verse reads: *The dream was doubled...twice*. This appears redundant; hence I.E. explains *was doubled* came in two versions, *twice*, twice in one night. *It is because the thing is established by God* corresponds to *was doubled*; and *and God will shortly bring it to pass* corresponds to *twice*.

⁵² According to this interpretation *ya'aseh paro* means let Pharaoh get. Also according to this interpretation the object is missing. It should be read: Let Pharaoh get wheat (Weiser).

⁵³ Grain that has not been purified from its stubble (Weiser).

cleansed.⁵⁴ To the one who says that the Egyptian air is damp because of the Nile and it is impossible for corn to last there for seven years, we reply that it is possible to mix corn with preservatives.⁵⁵

38. CAN WE FIND SUCH A ONE AS THIS. *Nimtza* (we find) is a *nifal* perfect and the meaning of *ha-nimtza kha-zeh ish* (can we find such a one as this) is, was such a one as this ever found in the world. It is also possible that the *nun* of *nimtza* is a first person plural prefix.⁵⁶ In this case the word *ha-nimtza* (can we find) relates to what Pharaoh said to his servants.⁵⁷

40. THOU SHALT BE OVER MY HOUSE. Thou shalt be chief over my house.

SHALL BE RULED. The *shin* of *yishak* (shall be ruled) has a *dagesh* to compensate for the missing *nun* of *neshek* (arms),⁵⁸ its meaning being Joseph will be commander of the army.⁵⁹ Others say that *yishak* is related to *neshikah* (kiss).⁶⁰ However, the latter is far fetched.

⁵⁴ Grain whose impurities have been removed. I.E. is paraphrasing Jer. 4:11. Our texts read, fanned or cleansed. *Vat. Ebr.* 38 reads, fanned and cleansed. We have followed the latter.

⁵⁵ According to *Bereshit Rabbah* 90:5 this is precisely what Joseph did.

⁵⁶ A *nun* is prefixed to the Hebrew root in the first person plural imperfect. According to this interpretation *nimtza* is a *kal*.

⁵⁷ The meaning of the phrase is, can we find such a one as this. The point is that *nimtza* can either be a third person singular *nifal* perfect or a first person plural *kal* imperfect. In the first instance it means was found, and relates to *kha-zeh ish* (such a one as this); in the second, it means we will find, and it relates to Pharaoh and his servants.

⁵⁸ *Yishak* is a denominative of *neshek* (arms), and means will be armed.

⁵⁹ I.E. translates *and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled* as, and according unto thy word shall all my people be armed. Hence Joseph will be chief of the army.

⁶⁰ All the people will pay homage to Joseph by kissing him on the mouth (*pikha*) (*Filwarg*). Krinsky suggests translating it, thy word shall all my people kiss. Literally, *pikha* means thy mouth.

ONLY IN THE THRONE WILL I BE GREATER THAN THOU. It is known that *egdal* (I will be greater) is an intransitive verb. The meaning of *rak ha-kisse egdal mi-mekka* is, I will not be greater than you except for the dignity of the throne.⁶¹

The word *gedelani* (he grew up with me) in *Nay from my youth he grew up with me* (*gedelani*) *as with a father* (Job 31:18) is not a transitive verb⁶² but an intransitive verb meaning he grew up with me. The juxtaposition of an intransitive verb (*egdal*) with the direct object (*kisse*) is found elsewhere in Scripture.⁶³ Compare, *For ye shall be as a terebinth whose leaf fadeth* (*ke-elah novelet aleha*) (Is. 1:30);⁶⁴ and *and ye perish in the way* (*ve-tovedu derekh*) (Ps. 2:12).⁶⁵

41. SEE, I HAVE SET THEE OVER ALL THE LAND. I have set thee above all the land of Egypt.

42. VESTURES OF FINE LINEN. I have explained the meaning of *shesh* (fine linen) in my comments on the Torah portion *ve-yikchu li terumah* (that they take for me an offering).⁶⁶

A GOLD CHAIN. *Revid* (chain) is like *marvadim* (coverlets) in *I have decked my couch with coverlets* (*marvadim*) (Prov. 7:16).⁶⁷

⁶¹ *Egdal* being intransitive refers to Pharaoh and not the throne.

⁶² Meaning, brought me up. If *gedelani* was transitive it would disprove I.E.'s contention that *egdal* is intransitive since they are both *kals*.

⁶³ That is, found elsewhere in Scripture with a similar meaning, i.e., meaning, with regard to (Weiser, Krinsky). Usually only a transitive verb is connected to a direct object (Weiser). Hence I.E. points out that our verse is not unique.

⁶⁴ *Novelet* (fadeth) is intransitive, *aleha* (its leaves) is the object. I.E. renders *novelet alehah* as, which is withering with regards to its leaves.

⁶⁵ *Ve-tovedu* (you shall perish) is intransitive. *Derekh* (way) is the object. According to I.E. the meaning of *ve-tovenu derekh* is, and you shall perish with regard to the way. Similarly the meaning of our verse is, I will be greater than you with regard to the throne (Krinsky).

⁶⁶ I.E. in Ex. 25:24 writes that *shesh* is white linen made from a type of flax which grows in Egypt.

⁶⁷ I.E. explains *revid* (chain) to mean a coverlet (Krinsky, Weiser).

43. THE SECOND. *Mishneh* (the second) comes from the same root as *shenayim* (two). The king is like the numeral one, next comes the *mishneh* which means second to him, and afterward the *shalish* (adjutant) which means the same as *shilishi* (third).⁶⁸

CHARIOT. A wooden chariot pulled by four horses,⁶⁹ as is evidenced by the chariot of Solomon.⁷⁰

ABRECH. Every man called before him, I will bend the knee (*avrekh*)⁷¹ and I will bow down. The word *avrekh* is a *hifil*. However, the word *va-yivrahh* in *and kneeled down* (*va-yivrahh*) *upon his knees* (II Chron. 6:13) is a *kal*. Both words come from the same root, *birkayim* (knees).⁷²

Rabbi Jonah, the Spanish grammarian,⁷³ said that *avrekh* is an infinitive, with an *alef* taking the place of the *heh*,⁷⁴ as we find in the word *ashkem* in *sending them betimes* (*ashkem*) *and often* (Jer. 25:4).⁷⁵

⁶⁸ I.E. points out that *mishneh* means second in rank and *shalish* third in rank (Netter). *Mishneh* can be taken to refer to the chariot, as Rashi interprets. Hence I.E. points out that *mirkevet ha-mishneh* (the second chariot) is to be rendered: the chariot of the second in rank (Cherez).

⁶⁹ Some interpret *mirkevet* (chariot) to mean a horse or mule. Cf. Rashi.

⁷⁰ We read in I Kings 10:29, *And a chariot* (*merkavah*) *came up and went out of Egypt for six hundred shekels of silver, and a horse for a hundred and fifty*. Now four times 150 gives 600. Hence each chariot had four horses.

⁷¹ *Avrekh* is a first person singular. However, the verb preceding it, *va-yikre'u* (and they cried), is a plural. Thus rather than *avrekh* we would expect *navrekh*, hence I.E.'s comment.

⁷² Its root is *bet*, *resh*, *caf*.

⁷³ Ibn Janah.

⁷⁴ That is, *avrekh* is a variant of *havrekh*. This answers the question raised in note 70. According to this comment *avrech* is not a first person singular but rather an infinitive. The verse thus reads: and they cried before him, bend the knee (*havrekh*). This is also the opinion of Kimchi.

⁷⁵ Wherein *ashkem* is to be interpreted as if written *hashkem*. I.E. quotes Jer. 25:4, *sending them betimes and often*. However, in this verse the word for betimes is written *hashkem* with a *heh*. The reference therefore must be to Jer. 25:3 (speaking betimes and often) where the word for betimes is written *ashkem* with an *alef*. Either we have a scribal error or I.E. quoted from memory and erred.

However, I believe that the *alef* of *ashkem* is a first person future prefix.⁷⁶

44. I AM PHARAOH. I alone am king and aside from you no one is permitted to act freely.⁷⁷

[HIS FOOT.] The meaning of *his foot* is permission to go any place.⁷⁸ It may also be a figurative expression.⁷⁹ The latter is its correct meaning.

45. ZAPHENATH-PANEAH. If this is an Egyptian word then we don't know what it means.⁸⁰ On the other hand, if this is a Hebrew translation of Joseph's Egyptian name then we don't know what Joseph's Egyptian name was. In the latter case⁸¹ the meaning of *paneah* is in accordance with Onkelos' translation,⁸² and it is a quadriliteral.⁸³

PRIEST OF ON. The term *kohen* (priest) can be applied to one who serves the Lord or to one who serves idols, for I believe that when this term is used in Scripture it means one who ministers.⁸⁴

⁷⁶ In other words a *heh* has not been substituted for an *alef*, its meaning being: I arose and spoke (Krinsky). Hence we cannot use Jer. 25:3 as an analogy for a *heh* being substituted for an *alef*.

⁷⁷ I remain king. However, everyone else will be subservient to you (Cherez).

⁷⁸ *Vat. Ebr.* 38. The same applies to *his hand*; i.e., no one may do anything without your (Joseph's) permission (Weiser).

⁷⁹ His hand or his foot is not to be taken literally but means do anything significant or insignificant (Weiser).

⁸⁰ Since we don't understand ancient Egyptian we cannot unravel its meaning.

⁸¹ If *Zaphenath-paneah* is Hebrew.

⁸² Onkelos renders *paneah* as revealed. He renders *zaphenath-paneah*, a man before whom all secrets (*tzefunot*) are revealed.

⁸³ Its root being *peh*, *ayin*, *nun*, *chet*.

⁸⁴ I.E.'s point is that *kohen* does not mean a priest of the Lord; it means any priest. Hence *kohen on* means priest of On.

AND JOSEPH WENT OUT. His name went out, as in *And thy renown went forth among the nations* (Ezek. 16:14).⁸⁵ Or it means he went out and traveled throughout the land and they announced who he was that he might become known.⁸⁶

48. ALL THE FOOD. All is not to be taken literally, for if it were, then all should have starved to death. *All in And all countries came* (v. 57) is similar.⁸⁷ The meaning of *And he gathered up all the food* is: and Joseph gathered as much of the food as he could.

51. FOR GOD HATH MADE ME FORGET. Its meaning is, because he said *God hath made me forget*.⁸⁸ Rabbi Judah, the first Hebrew grammarian,⁸⁹ says that *nashani* (made me forget) follows the paradigm of *channani* (dealt graciously with me) (Gen. 33:11).⁹⁰ However, Rabbi Moses Ha-Kohen, the Spaniard, says that (in *nashani*) a *pattach* has been substituted for the *chirik*.⁹¹

⁸⁵ That is, Joseph was renowned throughout the land. Literally: And thy name went forth among the nations. "Thy name" meaning thy renown.

⁸⁶ Taking *And Joseph went out* literally and not applying it to his name.

⁸⁷ It is not to be taken literally. It doesn't mean each and every individual came.

⁸⁸ This is an abridged statement as "because he said" has to be added between *Manasseh* and *for God* etc. Cf. I.E.'s comment on Gen. 26:7.

⁸⁹ Rabbi Judah ibn Hayyuj (c. 940-1010), the first Hebrew grammarian to put forth the idea that all Hebrew words come from a three letter root. He is considered the father of the science of Hebrew grammar (Weiser).

⁹⁰ *Channani* comes from the root *chet, nun, nun*. Similarly *nashani* comes from the root *nun, shin, shin*. They are both *kals*.

⁹¹ According to this opinion, *nashani* is a *pi'el* coming from the root *nun, shin, heh*. Compare, *tzivvani* whose root is *tzadi, vav, heh*. The problem is that the first letter of a *pi'el* perfect is vocalized with a *chirik*, and *nashani* is vocalized with a *pattach*, hence Rabbi Moses' explanation that a *pattach* has been substituted for a *chirik*. Thus *nashani* is a variant of *nishani*.

54. AND THE SEVEN YEARS OF FAMINE BEGAN. *Va-techillénah* is a *kal* and comes from a root whose second and third letters are identical.⁹²

IN ALL LANDS. All the lands adjacent to Egypt.⁹³

56. AND JOSEPH OPENED ALL. The storehouses which they had.⁹⁴

AND SOLD UNTO THE EGYPTIANS. It means he gave corn (*shever*) to the Egyptians.⁹⁵ *Va-yishbor* refers to a corn purchase.⁹⁶

57. TO JOSEPH TO BUY CORN. The clause is inverted⁹⁷ and must be understood as: And all the countries came into Egypt to Joseph to buy corn.

⁹² Its root is *chet, lamed, lamed*. This comment presents difficulties. *Techillénah* is obviously a *hifil*. If it were a *kal* it would be vocalized *techullénah*. Furthermore, this word is never encountered in the Bible in the *kal*. The entire comment is missing in *Vat. Ebr.* 38. Similarly S.D. Luzzato had manuscripts of I.E. which omitted this comment. For an attempt to justify this comment see Krinsky.

⁹³ Cf. *Bereshit Rabbah* 90:6, *the hunger was in three lands, Phoenecia, Arabia and Palestine*. The point is that if the hunger was in lands far from Egypt, how did they survive since they couldn't come to Egypt to buy food?

⁹⁴ The verse literally reads: And Joseph opened what was *ba-hem* (in them). I.E. interprets *ba-hem* to mean, had with them, i.e., their storehouses.

⁹⁵ *Va-yishbor* (and sold) is a denominative of corn or grain.

⁹⁶ The Egyptians purchased the corn. Hence Joseph sold it. Thus *va-yishbor* means, and he sold (Krinsky). *Va-yishbor* usually means, and he bought corn. This is the sense in which this root is used throughout Chap. 42 and in Is. 55:1. However, here *va-yishbor* seems to mean, and he sold corn. I.E.'s apparent solution to the problem is to explain that *va-yishbor* can apply either to the seller or to the buyer as the transfer of corn (*shever*) is effectuated by two individuals, the one giving (selling) the corn and the other buying it. The aforementioned is how Kimchi explains *va-yishbor* and it appears to be the meaning of I.E.'s comment (Cherez).

⁹⁷ It literally reads: to buy corn to Joseph.

CHAPTER 42

1. NOW JACOB SAW. Scripture interchanges¹ the way the senses² are referred to because they are all perceived in one central place.³ Thus Scripture says, *See the smell of my son* (Gen. 27:27);⁴ and *And the light is sweet* (Eccles. 11:7).⁵ *Now Jacob saw* is similar,⁶ for afterward Scripture states, *Behold I have heard that there is corn in Egypt* (v. 2).

WHY DO YOU LOOK ONE UPON ANOTHER. *Lammah titra'u* (why do you look one upon another) means, don't show yourselves as having an abundance of food.⁷ Or it may mean, do not quarrel with each other, as in *Come, let us look one another* (*nitra'eh*) *in the face* (II Chron. 25:17).⁸

2. AND BUY FOR US. *Ve-shivru lanu* means, and buy corn for us.⁹

¹ Scripture occasionally uses hear for see and see for smell.

² The five senses.

³ I.E. in his commentary on Eccles. 11:7 says that there is a place on the forehead where the senses are perceived.

⁴ Rather than smell the smell of my son.

⁵ Even though light cannot be tasted.

⁶ Now Jacob saw means, now Jacob heard.

⁷ Cf. Rashi, "Why do you show yourselves before the children of Ishmael and the children of Esau as having plenty to eat?" Why do you show yourselves is thus short for, why do you show yourselves as having an abundance of food.

⁸ I.E. translates *nitra'eh* in II Chron. 25:17 as fight. Thus the root *resh*, *alef*, *heh* which usually means to see, at times also means to fight or quarrel. Hence *titra'u* is similar to *nitra'eh*, i.e., it means to quarrel.

⁹ I.E. notes that *shivru* means to buy grain. He points this out because in Gen. 41:56 : means to sell grain.

4. HARM. Death.

6. THAT SOLD. *Ha-mashbir* (that sold) comes from the same root as *shever* (corn). It means the seller. It is a causative verb.¹⁰

7. BUT MADE HIMSELF STRANGE UNTO THEM. *Va-yitnakker* (but made himself strange) comes from the same root as *nokhri* (stranger). Its meaning is, he showed himself to be a stranger.

ROUGHLY. *Kashot* (roughly) is an adjective. Its meaning is rough words.¹¹ *Answereth impudent* (Prov. 18:23) is similar.¹²

AND HE KNEW THEM. When Joseph first saw the group he recognized them as his brothers.¹³ He then looked at each one of them and recognized them individually. The latter is the meaning of *And Joseph knew his brethren* (v. 8).¹⁴

9. THE NAKEDNESS OF THE LAND. Nakedness is a figure of speech for shame, since it is customary to hide one's nakedness because of its unseemliness.¹⁵ Or nakedness refers to secrets, since one's nakedness is covered. Joseph thus said to them, "You have come to learn the secrets of the land." I prefer the latter interpretation.

¹⁰ That is, it is a *hifil*. He caused the wheat to be sold (Weiser).

¹¹ The word "words" has to be added to the text. Thus rough (*kashot*) is short for rough words (Weiser). The Hebrew literally reads: and spoke rough (*kashot*) with them.

¹² Here, too, the word "words" is missing in the Hebrew. The verse should be understood as if written, answereth impudent words.

¹³ This is the meaning of *and he knew them*.

¹⁴ Our verse reads, *And He knew them*. Verse 8 states, *And Joseph knew his brethren*. I.E. interprets our verse as referring to the brothers as a group and verse 8 to each individual brother.

¹⁵ Nakedness thus means shame. Weiser takes I.E.'s comment at face value and explains that shame refers to the shame of the country. Cherez explains that shame refers to the areas of the country open to invasion. Be that as it may, according to this interpretation, the nakedness of the land means the shame of the land.

11. WE. *Nachnu* (we) is spelled without an *alef*. This is the correct form of the word.¹⁶

UPRIGHT. *Kenim* means truthful. It is possible that *kenim* comes from the same root as *ken* (so) in *So (ken) do, as thou hast said* (Gen. 18:5).¹⁷ Or *kenim* comes from the same root¹⁸ as *ken* (truth) in *The daughters of Zelophehad speak right* (ken) (Num. 27:7).¹⁹

16. AND YE SHALL BE BOUND. *He'aseru*²⁰ should be rendered: ye shall be bound. It is similar to *u-mot* (and die) in *and die in the mount* (Deut. 32:50).²¹

19. FAMINE OF YOUR HOUSES. Needed because of the famine of your houses.²² The meaning of *havi'u shever ra'avon batekhem* (carry corn for the famine of your houses) is, carry to your houses the corn needed because of the famine.²³

¹⁶ According to I.E. *nachnu* is primary, *anachnu* secondary, as the *alef* of *anachnu* is superfluous (Filwarg, Weiser, Cherez). Cf. I.E. on Lam. 3:42.

¹⁷ The meaning of *kenim anachnu* (we are upright men) is we are so, we are as we appear, that is, people who came to buy grain.

¹⁸ "Comes from the same root" means akin to or the same.

¹⁹ According to this interpretation *kenim anachnu* means, we are truthful men.

²⁰ *He'aseru* is an imperative meaning bind yourselves. Now one cannot bind oneself, that is, put oneself in prison (Krinsky). Also, Simeon was bound, he did not bind himself (Filwarg). Hence I.E. points out that even though *he'aseru* is an imperative, here it has the meaning of an imperfect.

²¹ *Die* is an imperative, but it has the meaning of an imperfect; i.e., it means you will die. See I.E.'s comments on Gen. 1:22.

²² The verse literally reads, *shever ra'avon* (corn famine). This makes no sense, so I.E. interprets, corn because of the famine.

²³ The verse literally reads, *havi'u shever ra'avon batekhem* (carry corn famine your houses). I.E. says that *havi'u* (carry) is to be connected to *batekhem* (your houses). Thus the meaning of the clause is: carry to your houses the corn needed because of the famine (Krinsky, Cherez).

21. VERILY. *Aval* (verily) has the same meaning as *aval* in *Verily* (aval) *Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son* (Gen. 17:19). It means verily (Gen. 28:16).²⁴

23. THE INTERPRETER. *Ha-melitz* means the interpreter. It is related to *melitzah* (figure of speech) (Prov. 1:6).

Joseph imprisoned Simeon because when many sin, the oldest is punished more severely than the others. He did not punish Reuben because he (Reuben) saved him.²⁵

Rabbi Moses Ha-Kohen says that the words *zahav* (gold) and *kesef* (silver) are never encountered in the plural.²⁶ However, he forgot that Scripture employs the term *kaspehem* (money) (v. 25).²⁷

[26. AND THEY LADED THEIR ASSES WITH THEIR CORN.] Which they had bought.

27. AND AS ONE OF THEM OPENED. *Va-yiftach ha-echad* means, and one of them opened. The reference is possibly to Reuben, as he was the first born. In this case *ha-echad* (one of them) means the first in number.²⁸

33. THE FAMINE OF YOUR HOUSES. Needed for the famine that is in your houses.²⁹

²⁴ The word *aval* also means but, however. Hence I.E. points out that here it means verily.

²⁵ Reuben was the eldest. However, he saved Joseph and Joseph had no reason to imprison him. Hence he punished Simeon who was second to the eldest.

²⁶ The reference must be to Scripture since we find plurals for gold and silver in Rabbinic literature. See *Baba Metzia* 42a; *Shemot Rabbah* 35.

²⁷ The singular would be *kaspam* (Filwarg).

²⁸ The term one (*ha-echad*) has the definite article prefixed to it. Thus it means the number one or the first one, that is, the eldest. If Scripture had meant one of them, it would have read *echad*.

²⁹ See I.E.'s comment on verse 19 and the notes thereto.

36. ALL THESE THINGS. All these troubles.

[37. THOU SHALT SLAY.] Some say that *thou shalt slay* means thou shalt punish.³⁰ Others say that this was a prayer to God.³¹ The sum of the matter is this, if Reuben would have spoken correctly Jacob would not have ignored him.³²

Thou shalt slay is hyperbolic. Reuben did not expect Jacob to kill his children.

Reuben directed the words *Thou shalt slay* to God, as if to say, Lord strike me dead *if I bring not him to thee* (to Jacob). This interpretation, too, seeks to get rid of the problem of Reuben telling his father to kill his grandchildren if he fails to protect Benjamin safely.

Had Reuben made sense, Jacob would have responded affirmatively to him (or). Or we should render, if Reuben had spoken correctly then Jacob would not have hushed him by saying, *My son shall not go down with you* (Krinsky).

CHAPTER 43

8. BOTH WE. It is Hebrew style to add *gam*¹ (also) even to the first of a series of items.² Compare, *Rule over us, also (gam) thou, also (gam) thy son, also (gam) thy son's son* (Jud. 8:22).

11. DO THIS. Do according to the following counsel.³

OF THE CHOICE FRUITS OF THE LAND. *Zimrat* (choice fruits) refers to all types of praiseworthy things. It comes from the same root as *zemirot* (songs) (Is. 24:16).⁴

BALM AND...SPICERY. I have previously explained these terms.⁵

NUTS. *Batenim* does not appear elsewhere in Scripture.⁶ Some say it means nuts.

12. DOUBLE. *Mishneh* means second.⁷

The Hebrew literally reads: *gam anachnu* (also we), *gam attah* (also you), *gam appenu* (also our little ones).

Gam means also. Hence it does not belong before the first of a series of items. Nevertheless, it is Hebrew style to place *gam* before the first particular in a series for purposes of emphasis (Weiser).

Zot (this) is feminine. The question thus arises, why did Jacob use the feminine *zot* (do this) rather than the masculine *zeh asu*? I.E.'s solution is that the word *zot* refers to *etzah* (council) which is feminine. It should be noted that *etzah* is not in the biblical text (Cherez).

Things that one sings about, things that one praises. Krinsky explains I.E. as naming the choicest fruits because of which the land is praised.

See I.E.'s comments on Gen. 37:25.

Since we cannot be sure what it means.

In addition to the money that you are returning, bring a second sum of money for purchase of new food (Filwarg).

OVERSIGHT. *Mishgeh* (oversight) is a noun whose third root letter is a *heh*.⁸

14. [AND GOD ALMIGHTY.] This phrase means the one who has the power to do all these things.

IF I BE BEREAVED. As I was bereaved by the death of Joseph, I think that I will be bereaved of all my children.⁹

18. THAT HE MAY SEEK OCCASION AGAINST US. *Le-hitgolet* (that he may seek occasion) comes from the same root as *bi-gelal*¹⁰ in *that for* (*bi-gelet*) *this thing* (Deut. 15:10).

AND FALL UPON US. As a man falls intentionally upon another and then says you tripped me.¹¹

20. OH. *Bi adoni* (Oh, my lord) is a supplicatory expression. I believe it is an abridged statement. It is like, *bi ani adoni he-avon* (upon me, my lord, upon me be the iniquity) (I Sam. 25:24). *Avon* (iniquity) here¹² has the same meaning as *avon* in *My iniquity* (*avoni*) *is greater than I can bear* (Gen. 4:13).¹³ The meaning of *bi adoni he-avon* is, do to me as you wish but first listen to me.

⁸ Its root is *shin, gimel, heh*.

⁹ According to Krinsky. The verse reads, *va-ani ka'asher shakholti shakholti*. The literal translation of the latter is, and as for me, as I was bereaved (*shakholti*), I was bereaved. I.E. explains that the second *shakholti* although a perfect, is to be rendered as an imperfect. Thus our verse reads, and as for me, as I was bereaved, so will I be (I think I will be, I fear I will be) bereaved. He explains it to mean: as I was bereaved of Joseph, I now fear that I will be bereaved of all my children. Cf. I.E.'s commentary on Es. 4:16.

¹⁰ Hence it is similar in meaning to it. He is seeking a cause, a reason.

¹¹ That is, he is seeking to blame us for something we are not guilty of.

¹² "Here" refers to I Sam. 25:24 and by extension to our verse which is short for *bi adoni he-avon* (Filwarg). Or "here" refers to our verse in which the word *avon* is to be inserted (Weiser).

¹³ Where *avon* (iniquity) means punishment. Cf. I.E. comments on Gen. 4:13. Thus *bi adoni he-avon* means, upon my lord be the punishment.

23. HATH GIVEN YOU TREASURE IN YOUR SACKS. It is possible that someone had a treasure in his house, hid it among the wheat in his storehouse and then forgot about it, and it was placed in your sacks by chance.¹⁴ This must be the case because I have your money.

24. INTO JOSEPH'S HOUSE. The *heh* at the end of *betah* (into the house of) means to. The latter is Hebrew style.¹⁵

27. IS YOUR FATHER WELL, THE OLD MAN. Our verse has a noun (*shalom*) in place of an adjective (*shalem*).¹⁶ It is abridged, and should be read as if written, *ha-shalom la-avikhem* (is your father in peace). *Ve-attah shalom* (and peace be unto thee) (I Sam. 25:6) is similar.¹⁷

28. AND THEY BOWED THE HEAD. *Va-yikkedu* (and they bowed the head) means, and they placed their head to the ground. Thus *va-yishtachavu* (and made obeisance) means, and they had bowed.¹⁸

¹⁴ After it was delivered to the royal granaries.

¹⁵ A *heh* suffixed to a noun has the same meaning as the preposition *el* (to) placed before it. Hence *betah yosef* means into Joseph's house.

¹⁶ Our verse reads, *ha-shalom avikhem* (is your father well). I.E. argues that according to the rule of Hebrew grammar the Bible should have read; *ha-shalem avikhem* and not *ha-shalom avikhem* since the former means, is your father well (*shalem*) while the latter means, is your father peace (*shalom*), an impossible statement. His solution is to suggest that *ha-shalom avikhem* is short for *ha-shalom la avikhem*.

¹⁷ I Sam. 25:6 reads, *ve-attah shalom*. According to I.E. it should have read, *ve-attah shalem* (and thou art well) since *shalem* is an adjective while *shalom* is a noun. Hence here, too, the verse is abridged and should be read as if written *ve-attah shalom lekha*.

¹⁸ Scripture reads, *va-yikkedu*, *va-yishtachavu*. I.E. interprets *va-yishtachavu* as a pluperfect, they had bowed, since the bowing obviously preceded the placing of the head on the ground.

29. GOD BE GRACIOUS UNTO THEE. *Yochnekhah* (be gracious unto thee) does not fit into any paradigm.¹⁹ Perhaps it differs from the usual paradigms because of the *chet* which is a guttural.²⁰

30. YEARNED. *Nikhmeru* (yearned) means burned and inflamed, as does *nikhmeru* (hot) in *our skin is hot (nikhmeru) like an oven* (Lam. 5:10).

34. AND PORTIONS WERE TAKEN. *Masot* (portions) means gifts.²¹

TIMES. *Yadot* (times) means portions.

AS ANY OF THEIRS. Benjamin's gifts were five times as great as the gift of any one of the brothers.²² It is far-fetched to believe that Joseph gave Benjamin five gifts for every gift that he gave to each one of his brothers.²³

¹⁹ The word comes from *chet*, *nun*, *nun*. Had it followed the paradigm of Hebrew double *ayin* roots, it would have been written *yechannekha*; compare, *yechannenu* in Ps. 67:2 (Krinsky, Cherez).

²⁰ To simplify its enunciation the *kamatz* was transferred from the *chet* to the *yod* and the *dagesh* dropped from the *nun* (Krinsky).

²¹ Not portions of food but gifts (Cherez).

²² He had five times as much as any individual, not five times as much as all of them together.

²³ For this would come to 50 gifts. I.E. comments thus because the Hebrew reads: and Benjamin's portion was greater than the portions of all of them five times. He interprets *kullam* (all of them) as meaning, as any of them.

CHAPTER 44

2. MY GOBLET. *Gavi'a* (goblet) means a cup.

5. AND WHEREBY HE INDEED DIVINETH. He used this cup to test you to see if you are thieves.¹ *Nachesh* (divineth) in our verse is similar to *nichashti* (I have observed the signs) (Gen. 30:27).² This is also the explanation of *know ye not that such a man as I will indeed divine* (v. 15).³ Its meaning is, why were you not afraid to steal my goblet? I placed the goblet before you to test you. I looked aside and you stole it.⁴ However, Rabbi Jonah says that *bo* (whereby) means for it. He interprets *nachesh yenachesh bo* as: he would indeed inquire of diviners for it. Similarly the meaning of *I will indeed divine* (v. 15) is: a man in my position has diviners. Some say that the cup had designs on it and that Joseph looked at the cup in the presence of his brothers and announced which of them was the oldest and which one was born next.⁵

According to I.E. divineth means tested.

However, in Gen. 30:27 I.E. explains *nichashti* to mean divines. Weiser explains E.'s comment on our verse as meaning tested by divination. However, this is not what I.E. seems to be saying. I.E. was apparently inconsistent.

That is, a man such as I will test you.

According to this interpretation *bo* in *ve-hu nachesh yenachesh bo* (and whereby he indeed divineth) means whereby, the meaning of the aforementioned being, and whereby he indeed tests.

¶. *Bereshit Rabbah* 92:5. The point being *and whereby he divineth* and *I will indeed divine* are to be taken literally. Joseph, of course, did not practice magic. However, his servants and his brothers had no way of knowing this. Also according to interpretation *bo* means whereby.

16. [CLEAR OURSELVES.] There is a *tet* in place of the *tav* of the *hitpa'el* conjugation in the word *nitztaddak* (clear ourselves) because the first root letter is a *tzadi*.

GOD HAS FOUND OUT THE INIQUITY OF THY SERVANTS. They spoke by way of parable.⁶ We committed a sin and it was, as it were, lost and long forgotten, but found today. Or *the iniquity of thy servants* means the punishment of thy servants, as in *My iniquity is greater than I can bear* (Gen. 4:13).⁷

VA-YIGGASH

18. FOR THOU ART EVEN AS PHARAOH. *Ki kha-mokha ke-faro* means: thou art as the king⁸ and the king is as you. This is true in all instances where two *cafs* are prefixed to two words following each other.⁹ Compare, *ke-ammi khe-ammekha* (my people as thy people) (II Kings 3:7).¹⁰ The use of two *cafs* in this manner is an abridged form.¹¹

20. WE HAVE A FATHER, AN OLD MAN. They indicated that their father was an old man because he could have been a relatively

⁶ Found implies that God was unaware of the sin till the present, and he now found it. However, nothing is hidden from the Lord. Hence *God found* is God, as it were, found (Krinsky).

⁷ See I.E.'s comments on Gen. 4:13. I.E. points out that iniquity (*avon*) at times has the meaning of punishment.

⁸ Pharaoh.

⁹ As in our verse, *ki-kha-mokha ke-faro*.

¹⁰ Here, too, we have two *cafs*, *ke-ammi khe-ammekha* (my people as thy people) which means my people as thy people and thy people as my people.

¹¹ Thus *ki kha-mokha ke-faro* is short for thou art as Pharaoh and Pharaoh is as you.

young man in view of the fact that the oldest among them was only 45 years old.¹²

21. THAT I MAY SET MINE EYES UPON HIM. That I may see him.¹³

22. FOR IF HE SHOULD LEAVE HIS FATHER, HIS FATHER WOULD DIE. Why didn't the one who lists the five undecided verses¹⁴ not include our verse and *And he drew off his shoe* (Ruth 4:8) among them.¹⁵

28. SURELY HE IS TORN IN PIECES. Proof of which is, *And I have not seen him since*.

¹² Joseph was at this time 39 years old (see I.E.'s comments on Gen. 37:3 and the notes thereto), and he was six years younger than Reuben since he was born in the 14th year of Jacob's stay in Laban's house while Reuben was born in the eighth year of that same stay. Reuben was thus 45 at this time.

¹³ *That I may set my eyes upon him* may be interpreted to mean, that I will take care of him, as in Jer. 24:6 and 39:12, hence I.E.'s comment. See also Nahmanides.

¹⁴ Our text literally reads: For if he should leave his father, "he" would die. The "he" is vague. The Talmudic sage Isi ben Judah (*Yoma* 92a,b) lists five verses wherein it is impossible to determine concerning what or of whom the verse speaks. Our verse and Ruth 4:8 are not included. I.E. asks, why not. It should be noted that according to Nahmanides' reading, I.E. explains that the "he" in *he would die* refers to Jacob. In that case I.E. only questions why Ruth 4:8 is not included in Isi ben Judah's list.

¹⁵ It isn't clear whether the "he" in *And he drew off his shoe* refers to Boaz or the near kinsman.

CHAPTER 45

1. REFRAIN HIMSELF. *Le-hitappek* (refrain himself) means to bear.

BEFORE ALL THEM THAT STOOD BY HIM. Its meaning is, until all that stood by him left. Joseph was therefore compelled to call and have them withdrawn.¹

2. AND HE WEPT ALOUD. The word reads *bi-vechi* (wept) even though it is a pausal.² *Oni* (affliction) in *I am the man that hath seen affliction* (*oni*) (Lam. 3:1) is similar.³

8. BUT GOD. Sent me.

A FATHER. A teacher. Father in *he was the father of all such as handle the harp and pipe* (Gen. 4:21) is similar.⁴

11. LEST THOU COME TO POVERTY. *Tivvaresh* (come to poverty) means thou be cut off. *Le-horish* in *to drive out* (*le-horish*) *nations* (Deut. 4:38) is similar.⁵

¹ Joseph could not bear to wait until all those in his presence left. He therefore had the hall cleared.

² In such cases the word is vocalized with a *sheva* beneath the first *bet* and a *segol* beneath the second *bet*. Our word is vocalized *chirik*, *sheva* (Weiser).

³ *Oni* in Lam. 3:1 is vocalized with a *chataf kamatz* even though it is a pausal. At such times the word is usually vocalized with a *cholam*. Cf. Deut. 16:3. We thus see that Scripture occasionally vocalizes a pausal as a non pausal.

⁴ Jubal obviously was not the biological father of all harp and pipe players.

⁵ The point is that the root *yod*, *resh*, *shin*, which usually means to inherit, can also mean to cut off, to destroy. I.E. renders Deut. 4:38 to destroy nations. He renders our verse, lest thou be destroyed (cut off).

12. THAT IT IS MY MOUTH. It is well known that *peh* (mouth) spelled *peh*, *heh* is in the absolute. However, when it appears in the construct the silent *heh*⁶ changes to a silent *yod*,⁷ as in *The mouth of* (pi) *the righteous* (Ps. 37:30). The same form (pi) is also used for the plural, as in *But the mouth* (pi) *of the wicked* (Prov. 10:11).⁸ Now when the *yod* that takes the place of the *heh* comes together with the *yod* of the first person pronominal suffix, one of the *yods* is dropped,⁹ as in *my mouth* (fi) *that speaketh*. The meaning of *my mouth that speaketh unto you* is: I speak directly to you in Hebrew without the use of an interpreter.

14. NECK. Scripture employs both the plural and singular forms for the neck.¹⁰ We also find the word for neck spelled with a *nun*.¹¹ However, its *alef* is never dropped.¹²

17. LADE. *Ta'anu* means load. The word *meto'ane* in *thrust through* (meto'ane) *with the sword* (Is. 14:19) is close in meaning to it.¹³

⁶ The *heh* in *peh* is not sounded.

⁷ *Peh* becomes *pi* (my mouth) or *fi* when the rules of grammar call for the omission of the *dagesh*. I.E. refers to the *yod* following a *chirik* as a silent *yod*.

⁸ *Resha'im* (wicked) is in the plural. Thus the *mouth of the wicked* should be rendered, the mouths of the wicked men (Cherez).

⁹ My mouth should be written *peh*, *yod*, *yod*, one *yod* serving as the first person pronominal suffix and the other substituting for the *heh*. However, one *yod* is dropped to simplify enunciation. Thus *pi* can mean either my mouth or mouth of.

¹⁰ The singular of neck is *tzavvar*. Cf. Is. 8:8 and Jer. 28:10; *tzavvare* is a plural. However, the plural is occasionally also used for the singular when this noun is employed.

¹¹ Cf. *tzavveronayikh* (thy neck) in Cant. 4:9.

¹² According to Weiser. The problem is that there is no *alef* in *tzavveronayikh*. Filwarg suggests that in I.E.'s copy of the Bible *tzavveronayikh* had an *alef*. Also, Kimchi in his book of roots says that *tzavveronayikh* is spelled with an *alef*. Weiser suggests that what I.E. means is that *tzavveronayikh* should have been written with an *alef* but for some reason it was dropped.

¹³ I.E. renders this, laden with wounds of the sword (Krinsky). It is noteworthy that in Isaiah, I.E. says that it is farfetched to connect *ta'anu* to *meto'ane*; therefore he connects *meto'ane* with an Arabic word meaning pierced.

BEASTS. *Be'irekhem* means your cattle. *Be'irenu* in *we and our cattle* (u-ve-irenu) (Num. 20:4) is similar.

18. THE FAT OF THE LAND. Its meaning is *shuman ha'aretz* (fat of the land).¹⁴

22. CHANGES OF RAIMENT. Two garments, each different from the other, two being the minimum for a plural.¹⁵

23. [IN LIKE MANNER.] That is, of the finest changes of raiment¹⁶ that were found in Egypt.

CORN. *Bar* (corn) means grain.

AND BREAD. That is to be taken literally.¹⁷

AND VICTUAL. The term *mazon* (victual) refers to peas, beans, lentils, millet, spelt, figs, raisins and dates, for only these, excluding wheat¹⁸ and barley, are termed *mazon*.¹⁹

¹⁴ What I.E. apparently intends to say is that since the choicest part of an animal is its *shuman* (fat), it follows that the *fat of the land* is a metaphor for the best of the land (Weiser).

¹⁵ *Chalifot semalot* (changes of raiment) is in the plural. The minimum of the plural is two. Hence two garments are implied. Had Scripture intended more than two their number would have been listed, as in the case of Benjamin. *Chalifot* (changes) implies each garment was different from the other. He didn't give them two identical garments (Cherez).

¹⁶ *Ke-zot* (in like manner) not only applies to what follows but also to what comes before, viz., garments (Weiser). Or *ke-zot* applies only to what comes before; i.e., the verse is to be understood: And to his father he sent in like manner ten asses laden with the good things of Egypt, viz., the finest changes of raiment that were found in Egypt (Cherez).

¹⁷ *Lechem* (bread) can mean food, hence I.E.'s comment.

¹⁸ I.E. reads *dagan* (grain) but he means wheat (Weiser).

¹⁹ Wheat and barley are not deemed *mazon* but *bar* (Krinsky, Filwarg).

24. [SEE THAT YE FALL NOT OUT BY THE WAY.] Don't be angry with each other because of my being sold into slavery.²⁰

26. AND HIS HEART FAINTED. *Va-yafag* (fainted) comes from the same root as *fugat*²¹ in *Give thyself no respite* (*fugat*) (Lam. 2:18). It means his heart stopped and was still. It has the same meaning as *and his heart died within him* (I Sam. 25:37). Jacob reacted in this manner because he didn't believe them.²² However, when he saw the wagons, his spirit revived. Do not be surprised at the term *his heart stopped* for it is the style of the prophets to speak in hyperbole. Compare, *neither was there breath left in me* (Dan. 10:17).

28. IT IS ENOUGH; JOSEPH MY SON IS YET ALIVE. This happiness is enough for me.²³

I.E. renders *tirgizu* (fall out) as be angry (Cherez); i.e., don't be angry and thus rrel with each other, the idea being, don't be angry that you sold me and thus rrel with each other about who was responsible. It should be noted that in Ps. 4:5 renders *rigzu* as fear.

That is, stop.

Jacob reacted in this manner because what his sons said reminded him that Joseph had.

The Hebrew reads, *Enough, Joseph my son is yet alive*. I.E. suggests that enough rt for "this happiness is enough for me" (Weiser). What Jacob was saying was, I t concerned with the fact that he is a ruler over Egypt; the fact that he is alive is ough for me (Krinsky). Cherez suggests rendering I.E., I have great happiness oseph is yet alive.

CHAPTER 46

3. TO GO DOWN. *Me-redah* (to go down) is an infinitive. Its first root letter is missing.¹ *Me-redah* is similar to *tenah* in *Whose majesty is rehearsed* (*tenah*) *above the heavens* (Ps. 8:2).²

4. [AND I WILL ALSO SURELY BRING THEE UP AGAIN.] This means you will be buried in the land of Israel.³

AND JOSEPH SHALL PUT HIS HAND UPON THINE EYES. At the time of your death. It is customary for the living to close the eyes of the deceased upon their death.

7. HIS DAUGHTERS. This refers only to Dinah.⁴ It is possible that Dinah had maid servants of her own age who grew up with her in Jacob's house and who because of Dinah are called Jacob's daughters. Jacob's "daughters" can be compared to Michal's "children" (II Sam. 21:8).⁵ The same interpretation is to be given to *and his sons' daughters* since Jacob had only one granddaughter.⁶

¹ *Me-redah* is made up of the infinitive *redah* (go down) plus the prepositional *mem*. The root of *redah* is *yod, resh, dalet*.

² The root of *tenah* is *nun, tet, nun*. Both *redah* (whose *yod* is missing) and *tenah* (whose *nun* is missing) are infinitives whose first root letters are missing.

³ Jacob never came back from Egypt. Hence I.E. interprets our verse as referring to Jacob's body.

⁴ Jacob had no other daughters.

⁵ Michal's "children" were in fact the children of Merab. Scripture refers to them as Michal's children because she raised them. Cf. *Sanhedrin*. 19b. See also I.E.'s comments on Gen. 36:2 and the notes thereto.

⁶ Serah, the daughter of Asher (v. 17). There, too, "daughters" refers to the maid-servants who grew up with her.

10. THE SON OF A CANAANITISH WOMAN. This proves that Jacob's sons married Aramean, Egyptian, Edomite and Midianite women.⁷ Shaul's mother's nationality is singled out in order to indicate that Simeon did wrong in marrying a Canaanitish woman. It is for this reason that Scripture records the death of Er and Onan (v. 12). Scripture records their demise in order to indicate that they died because they were the sons of a Canaanitish woman (Gen. 38:2).⁸

21. AND NAAMAN. This Naaman was a son of Benjamin. I note this because Benjamin also had a grandson called Naaman (Num. 26:40).

23. AND THE SONS OF DAN: HUSHIM. It is possible that Dan had two sons and one of them died and Scripture did not mention him.⁹ It is also possible that the verse employs "sons" for stylistic reasons.¹⁰

[27. ALL THE SOULS OF THE HOUSE OF JACOB, THAT CAME INTO EGYPT, WERE THREESCORE AND TEN.] An exegete says that *three score and ten* is a round number, since in fact they numbered sixty-nine.¹¹ However, this commentator erred, since we find Scripture stating, with regard to Leah's offspring who numbered thirty-

⁷ The fact that Scripture singles out Shaul as being the son of a Canaanitish woman indicates that only he was the son of a Canaanitish woman, but not the others mentioned here. That Simeon did wrong in marrying her is obvious since Abraham told his servant not to take a Canaanitish woman for Isaac, and Isaac told the same to Jacob.

⁸ The Canaanite women were evil. Er and Onan followed in their mother's footsteps and were punished by God. Scripture thus mentions their death as an object lesson (Filwarg).

⁹ Scripture says "sons" but lists only one son, hence I.E.'s comment.

¹⁰ Since Scripture used *sons of* with regard to the other children, it employs the same form here for the sake of consistency (Weiser). Nahmanides (v. 7) writes, "It is Biblical style to refer to an individual in the plural form when mentioning the genealogy of any people. For example, *And the sons of Dan: Hushim*; (Gen. 46:23) *And of the sons of Palu: Eliab* (Num. 26:8)." This is apparently what I.E. had in mind (Krinsky).

¹¹ The names of Jacob's descendants listed in our chapter come to 69, not 70.

two, *all the souls of his sons and daughters were thirty and three* (v. 15).¹² The Midrash tries to solve the problem by saying that Jochebed was born between the ramparts when they entered Egypt.¹³ However, this, too, presents a problem, viz., why doesn't Scripture record the great wonder of Jochebed giving birth to Moses when she was one hundred and thirty years old?¹⁴ Furthermore, why does Scripture note that Sarah was ninety when she bore a son?¹⁵ And as if we didn't have enough problems with the above, the liturgical poets composed a hymn for Simchat Torah reading, *Jochebed my mother will be comforted after me* thereby indicating that Jochebed was two hundred and fifty years old at the time of Moses' death.¹⁶ As to the Midrash which states that Ahijah the Shilonite lived for hundreds of years,¹⁷ it is an aggadic statement or an individual opinion.¹⁸

¹² Verses 8-14 list the children of Leah and their offspring. Thirty-two individuals are listed by name. However, in giving their total Scripture says they were thirty-three. Now 70 is a round number with regard to 69. However, 33 is not a round number with regard to 32. It should be noted that it is the one person missing from the list of Leah's offspring that is missing from our list of 70; i.e., if Leah's thirty-three were listed here, we would have 70.

¹³ *Baba Batra* 123a-b. The point being that when Jacob was going down to Egypt, Jochebed was yet in her mother's womb and could not be counted as a person. However, as soon as the Israelites come to Egypt she was born. Hence 70 descendants of Jacob came to Egypt.

¹⁴ According to Talmudic tradition the Israelites were in Egypt for 210 years (*Seder Olam*). Moses was 80 at the time of the Exodus (Ex. 7:7); thus Moses was born 130 years after the descent into Egypt. If his mother was born at the beginning of the descent then she had to be 130 years old at the time of Moses' birth.

¹⁵ When the Torah doesn't see fit to note that Jochebed was 130 when she brought a child into the world.

¹⁶ If this is really so, why wasn't Jochebed's longevity mentioned in Scripture?

¹⁷ Cf. *Baba Batra* 121b and *Seder Olam* 1. There it is stated that the prophet Ahijah, who prophesied during the reign of King Jeroboam, saw Amram the father of Moses. Ahijah thus lived close to 600 years. This is therefore a greater miracle than that of Jochebed, and yet Scripture doesn't mention it. Hence this Midrash can serve as support for the liturgical poets that Scripture omits certain miracles (Cherez). Krinsky explains that the liturgical poets can argue that if Ahijah could live 600 years, why is it hard to believe that Jochebed was still alive at the time of Moses' death?

¹⁸ It is therefore not binding and cannot be offered as proof.



I believe that the way to solve our problem is by recognizing the fact that the Bible includes Jacob among the seventy who came into Egypt and starts the count of the seventy from him. The verse (15) is to be interpreted as if it read: all the souls of his sons and his daughters plus himself were thirty-three. Proof that this is the way to interpret this verse is that Scripture previously states, *And these are the names of the children of Israel, who came into Egypt, Jacob and his sons* (v. 8).¹⁹ Should one argue and say, "Does not Scripture explicitly state, *And all the souls that came out of the loins of Jacob were seventy souls* (Ex. 1:5)?²⁰ Know that Scripture isn't concerned with noting that one of the seventy did not come from Jacob's loins, as it didn't bother to leave out Benjamin when it said, *These are the sons of Jacob, that were born to him in Paddan-aram* (Gen. 35:26), even though Benjamin was not born there. We have two proofs in our own Torah portion that this is the style of Scripture. First, the Pentateuch states, *And these are the names of the children of Israel, who came into Egypt, Jacob and his sons* (v. 8). The Torah thus includes Jacob among the sons of Israel. It does so because Scripture speaks of the majority of those who came to Egypt. Secondly, Scripture states, *all the souls of the house of Jacob, that came into Egypt, were three score and ten* (Gen. 46:27). However, Manasseh and Ephraim did not come into Egypt, they were there to begin with, having been born in Egypt.²¹ In the same vein another verse²² reads, *Thy fathers went down into Egypt with three score and ten souls* (Deut. 10:22).²³ However, as noted, Manasseh and Ephraim did not go down to Egypt. This verse²⁴ is also proof that Jacob is counted among the

¹⁹ We thus see that Jacob is included in the number of those who came to Egypt.

²⁰ Jacob obviously cannot be included in those that came out of his loins.

²¹ Yet Scripture lists them among those who came to Egypt (v. 20).

²² So *Vat. Ebr.* 38.

²³ *Nefesh* has been translated as souls, in keeping with I.E.'s translation.

²⁴ The reference is either to verse 27 (Krinsky) or both verse 27 and Deut. 10:22 (Cherez), or possibly only to Deut. 10:22.

seventy, for he had a soul²⁵ and he was the most important of them all.²⁶

29. AND JOSEPH MADE READY HIS CHARIOT. Joseph commanded it ready.²⁷ *So Solomon built the house, and finished it* (I Kings 6:14),²⁸ is similar.

34. FOR EVERY SHEPHERD IS AN ABOMINATION UNTO THE EGYPTIANS. This verse shows that in those days the Egyptians did not eat meat and they did not permit anyone to slaughter sheep. This is still the custom among the Indians. The Egyptians considered shepherds an abomination because they drank milk.²⁹ The people of India until this very day do not eat or drink anything derived from a living creature.

²⁵ *All the souls of the house of Jacob, that came into Egypt, were three score and ten.* Since Jacob had a soul he is included in the souls that came into Egypt and similarly with Deut. 10:22.

²⁶ Hence it is unlikely that he would not be included in the number of those that went down (Weiser).

²⁷ A man of Joseph's position would not personally make ready his chariot, hence I.E.'s comment. However, since he commanded that his chariot be made ready it is as if he himself did it.

²⁸ Solomon obviously did not personally build the house. He ordered it built.

²⁹ Although the Egyptians allowed shepherds in their country, they did not allow them to slaughter sheep. However, they permitted them to drink milk, although they detested them for it.

1. IN THE LAND OF GOSHEN. The land of Goshen refers to the entire land, *the land of Rameses* (v. 11) to an area within it.¹ The *ayin* in Rameses is vocalized with a quiescent *sheva*. I believe that the city Raamses (Ex. 1:11) which is vocalized with a *pattach* beneath the *ayin*² is not to be identified with the Rameses in which the Israelites dwelt, for Raamses was one of the store cities that the Israelites built for Pharaoh.³

6. RULERS OVER MY CATTLE. Such as horses and mules.⁴

13. LANGUISHED. *Va-telah* (languished) follows the paradigm of *va-teta* (and strayed) (Gen. 21:14).⁵ Similarly *ke-mitlahle'ah* (as a

¹ In our verse we are told that the Israelites lived in the land of Goshen. However, verse 11 tells us that they lived in the land of Rameses. I.E. solves this discrepancy by explaining that the land of Goshen was divided into a number of subdivisions one of which was called Rameses (Weiser). Thus the Israelites dwelt both in the land of Rameses and in the land of Goshen.

² Rameses and Raamses have identical consonants. They differ only with regard to the vocalization of the *ayin*.

³ It was not even in existence when the Israelites came to Egypt.

⁴ I.E. explains thus because he held that the Egyptians did not keep sheep. Cf. I.E.'s comments on Gen. 46:34 (Cherez).

⁵ The root of *va-tela* is *lamed, heh, heh*. The root of *va-teta* is *tav, ayin, heh*. Both words drop the final root letter and are similarly vocalized.

madman) (Prov. 26:18) is like *ki-metate'ah* (as a mocker) (Gen. 27:12).⁶ Its meaning is, the land was like a person who has lost his wits.⁷

15. WAS ALL SPENT. *Va-yittom* (was all spent) comes from a root whose second and third letters are identical.⁸ It is similar to *va-yiddom* (stood still) in *And the sun stood still* (va-yiddom) (Josh. 10:13).⁹

16. GIVE. According to the rules of Hebrew grammar the *heh* of *havu* should have been vocalized with a *chataf pattach*.¹⁰

IF MONEY FAIL. *Afes* (fail) is a perfect.¹¹ It is similar to the word *yare*¹² in *for he feared* (*yare*) *to dwell in Zoar* (Gen. 19:30).

19. [WHEREFORE SHOULD WE DIE...BOTH WE AND OUR LAND.] One should not be surprised that the Bible employs the term death to the land. We also find the reverse in *Thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and all things that are thereon...and Thou givest them all life* (Neh. 9:6).¹³

⁶ Both of these words also follow similar patterns in their quadrilateral form. In Prov. 26:18 and in Gen. 27:12 these words appear as quadrilateral; i.e., their first root letters are similarly doubled forming the stems *lamed, heh, lamed, heh* and *tav ayin, tav ayin*.

⁷ Its inhabitants couldn't think clearly because of exhaustion (Krinsky). Thus according to I.E. *va-telah* means crazed. Cf. I.E. on Prov. 26:18 and Kimchi on our verse.

⁸ Its root is *tav, mem, mem* and it is a *kal* (Filwarg).

⁹ Its root is *dalet, mem, mem*. It, too, is a *kal* (Filwarg).

¹⁰ The root of *havu* is *yod, heh, bet*. Such a word drops its first root letter in the plural masculine imperative and its second root letter is vocalized with a *sheva*. Compare, *yada* and *yatza* which in the imperative plural masculine become *de'u* and *tze'u*. Thus *havu* should have a *chataf pattach* beneath the *heh*. However, it does not. The *heh* is vocalized with a *kamatz*. It is therefore irregular.

¹¹ A third person perfect is usually vocalized *kamatz, pattach*. However, some words are conjugated according to the paradigm of *pa'el*. These words are vocalized *kamatz, tzere* both in the third person masculine perfect and in the present tense. Thus *afes* can either be a perfect or a participle, hence I.E.'s comment.

¹² See above note. I.E. points out that *yare* is a third person masculine perfect.

¹³ Translated according to I.E. In this verse we find life, which is the opposite of death, applied to heaven and earth.

BE NOT DESOLATE. *Tesham* (be desolate) comes from the same root as *tishamenah* in *and the high places shall be desolate* (*tishamenah*) (Ezek. 6:6). *Tesham* follows the paradigm of *tada* (she will know).¹⁴

The Midrash tells us that the hunger ceased because of Jacob's merit.¹⁵ However, it is possible that the hunger lasted for seven years but that it was less intense in the final three years than during the first four years.¹⁶

21. AND AS FOR THE PEOPLE, HE REMOVED THEM. He uprooted each and every Egyptian from his place.¹⁷ Some say that Scripture speaks of the people of Egypt's main city. Joseph removed them from the capital to villages so that they would till the soil.¹⁸

¹⁴ According to I.E. the root of *tesham* is *yod, shin, mem* (Filwarg). The *yod* drops out and the letters prefixed to the root which indicate that the word is an imperfect are vocalized with a *tzere*, as in the case of the imperfect of the word *yada* from the root *yod, dalet, ayin*.

¹⁵ *Bereshit Rabbah* 89:11. See also *Tosephta, Sotah* 10, "Before Jacob came down to Egypt there was a famine there...after he came there Scripture tells us, *Then Joseph said unto the people...Lo, here is seed for you, and ye shall sow the land. And it shall come to pass at the ingatherings* (Gen. 47:23-24), which indicates that the famine ceased."

¹⁶ I.E. wants to reconcile the Midrash with Joseph's prophecy that there would be seven years of hunger. He does so by accepting the fact that there were seven years of hunger and interprets the Midrashic statement as meaning that the hunger eased. It should be noted that *Vat. Ebr.* 38 has the reading: "The Midrash tells us that the hunger ceased because of Jacob's merit. This is possible. It is also possible that the hunger continued during the last three years of the famine but that it was less intense than during the first four years." According to Weiser, I.E. is of the opinion that Joseph's collection of the money (v. 14 and 15); of the cattle (v. 16 and 17); and of buying the land (v. 18 and 19) took place successively during the last three years of the famine and that it eased during these years. For another interpretation see Filwarg, Weiser and Krinsky.

¹⁷ The verse reads, *ve-et ha-am he-evir oto le-arim* (And as for the people, he removed them city by city). *Am* (people) is a plural. *Oto* (him) is a singular, hence I.E.'s interpretation (Krinsky). This is the way I.E. explains the combination of singulars and plurals.

¹⁸ *Ve-et ha-am he-evir oto le-arim* literally means: And as for the people, he removed them to the cities, hence I.E.'s second interpretation.

26. THE PRIESTS. This is to be rendered as Onkelos does.¹⁹

27. AND THEY GOT THEM POSSESSIONS THEREIN. They bought property with title.²⁰

VA-YECHI

29. AND JACOB LIVED. The terms *put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh* and *kindly and truly* have been explained in the account dealing with Eliezer.²¹

30. BUT WHEN I SLEEP WITH MY FATHERS. This is a euphemism for death.²² Or it may mean: bury me not, I pray thee, in Egypt (v. 29), but I will sleep (be buried) with my fathers.²³ The latter will come to pass because thou shalt carry me out of Egypt and bury me in their burying place.²⁴

31. AND ISRAEL BOWED DOWN. He payed homage to Joseph because he held royal position. However, I believe it means he bowed to God in praise. Our verse is different from the verse which records the

¹⁹ Onkelos renders *kohanim* pagan priests.

²⁰ The text reads, *va-ye'achazu vah* (and they got them possessions therein). *Va-ye'achazu* is a denominative of *achuzah* which means property with a title.

²¹ Cf. I.E.'s comments on Gen. 27:2 and 24:49.

²² According to this interpretation the verse reads, *But when I die (when I sleep with my fathers), thou shalt carry me out of Egypt, and bury me in their burying-place.*

²³ According to this interpretation, *ve-shakhavti im avotai* (but when I sleep with my fathers) means, but I will be buried with my fathers.

²⁴ The verse reads, *But when I sleep with my fathers, thou shalt carry me out of Egypt, and bury me in their burying place.* If *ve-shakhavti im avotai* (but when I sleep with my fathers) means I will be buried with my fathers, then the verse is redundant, hence I.E.'s interpretation.

²⁵ Gen. 23:7 tells us that Abraham bowed before the children of Heth. Some interpret that verse to mean that Abraham bowed before God. I.E. on Gen. 23:6 rejects that interpretation on the grounds that Scripture explicitly states, *And Abraham rose up, and bowed down to the people of the land, even to the children of Heth.* However, here Scripture does not explicitly state that Jacob bowed down to Joseph. Hence we may interpret that Jacob bowed to God. Cf. I.E.'s comments on Gen. 23:6 and the notes thereto.

CHAPTER 48

1. THAT ONE SAID TO JOSEPH. Someone said to Joseph.¹ *Whom she bore to Levi in Egypt* (Num. 26:59) is similar.²

2. AND ONE TOLD JACOB. Someone told Jacob.³ Or it may refer to the one who said to Joseph, *Behold, thy father is sick*. On the other hand, he may have been a messenger sent by Jacob.⁴

4. [BEHOLD, I WILL MAKE THEE FRUITFUL.] According to Saadiah Gaon Jacob told Joseph: God appeared to me and told me, *Behold I will make thee fruitful*. However, following this promise I had no other children, and Rachel died. I now know that the Divine promise of *Behold, I will make thee fruitful* was said concerning your children.⁵ This interpretation is totally unpalatable. What difference is there between Joseph's children and Reuben's children?⁶ Furthermore, Benjamin was born after this prophetic vision.⁷

¹ The subject of *va-yomer* (and he said) is omitted.

² Scripture similarly omits the subject. The translation of Num. 26:59 is a literal one.

³ The subject of *va-yagged* (and he told) is omitted.

⁴ *And he told* refers to a messenger sent by Jacob to Joseph requesting that he come to see him. This messenger came back *and he told Jacob...Behold, thy son Joseph cometh unto thee*.

⁵ Hence *Ephraim and Manasseh...shall be mine* (v. 5).

⁶ How did Jacob know the promise referred to Joseph's children and not to Reuben's children when both are his descendants and the Divine promise, *Behold, I will make thee fruitful* could apply to both?

⁷ The vision in which God told Jacob, *Behold, I will make thee fruitful*, is recorded in Gen. 35:9-16. Benjamin's birth follows immediately in verse 18. Hence it may refer to him.

I believe that Jacob told Joseph the following: "God appeared to me and told me that the land of Canaan will be *an everlasting possession* for my children. I now give you a first born's share⁸ in this land. Therefore let Ephraim and Manasseh share in the land in the same manner as Reuben and Simeon, my two eldest sons (v. 5). However, any children that will be born to you in addition to Ephraim and Manasseh⁹ shall be called after the name of their just noted brothers, namely, they will receive their inheritance among them (v. 6).¹⁰ I take issue with the one who interprets *And thy issue, that thou begettest after them* (v. 6) as referring to the children of Machir the son of Manasseh who *were born upon Joseph's knees* (Gen. 50:23). If his interpretation is correct, why does Scripture say, *they shall be called after the name of their brethren in their inheritance* (v. 6)?¹¹ And what if one argues, but we do not find that Joseph had any other children after Manasseh and Ephraim?¹² It is not convincing. It is quite possible that Joseph had additional children but they are not mentioned because they received their inheritance among their brothers.¹³ There are many other such instances in Scripture.¹⁴

7. [AND AS FOR ME, WHEN I CAME FROM PADDAN.] Rachel died suddenly and I was not able to transport her to the cave of Machpelah and inter her there, as I did with Leah. Jacob told this to

⁸ Since the land was given to me, I may pass it on as I see fit.

⁹ Viz., *And thy issue, that thou begettest after them*. I.E. explains *holadta* (literally, you begat) as an imperfect, you will beget.

¹⁰ They will be included in the Ephraimites and Manassites.

¹¹ Machir's children received Machir's share in the land. Hence Scripture should have stated "after the name of their father" in their inheritance.

¹² If Scripture tells us, *and thy issue, that thou begettest after them*, then it must be true. If we cannot apply it to Joseph's sons other than Manasseh and Ephraim, since he had no others, then the Bible must be referring to grandchildren.

¹³ Since they were included in the tribes of Manasseh and Ephraim, there was no reason to mention them.

¹⁴ Where names were left out because they had no significance.

Joseph so that he would not be angry with him for requesting that he do for him what he didn't do for his mother.

8. [AND ISRAEL BEHELD JOSEPH'S SONS.] After stating in our verse, *And Israel beheld Joseph's sons*, how could Scripture go on to say, *Now the eyes of Israel were dim for age, so that he could not see* (v. 10)? The answer is, *so that he could not see* means he was not able to see clearly and recognize their faces.

12. AND JOSEPH BROUGHT THEM OUT FROM BETWEEN HIS KNEES. This verse should have followed *And he blessed them that day*, etc. (v. 20).¹⁵

[FROM BETWEEN HIS KNEES.] Jacob sat on the edge of the bed.¹⁶

[11. I HAD NOT THOUGHT.] *Pillalti* (I thought) means, my mind never judged that I would ever see you. It comes from the same root as *pelilim* (judges) (Deut. 32:31).¹⁷

¹⁵ So Krinsky, Weiser and Cherez. The point being that Manasseh and Ephraim were between Joseph's knees until the conclusion of the blessing. Hence our verse should have followed verse 20. However, the problem remains, why is this verse misplaced? Filwarg interprets I.E. as saying that Scripture first summarizes what transpired during the blessing and then goes into detail, that is, Scripture in verses 9-12 tells us that Joseph brought his children to Jacob and that Jacob placed them between his knees, kissed them and blessed them and that Joseph took them from between his knees, and bowed in gratitude before his father for blessing his children. Then in verses 13-20 the Bible tells us exactly what transpired during the blessing.

¹⁶ Jacob sat on the edge of the bed with his feet on the ground and Manasseh and Ephraim were between his knees (Cherez).

¹⁷ Its root is *peh, lamed, lamed*.

13. AND JOSEPH TOOK THEM BOTH. Its meaning is: And Joseph had taken them both.¹⁸ I have already noted many other such instances.¹⁹

14. GUIDING HIS HANDS WITTINGLY. His hands, as it were, understood what he wanted to do.²⁰

FOR MANASSEH WAS THE FIRST-BORN. *Even though* (ki) *Manasseh was the first-born.*²¹ The word *ki* in *O Lord, let the Lord...go in the midst of us, even though* (ki) *it is a stiff-necked people* (Ex. 34:9) is similar. There are many similar instances.²²

[16. THE ANGEL WHO HATH REDEEMED ME.] The meaning of this will be found in the Torah portion *Ve-eleh shemot* (Ex. 23:20).

AND LET MY NAME BE NAMED IN THEM. All of Israel will be called Ephraim²³ and Joseph.²⁴ Scripture also states, *A voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping, Rachel weeping for her children; she refuseth to be comforted for her children, Because they are*

¹⁸ In other words *va-yikkach* (took) is a pluperfect that means had taken. In verse 9 we are told that Jacob told Joseph, *Bring them (your sons), I pray thee, unto me, and I will bless them.* Verse 10, while stating that Jacob kissed them, does not state that Joseph brought them to his father. This is stated in verse 13. Filwarg in keeping with his interpretation of I.E., viz., that verses 9-12 summarize what happened and verses 13-20 tell in detail what occurred, interprets as follows: Scripture is about to relate the details of the blessing. It begins by telling that Joseph had brought his children to his father in the following manner, Ephraim in his right hand and Manasseh in his left hand.

¹⁹ Of the pluperfect in Scripture. See I.E.'s comments on Gen. 1:9.

²⁰ The verse reads: *sikkel et yadov*, which literally means, he imparted wisdom to his hands. Hence his hands "understood" his intentions.

²¹ In other words, *ki* (for) is to be rendered even though, i.e., Jacob placed his left hand upon Manasseh's head even though Manasseh was the first born.

²² Where the word *ki* has the meaning of even though.

²³ The Bible refers to Israel as Ephraim in Hos. 7:1; 10:6; 11:3; 12:1; and Jer. 31-20. According to I.E. *and let my name be named in them* means that all of Israel will be called Ephraim. Nachmanides objects. He argues that if this were the interpretation they would also be called by the name of Manasseh since the text reads, *in them*.

²⁴ The Bible refers to Israel as Joseph in Ps. 80:2; 81:6; and Zech. 10:6.

not (Jer. 31:15),²⁵ because Jacob considered Rachel to be his true mate.²⁶ Hence Scripture says, *The sons of Rachel Jacob's wife* (Gen. 46:19).²⁷ Similarly, as soon as Rachel bore a son, Jacob said to Laban, *Send me away, that I may go unto mine own place, and to my country* (Gen. 30:25). He also gave the birthright to Joseph because he was the first born of his true mate. When Reuben showed himself unfit for the birthright he transferred it to Joseph who was Rachel's first born, rather than to Dan or Gad because they were sons of the handmaidens.²⁸

[17. HIS RIGHT HAND.] The right hand is more honored and is stronger than the left.²⁹

19. A MULTITUDE OF NATIONS. Many nations shall descend from him³⁰

20. BY THEE SHALL ISRAEL BLESS. All the Israelites.³¹

AND HE SET EPHRAIM BEFORE MANASSEH. In the enunciation of the blessing.³²

²⁵ The children of the other matriarchs also went into exile. However, the Bible mentions only Rachel weeping for her children. We thus see that all of Israel is called after Rachel's children.

²⁶ The Hebrew reads, *ikkar machasavto*, the main one of his thoughts. Rachel was the one Jacob originally wanted to marry and the one whom he loved. It was only due to circumstances that he married Leah, Bilhah and Zilpah.

²⁷ *Jacob's wife* is an appellation not used with reference to any of Jacob's other wives.

²⁸ Dan was Bilhah's first born (Gen. 30:6). Gad was Zilpah's first born (Gen. 30:11). Jacob thus gave the birthright to Joseph even though Dan and Gad were older than Joseph and were first born. He did this because Joseph was the first born of Rachel and they of handmaidens.

²⁹ According to Weiser.

³⁰ The verse reads, *melo ha-goyim*. Its literal translation is, a fullness of the nations. I.E. points out that *melo* (fullness) is to be rendered as many, a multitude. Filwarg asks, "Who were the many nations descended from Ephraim?"

³¹ Israel here doesn't refer to Jacob but to all of Jacob's descendants (Krinsky).

³² Viz., "God make thee as Ephraim and as Manasseh."

22. ONE PORTION. Some say that *shekhem* (portion) alludes to the city of Shechem which was in the portion of the land allotted to Joseph. *With my sword and with my bow* refers to God, as in David's statement, *The lord is my rock...My shield and my horn of salvation* (Ps. 18:3; II Sam. 22:3).³³ However, I believe that *shekhem* means a portion and *shekhem echad* is to be rendered one portion. The word *shekhem* is related to the words *shikhmam* (their shoulders) and *shekhem* (shoulder) in, *upon their shoulders* (*shichmam*) (Ex. 12:34), and *To serve Him with one consent* (*shekhem echad*) (Zeph. 3:9).³⁴

ABOVE THY BRETHREN. More than thy brethren.³⁵

[WHICH I TOOK.] Its meaning is: which the Israelites will take with their sword and with their bow.³⁶ Jacob singled out the Amorites because there were none among the seven Canaanite nations equal in strength to them. Observe, after the two mighty Amorite kings were slain³⁷ Joshua said (Josh. 7:7), *Alas, O Lord God, wherefore hast Thou at all brought this people over the Jordan,*³⁸ *to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites,*³⁹ *to cause us to perish?* Jacob's statement, *Which I took*, presents no problems⁴⁰ because the Patriarchs considered the land as theirs from the moment that God verbally gave it to Abraham.⁴¹ God

³³ That is, with the help of God, who is my sword and bow.

³⁴ A portion is called a *shekhem* (shoulder) because the shoulder is a part of the body (Filwarg).

³⁵ The reference is to Joseph's receiving a double portion in the land of Canaan (Filwarg).

³⁶ Jacob will conquer the land via his children. I.E. holds that *lakachti* (took), a perfect, is to be understood as an imperfect, viz., will take. I.E. later explains why Jacob used a perfect.

³⁷ Sihon and Og. Cf. Num. 21:21ff.

³⁸ After defeating Sihon and Og.

³⁹ We thus see that Joshua referred to all of Canaan as the land of the Amorite.

⁴⁰ If Jacob was speaking of the future, why did he use the perfect *lakachti* (took)?

⁴¹ Once God promised it to the patriarchs they were sure that they would inherit it. Hence it was as good as already taken (Ralbag).

similarly gave it to Jacob, as we read, *The land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed* (Gen. 28:13).

CHAPTER 49

1. THAT WHICH SHALL BEFALL YOU. Prophecies foretelling that which shall befall you in the future. Those who base themselves on Scripture's closing remark, *and this is that their father spoke unto them and blessed them* (v. 28), and conclude that they (Jacob's words) are blessings, err.¹ For if it were so, where are the blessings of Reuben, Simeon and Levi?² The way to understand *and this is that their father spoke unto them and blessed them* is as follows: and this (v. 3-27) is what their father spoke unto them by way of prophecy after which he blessed them. Scripture omits the blessings.

3. REUBEN, THOU ART MY FIRST-BORN, MY MIGHT, AND THE FIRST-FRUITS OF MY STRENGTH. My might was first seen in thee. The first-born is called the first of one's strength. We find an identical expression in *And smote all the first-born in Egypt, The first-fruits of their strength in the tents of Ham* (Ps. 78:51).

THE EXCELLENCY OF DIGNITY. You were suited by virtue of being first-born for the advantage of being exalted above all your brothers.³

¹ Since Scripture concludes with *and this is that their father spoke unto them and blessed them* (v. 28), it implies that what precedes are blessings.

² These three sons were castigated, not blessed.

³ I.E. translates *yeter se'et* (the excellency of dignity) as the advantage (*yeter*) of rank (*se'et*) and interprets accordingly. It should be noted that *se'et* comes from the root *nun, sin, alef*, meaning raised up or exalted.

AND THE EXCELLENCY OF POWER. This means the same as *The excellency of dignity*. It is prophetic style to repeat the same idea in different words.⁴ The meaning of *oz* is power.

4. UNSTABLE. Because you acted unstably as water does.

HAVE NOT THOU THE EXCELLENCY. (Some say) that *al totar* (have not thou the excellency) means, you will not have the advantage.⁵ However, if this were the case then our text should have read *al tutar* rather than *al totar*; i.e., the *vav* of *totar* should have been vocalized with a *shuruk*.⁶

Others say that our clause should be interpreted thus: you acted unstably as water that is poured out of a vessel and you gained nothing thereby (*al totar*).⁷ However, I disagree with this interpretation. The term *al* is always used in Scripture as an imperative.⁸ The latter fact is not negated by the fact that we find *al* used once in a non-imperative sense in *In the way of righteousness is life, And in the pathway thereof there is no (al) death* (Prov. 12:28).⁹ The correct translation of our clause is: do

⁴ I.E. translates our line: The advantage of rank / the advantage of power. The first in rank has dominion over those below him, hence power is parallel to rank and the advantage of power means the same as the advantage of rank. Modern scholars refer to this as synonymous parallelism. The latter is a feature of Biblical poetry.

⁵ According to this interpretation our line reads: Unstable as water / you will not have the advantage; i.e., because you acted unstably as water does, you will not have the advantage of rank and power.

⁶ *Totar* is vocalized with a *cholam*. If *al totar* means you will not have the advantage then *totar* is a passive, i.e., a *hofal*, and should be written *tutar* and not *totar* which is a *hifil* and a causative. Cf. Filwarg.

⁷ The advantage of this interpretation is that *totar* is not irregularly vocalized. *Al totar* is a *hifil* imperfect with the meaning of a perfect. It literally means you will not gain. Here it means you did not gain anything; that is, you gained nothing by acting rashly. For an alternate interpretation see Krinsky.

⁸ The point is *al totar* cannot be translated as you gained nothing because *al* is an imperative meaning don't. This comment also negates the first interpretation quoted by I.E. since there, too, *al* is not used as an imperative (Filwarg).

⁹ I.E.'s point is that one irregular usage of *al* does not disprove his contention that *al* is always used as an imperative.

not seek any advantage (*al totar*) even one as insignificant as water.¹⁰ Accordingly the *vav* of *totar* is properly vocalized with a *cholam*, and follows the paradigm of *tosaf* (more) in *Think upon the battle, thou wilt do so no more* (*al tosaf*) (Job 40:32).¹¹

Rabbi Saadiah Gaon explains our line as follows: you will not have any advantage over your brothers even one as insignificant as water. According to Saadiah *pachaz* (unstable) comes from the same root as *pochazim* (light, insignificant) in *vain and light* (*pochazim*) *fellows* (Judges 9:4), and the root of the word *pachaz* does not have to be inverted.¹²

¹⁰ In other words *al totar* means do not seek any advantage. This comment presents a problem. I.E. reads, "even one as insignificant as water (*afilu pachaz ka-mayim*)."¹⁰ This reading is extremely difficult since up to now I.E. explains *pachaz ka-mayim* as referring to Reuben's action, not to Reuben's punishment. Filwarg suggests deleting these words. Krinsky and Cherez emend *afilu* to *attah* (you). Weiser suggests that this comment has been misplaced and that its proper place is after Saadiah's comment. In this case I.E. amplifies Saadiah's explanation that *pachaz* means something insignificant. However, it appears that I.E. anticipated Saadiah's interpretation of *pachaz ka-mayim*.

¹¹ *Totar* is a *hifil* and follows the paradigm of *tosaf* which is also a *hifil*. Since *tosaf* is a *hifil* the text should have read *tosef*. But as the word comes at the end of a verse the *tzere* changes to a *patach*. Similarly *totar* should have been written *toter* but as it concludes a segment of a poetical line the *tzere* changes to a *patach*. Cf. Rashi on Job 40:32 (Cherez). Thus *totar* is similar to *tosaf*.

¹² As it must be if we interpret the word to mean unstable. *Pachaz* (unstable) comes from the root *chet, peh, zayin* (*chafaz*) which means to hurry. However, the root of *pachaz* is obviously *peh, chet, zayin*. By interpreting *pachaz* to mean unstable we are saying that we must invert the root *chet, peh, zayin* into *peh, chet, zayin*. However, according to Saadiah *pachaz* has its own root, *peh, chet, zayin*, and means light, insignificant.

THEN DEFILEDST THOU IT. From the day that thou defiled my couch, my conjugal couch was removed.¹³ *Yetzu'i alah* (he went up to my couch) is to be interpreted as if written *yetzu'i alah me'alai* (my conjugal couch went up from me). Furthermore, the word *alah* (went up) at times has the meaning of cut off,¹⁴ as in *O my God, take me not away* (al ta'aleni) *in the midst of my days* (Ps. 102:25).

Our chapter is clearly explained in Chronicles where we read, *Reuben (was) the first-born of Israel...but, forasmuch as he defiled his father's couch, his birthright was given unto the sons of Joseph the son of Israel, and he was not to be reckoned in the genealogy as first-born* (I Chron. 5:1). Chronicles then tells us that Joseph received the birthright and Judah the kingship (*Ibid.* v. 2). Some explain that *and he was not to be reckoned in the genealogy as first-born* means that the listing of the order of the twelve sons would start with Reuben.¹⁵

5. SIMEON AND LEVI ARE BRETHREN. He referred to them as brethren because of what they did to the city of Shechem.¹⁶

THEIR KINSHIP. Some say that the word *mekherotehem* (their kinship) is similar in meaning to *ha-karat* (the show of) in *The show of*

¹³ The part of the verse under discussion reads: Then defiledst thou / my couch went up. I.E. reads "my couch went up" as if written, my couch went up from me. He interprets it to mean, my couch was taken away from me. According to I.E., in Chapter 7 of his *Yesod Mora*, Jacob ceased cohabiting with his wives after Reuben defiled his couch. His reason was: Rachel was dead, Bilhah defiled, and he was angry at Leah because of what her son did and therefore slept neither with her nor her handmaiden Zilpah. "My couch went up" thus means, my conjugal bed ceased to function. Filwarg suggests that the reference may be only to Bilhah.

¹⁴ In this case *yetzu'i alah* means my couch was cut off or destroyed.

¹⁵ In other words, *and he was not to be reckoned in the genealogy as first born* refers to Joseph, not to Reuben.

¹⁶ The point is all twelve sons were brethren, Why, then, does Jacob single out Simeon and Levi as brethren? Scripture tells us that at Shechem *two of the sons of Jacob, Simeon and Levi...took each man his sword, and came upon the city unawares, and slew all the males* (Gen. 34:25). Simeon and Levi were thus brothers in council with regard to the destruction of Shechem (Weiser).

(ha-karat) *their countenance doth witness against them* (Is. 3:9).¹⁷ However, this interpretation is grammatically impossible.¹⁸ Others say that *mekherotehem* is to be rendered their possessions¹⁹ and is to be compared to the word *tikhru* (ye shall buy) in *and ye shall also buy* (*tikhru*) *water of them for money* (Deut. 2:6). However, this, too, is incorrect for the word *tikhru* means to dig.²⁰ Others say that *mekherotehem* is related to the word *mekhirah* (sale) and the meaning of *mekherotehem* is they sold themselves,²¹ as in *a people that jeoparded* (cheref) *their lives unto the death* (Jud. 5:18).²² I believe that *mekherotehem* comes from the same root as *mekhorotayich* (thine origin) (Ezek. 16:3).²³ While the prepositional *bet* is missing from *mekherotehem*,²⁴ we find the same with the word *bet* (house) in *that was found in the house of* (*bet*)²⁵ *the Lord* (II Kings 16:8) and with the word *ma'on* (habitation) in *which I have commanded in My habitation* (*ma'on*) (I Sam. 2:29).²⁶ Our text refers to the violence which Simeon and Levi committed in the land of their origin by deceitfully slaying the entire city of Shechem after making a covenant with them.²⁷

¹⁷ That is, one can tell by looking at them that they employ weapons of violence (Weiser).

¹⁸ *Mekherotehem* and *ha-karat* come from different roots (Weiser).

¹⁹ Our text is thus to be rendered: weapons of violence are their possessions.

²⁰ Deut. 2:6 is thus to be rendered: ye shall dig water of them for money; that is, pay them so that they will give you permission to dig for water (Cherez).

²¹ That is, they sold themselves to weapons of destruction.

²² Cf. Kimchi in Jud. 5:18. Although different verbs are employed in our verse and in Jud. 5:18, the idea is the same. For an alternate interpretation see Krinsky.

²³ It means in the land of their origin.

²⁴ If *mekherotehem* means in their land wherein they dwelt, Scripture should have read *bi-mekherotehem*.

²⁵ Scripture should have read *be-vet* rather than *bet*. We thus see that Scripture occasionally omits the prepositional *bet*.

²⁶ Scripture should have read *be-ma'on* rather than *ma'on*. See above note.

²⁷ Cf. Gen. 34. *Weapons of violence their kinship* should thus be rendered: they employed weapons of violence in the land of their origin.

6. LET MY SOUL NOT COME INTO THEIR COUNCIL. Rabbi Aaron²⁸ explained the word *tavo* (come) in *Let my soul not come* (*tavo*) as having the meaning of set like the meaning of *ba* (goeth down, to set) in *and the sun goeth down* (*ba*) (Eccles. 1:5).²⁹ He interpreted *let my soul not come into their council* as meaning, I do not want to be outside of their council. However, Rabbi Aaron's interpretation inverts the meaning of the verse.³⁰ If Jacob praised Simeon and Levi, why did he mention weapons of violence? Furthermore, Jacob told his sons, *Ye have troubled me, to make me odious unto the inhabitants of the land* (Gen. 34:30).³¹ The truth of the matter is that Simeon and Levi placed Jacob and his household in great jeopardy by their actions in Shechem. Indeed, were it not for the *terror of God that was upon the cities that were round about them* (Gen. 35:5), they would have surrounded Jacob and his family and exterminated them all. He (Rabbi Aaron) similarly explained³² *Cursed be their anger* (v. 7) as meaning *and in their self will they uprooted a cursed wall*,³³ *for their anger was fierce*. The above

²⁸ Gaon of the school of Pumbedita. The great Hai Gaon was among his students.

²⁹ The word *ba* means to come. In Eccles. 1:5 the word *ba* means sets, i.e., when the sun goes down (sets) it is no longer in the sky. Similarly the word *tavo*, which comes from the same root, here means will set. Let my soul not set from their council means let my soul always be in their council.

³⁰ Rabbi Aaron interpreted *Let my soul not come in to their council* to mean let my soul not set from their council. The verse means I do not want my soul to be in their council. Thus Rabbi Aaron's interpretation is precisely the opposite of what the verse actually says.

³¹ We thus see that Jacob was angry at what his sons did to the inhabitants of Shechem and on his deathbed would not praise them for this act.

³² That is, in a positive manner, not that Jacob castigated his sons but praised them for slaying the inhabitants of Shechem and destroying its wall. Rabbi Aaron interprets verses 6-7 as follows: Let my soul not set from their council, from their assembly let my glory not be excluded; For in their anger they slew men, and in their self-will they uprooted a cursed wall; For their anger was fierce, and their wrath it was cruel. Rabbi Aaron interprets verse 8 as follows: I will give them a good portion in Jacob (*achallekem be-ya'akov*) and may they multiply in Israel (*va-afitzem bi'yisra'el*) (Filwarg).

³³ Rabbi Aaron renders *ikkeru shor* (they houghed oxen) as they uprooted a wall.

explanations are unpalatable.³⁴ Let my soul not come into their council.³⁵

Rabbi Moses Ha-Kohen³⁶ says that *kevodi* (my glory) is synonymous with *nafshi* (my soul). He notes that we find the two often used synonymously in the book of Psalms. Rabbi Moses' interpretation is correct since our text repeats itself in different words,³⁷ as is the style of prophetic statements. We thus find, *Ask thy father, and he will declare unto thee, Thine elders, and they will tell thee* (Deut. 32:7), and (in Num. 23:8) *How shall I curse, whom God hath not cursed? And how shall I execrate, whom the Lord hath not execrated? Thus into their council* means the same as *unto their assembly*, come (*tavoh*) the same as be united (*techad*), and *nafshi* the same as *kevodi*. However, Rabbi Judah ben Balam the Spaniard³⁸ says that Rabbi Moses erred. He maintains that *kavod* (glory) refers to the body because the body is the glory (*kavod*) of the soul in the same way that a necklace is the ornament to the neck,³⁹ as we find in the verse *Who satisfieth thy body* (edyekh)

³⁴ Literally, cold, i.e., unpalatable as cold food (Krinsky).

³⁵ I reject them. I.E. takes Jacob's words and gives them a new twist.

³⁶ Rabbi Moses ben Samuel Gikatilla, an 11th century Bible commentator. See I.E. on Gen. 1:26 and the notes thereto.

³⁷ The point is that the second half of the line repeats what the first half said but in different words. In the first half it uses *nafshi*, in the second *kevodi*. However, both mean one and the same.

³⁸ Bible commentator and grammarian who lived in the 10th and 11th centuries. "His commentaries (in Arabic) on most of the Bible are remarkable for their philosophical method and use of comparison with Arabic." (Cecil Roth, *Standard Jewish Encyclopedia*, p. 940).

³⁹ The body is inferior to the soul, yet it is considered the soul's glory in the same way that a necklace, although certainly less important than the neck, is nevertheless called the ornament of the neck (Cherez).

with good things (Ps. 103:5).⁴⁰ Rabbi Judah offers as a proof text,⁴¹ *Yea, let him lay my glory (kevodi) in the dust. Selah.* (Ps. 7:6).⁴²

However, I say that Rabbi Judah errs, for we find Scripture saying, *So that my glory (kevodi) may sing praise to Thee* (Ps. 30:13),⁴³ and *Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory (kevodi) rejoiceth; My flesh* (i.e., my body) *also dwelleth in safety* (Ps. 16:9).⁴⁴

As to the proof which Rabbi Judah offered from *Yea, let him lay my glory in the dust*, it is figurative. What the verse means is that my soul will be lowered as low as possible, i.e., to the dust. Positive proof that my interpretation is correct comes from *My soul (nafshi) cleaveth unto the dust* (Ps. 119:25).⁴⁵

BE UNITED. *Techad* (be united) is related to the word *yachad* (united).⁴⁶ However, according to Rabbi Moses Ha-Kohen, the grammarian of blessed memory, the *tzere* beneath the *tav* of *techad* takes the place of the *alef* of *echad*.⁴⁷ He similarly explains the word *tesham*

⁴⁰ The Hebrew *edyekh* ordinarily means your ornament. J.P.S. translates it as thine old age. Rabbi Judah Balam interprets *edyekh* as referring to the body. However, I.E. in Psalms interprets *edyekh* as referring to the soul.

⁴¹ That *kavod* refers to the body.

⁴² Which proves that glory cannot refer to the soul for it is impossible to lay the soul in the dust.

⁴³ I.E. interprets this verse in his commentaries on Psalms as follows: So that all that have a soul (*kavod*) may sing praise to thee. We thus see that *kavod* refers to the soul. Rabbi Judah might retort that Ps. 30:13 should be interpreted: so that my body may sing praise to thee, or all that have a human form (*kavod*) may sing praise to thee.

⁴⁴ *Kavod* must refer to the soul for otherwise body is mentioned twice in our verse. I.E. in Psalms interprets *my heart* as referring to man's intelligence, *my glory* (kevodi) to man's soul, and *my flesh* to the body.

⁴⁵ This verse certainly must be taken figuratively. Similarly, Ps. 119:25.

⁴⁶ Its root is *yod, chet, dalet*.

⁴⁷ That is, its root is *alef, chet, dalet*.

(be desolate) in *and that the land be not desolate* (tesham) (Gen. 47:19).⁴⁸

[INTO THEIR COUNCIL.] *Be-sodam* (into their council) is analogous to *be-hivvasedam* (while they took council) in *while they took council* (be-hivvasedam) *together against me* (Ps. 31:14).⁴⁹ The meaning of our verse is: since Simeon and Levi's weapons are ones of violence (v. 5), *Let my soul not come into their council*.

THEY SLEW MEN. Scripture employs the term *ish* (man) generically as it does *shor* (ox) and *chamor* (ass) for oxen and asses (Gen. 32:6). *They slew men* alludes to the inhabitants of the city of Shechem.

OXEN. *Shor* (oxen) is to be rendered as wall. We similarly read, *Its branches run over the wall* (*shur*) (v. 22). I have already explained in my work *Moznayim* that the *cholan* and *shuruk* interchange.⁵⁰

[HOUGHED.] *Ikkeru* (houghed) is similar to the word *te'akker* (hough) in *thou shalt hough* (te'akker) *their horses* (Josh. 11:6).⁵¹ This verse shows that Shechem was a large city since it had a wall.

7. CURSED BE THEIR ANGER, FOR IT WAS FIERCE. Jacob either prophesied or offered a prayer that Simeon and Levi's anger would (or should) diminish and that this would be for their very own

⁴⁸ Rabbi Moses Ha-Kohen says that the root of *tesham* is *alef*, *shin*, *mem* and the *tav* is vocalized with a *tzere* to make up for the dropped *alef*. I.E. holds that it comes from the root *yod*, *shin*, *mem*. Cf. I.E.'s comments on Gen. 47:19.

⁴⁹ Both words come from the root *samekh*, *vav*, *dalet* (Krinsky) and mean secret council.

⁵⁰ Therefore the fact that our verse reads *shor* and verse 22 *shur* presents no problem.

⁵¹ According to I.E. *ikkeru shor* is to be translated, they uprooted a wall.

good. For curse is the opposite of bless, and as a blessing means an increase, so a curse means a diminution.⁵²

AND THEIR WRATH. A repetition in different words of *their anger*. The same is true with *I will divide them* and *And scatter them*. The meaning of *I will divide them in Jacob, And scatter them in Israel* is, Simeon and Levi deserve to be separated and disunited. And so it was. For we find that the lot of the tribe of Simeon fell within the inheritance of the tribe of Judah.⁵³ Simeon was thus under Judah's dominion. Furthermore, its cities were discontiguous and scattered throughout the boundary of Judah.⁵⁴ Similarly the forty-eight cities of the tribe of Levi were scattered among the other tribes.

8. JUDAH. Thou art as thy name,⁵⁵ and thy brethren shall so praise thee.⁵⁶ When thy brothers shall see that *Thy hand shall be on the neck of thine enemies; Thy father's sons shall bow down before thee* as to a king. This prophecy came to pass.

[9.] JUDAH IS A LION'S WHELP. Jacob compared Judah to a small lion's whelp, to a type of whelp that grows into a lion.⁵⁷ The

⁵² Thus *Cursed be their anger* means may their anger be diminished or their anger will be diminished.

⁵³ Cf. Josh. 19:1.

⁵⁴ In addition to having their inheritance within the tribe of Judah, their cities were also scattered within Judah's boundaries (Weiser).

⁵⁵ That is, thy name Judah means praise.

⁵⁶ The verse literally reads: Judah thou, thy brethren shall praise thee. I.E. interprets thus: Judah thou art as thy name and thy brethren shall so praise thee.

⁵⁷ The Hebrew reads, *gur aryeh*. *Gur* (whelp) can be applied to any young animal. I.E. points out that *gur* (whelp) *aryeh* (lion) means a *gur* that grows up to be a lion, that is, a *gur* of the lion family (Cherez).

comparative *caf* (meaning like) has been omitted,⁵⁸ as it is in *When a wild ass's colt (ayir pere) is born a man* (Job. 11:12).⁵⁹

FROM THE PREY, MY SON, THOU ART GONE UP. My son, you appear to me as a lion's whelp when thou art gone up from the prey. *From the prey* means after tearing a prey apart.⁶⁰ This is its plain meaning. For us to interpret it as referring to the saving of Joseph,⁶¹ Scripture should have written *he'elita* (thou brought up)⁶² rather than *alita* (thou art come up) which is an intransitive verb. The rest of the verse⁶³ is proof that the first part of the verse deals with Judah's tearing of a prey and not with Judah's saving of Joseph from being a prey. Observe the verse *And she brought up (va-ta'al) one of her whelps* (Ezek. 19:3).⁶⁴

[HE STOOPED DOWN, HE COUCHED AS A LION.] After a lion tears its prey it sits on its knees and couches in security and no other passing animal⁶⁵ will cause it to get up and flee.

⁵⁸ Scripture reads: Judah is a lion's whelp. It should have read: Judah is as a lion's whelp (*ke-gur*).

⁵⁹ There, too, a *caf* should have been placed before *ayir pere* (a wild ass's colt). We thus see that Scripture occasionally omits the comparative *caf*. However, it should be supplied by the reader.

⁶⁰ According to Weiser.

⁶¹ That it means: from the prey you brought up (saved) my son (Joseph). So Cherez. Judah saved Joseph by saying, *What profit is it if we slay our brother and conceal his blood* (Gen. 37:26).

⁶² The *hifil*.

⁶³ Which reads, *He stooped down, he couched as a lion*, etc. (Cherez). According to Krinsky and Weiser: the next verse, which reads, *The scepter shall not depart from Judah, Nor the ruler's staff from between his feet*, is proof that our verse deals with Judah's ability as a warrior and not with his saving Joseph. I.E. literally reads: "The following verse is proof." Filwarg suggests that the word "following" is a scribal error.

⁶⁴ And you will see that when Scripture wants to say brought up, it employs the *hifil va-ta'al*. Cf. Kimchi on Ezek. 19:3. Also see Cherez.

⁶⁵ The lion is not afraid of any other species of animal.

10. THE SCEPTRE SHALL NOT DEPART FROM JUDAH. The sceptre of greatness shall not depart from Judah until David, who inaugurated the Kingdom of Judah, comes.⁶⁶ And so it was. Observe that in Israel's march toward the promised land, the standard of the tribe of Judah set forth in the first (Num. 10:14).⁶⁷ God also said, *Judah shall go up first* (Jud. 1:1, 2).⁶⁸

[NOR THE RULER'S STAFF.] A scribe (*mechokek*) who will write (*she-yachok*) in a book.⁶⁹

[FROM BETWEEN HIS FEET.] Scribes sit at the feet of the ruler.⁷⁰

SHILOH. Some interpret *Shiloh* as Onkelos does. They say that it means "his."⁷¹ Others say that *Shiloh* comes from the same root as *u-ve-*

⁶⁶ The verse reads, *The scepter shall not depart from Judah...as long as men come to Shiloh*. The last part of the latter quote literally reads, until Shiloh cometh. I.E. interprets *shiloh* as referring to David, hence his interpretation: the scepter shall not depart from Judah...until David comes. Later in his commentary I.E. explains why Shiloh refers to David.

⁶⁷ We thus see that the tribe of Judah was pre-eminent.

⁶⁸ *After the death of Joshua,...the children of Israel asked of the Lord saying: Who shall go up for us to fight against the Canaanites, to fight against them? And the Lord said: Judah shall go up* (Jud. 1:1, 2). I.E. reads, "Judah shall go up first." Either I.E. quoted from memory and erred or he amplified the Biblical verse. According to Krinsky the reference is to Jud. 20:18. There we read, with regard to the war against Benjamin, that Israel asked of the Lord, "Who shall go up to fight Benjamin first?" Scripture tells us, *And the Lord said: Judah first*. According to Krinsky, I.E. combined Jud. 1:2 and 2:18.

⁶⁹ I.E. renders *mechokek* (ruler's staff) as scribe. The root *chet, kof, kof* means to inscribe. Cf. Is. 30:8, *And inscribe (chukkah) it in a book*. Thus *mechokek* is an inscriber, i.e., a scribe.

⁷⁰ According to Cohen.

⁷¹ Onkelos renders *ad ki yavo shiloh* (literally, until shiloh cometh) as until the Messiah, to whom is the kingdom (shiloh meaning *shelo*, his) cometh. I.E. says that it is possible to so interpret the verse but to apply it to David rather than to the Messiah (Filwarg).

shilyatah (and against her afterbirth) (Deut. 28:57).⁷² Others connect it to the Rabbinic term *shalil* (embryo).⁷³ There is also a commentator who says that *shiloh* refers to the city Shilo. He would explain *yavo* to mean goeth down, as in *and the sun goeth down* (ba) (Eccles. 1:5).⁷⁴ Or he would maintain that our verse is abridged and should read as if written *ad ki yavo ketz shilo* (until the end of Shiloh comes).⁷⁵ For it is written, *And he forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh* (Ps. 78:60), and then, *He chose David also His servant* (Ps. 78:70). The latter interpretation is also not implausible.

It is also possible that *Shiloh* means his son, with the *heh* taking the place of the *vav*,⁷⁶ as in the word *oholoh* (his tent) (Gen. 9:21), and that the word *shiloh* comes from the same root as *tashleh* (give birth) in *lo tashleh oti* (don't cause me to give birth) (II Kings 4:28).⁷⁷

[OBEDIENCE.] The word *yikkehat* (obedience of) is similar to the word *li-kehat* in *to obey* (li-kehat) *his mother* (Prov. 30:17).⁷⁸ The *yod* of *yikkehat* is a third person imperfect prefix.⁷⁹ The meaning of *ve-lo yikkehat ammim* is that nations shall obey him. Jacob's prophecy came

⁷² That is, it means a child. *Shilyah* means the afterbirth, or placenta and, by extension, the child which was in the placenta. The meaning of *ad ki yavo shiloh* thus is: until the child comes, the reference being until David from the house of Judah comes (Filwarg). Krinsky and Weiser apply it to the Messiah. Filwarg's interpretation seems to be correct in view of the fact that I.E. explicitly states that this verse applies to David.

⁷³ The interpretation being the same as in the note above.

⁷⁴ See note 29. And *ad ki yavo shilo* means until Shilo goeth down (is destroyed).

⁷⁵ Cohen. That is, Judah's pre-eminence will continue throughout the period of Shiloh and when that is destroyed, it will be superseded by the royal line of David.

⁷⁶ If *shiloh* means his son, then the word should end in a *vav* rather than in a *heh*, as the *vav* with a *cholem* suffixed to a noun is the sign of the pronoun his. I.E. here accepts the interpretation that *shiloh* means his son. However, he connects it to the words *tashleh* rather than to *shelil* or *shilyah* as was done above (Filwarg).

⁷⁷ Don't pray to God that I should give birth (Weiser, Cherez).

⁷⁸ They both come from the root *kof*, *heh*, *tov* meaning obedience.

⁷⁹ A *yod* prefixed to a verb is the sign of the third person future.

true, for we find that many nations were subservient to David and his son Solomon.

Our phrase (v. 10) does not mean that the sceptre shall depart from Judah when David comes.⁸⁰ Our verse may be compared to someone saying, so and so will not lack bread until the time that he will have many vineyards and fields. *For I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of*, viz., returning you to the land of Canaan (Gen. 28:15), is identical.⁸¹

11. BINDING. The *yod* of *oseri* (binding) is superfluous.⁸² It is similar to the superfluous *yods* of *ha-yoshevi* (that are enthroned) (Ps. 123:1)⁸³ and *le-susati* (to a steed) (Cant. 1:9)⁸⁴ both of which are superfluous.

HIS FOAL. *Iroh* (his foal) is similar to *ayarim* (ass colts) in *on thirty ass colts* (*ayarim*) (Jud. 10:4).⁸⁵ The *yod* of *beni* (colt) in *beni atono* (his ass's colt) is superfluous.⁸⁶ The meaning of our verse then is: Binding

⁸⁰ According to I.E. our verse reads: the scepter shall not depart from Judah...until his son (David) comes. This implies that when David comes, the scepter shall depart from Judah.

⁸¹ Krinsky, Weiser.

⁸² The usual form is *oser*.

⁸³ The usual form is *ha-yoshev*.

⁸⁴ The usual form is *le-susah*.

⁸⁵ The singular is *ayir* and it means a young and vigorous male ass. The *heh* of *iroh* is in place of a *vav* as is indicated by the *keri* (Krinsky).

⁸⁶ *Beni atono* is a variation of *ben atono*. *Beni* thus does not mean my son.

his foal unto the vine and binding his ass's colt unto the choice vine, for the word binding is to be read as if written twice.⁸⁷

UNTO THE CHOICE VINE. Scripture repeats the same idea in different words, for *sorekah* (vine) means the same as *gefen*, and *ayir* (foal) the same as *aton*. Similarly, *And his vesture in the blood of grapes*.⁸⁸

Some say that *suto* (his vesture) is the word *kesuto* (his vesture) with the *kaf* missing.⁸⁹ However, I believe that *sutoh* comes from the same root as *masveh* (veil) (Ex. 34:33).⁹⁰ The meaning of our verse is that his vineyards will produce so many grapes that Judah will bind⁹¹ his foal to the vine and he will not care if the animal eats of the grapes; and he will have so much wine that he will wash his garments in wine rather than in water. Scripture terms wine *the blood of grapes* because wine is red.⁹² The Bible speaks figuratively here, as it does in *And it shall come to pass*

⁸⁷ The text has "binding" once. I.E. notes that it applies both to *his foal* and to *his ass's colt*. This translation follows *Vat. Ebr.* 38 which reads, "*ve-yehi perusho oseri la-gefen...ki...*, and its meaning is: Binding his foal...because *oseri* is to be read as if written twice." The printed text reads, "*o yehiyeh pirusho ki...* or its meaning is because *oseri* is to be read as if written twice." This reading is impossible. It implies that according to the first interpretation (that the *yod* of *oseri* is superfluous) *oseri* does not apply to the second part of the verse. However, according to the first interpretation *oseri* also refers to the second part of the verse as well, for how else can we interpret *And his ass's colt unto the choice vine*, except by: And binding his ass's colt unto the choice vine. Both Filwarg and Cherez note that I.E.'s comment as written in the printed text is incomprehensible. They suggest their own emendation. However, the reading in *Vat. Ebr.* 38 eliminates most of the difficulties. The reading in the printed texts probably arose because a scribe omitted *Binding his foal*, etc., and a latter scribe changed *ve-yehiyeh* to *o yehiyeh* in an attempt to make sense out of the remaining fragment. However, he failed to do so.

⁸⁸ Which means the same as *his garments in wine*.

⁸⁹ Thus *sutoh* comes from the root *caf*, *samekh*, *heh* which gives us the noun *kesut* (a covering, a vesture) (Cherez).

⁹⁰ In this case the root of *sutoh* is *samekh*, *vav*, *heh*. Both opinions agree that *sutoh* means a vesture. They differ only in explaining the word's origin.

⁹¹ Reading *ye'esor* as in *Vat. Ebr.* 38.

⁹² Cf. Prov. 23:31, *Look not thou upon the wine when it is red*.

in that day, That the mountains shall drop down sweet wine, And the hills shall flow with milk (Joel 4:18).

The land will produce so much wine that Judah will be called "red eyes" because of the great amount of wine that he will drink.⁹³ He will be so called because the eyes of one who drinks much wine look red.⁹⁴ Similarly Judah's teeth will be white from the large amount of milk that he will drink.⁹⁵

12. AND HIS TEETH WHITE. *U-leven* (white) is an adjective modifying *shinnayim* (teeth).⁹⁶ *Shinnayim* is in the dual form because the teeth are arranged in two sets.⁹⁷

Saadia Gaon, of blessed memory, explains *His eyes shall be red with wine* to mean that his eyes shall be redder than wine. He similarly explains *And his teeth white with milk* to mean that his teeth shall be whiter than milk.⁹⁸ Others say that *And his teeth white with milk* means

⁹³ The verse literally reads: red eyes from wine. I.E. interprets accordingly.

⁹⁴ Cf. Prov. 23:29, 30, *Who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine.*

⁹⁵ So *Vat. Ebr.* 38. The printed texts have "from eating milk." But milk is drunk not eaten. The verse literally reads: and his teeth white from milk. I.E. interprets accordingly.

⁹⁶ I.E.'s point is that *u-leven shinnayim* means white teeth not whiteness of teeth; hence he points out that *u-leven* is an adjective (Filwarg).

⁹⁷ The dual form is usually limited to nouns that come in pairs, i.e., *oznayim* (ears), *yadayim* (hands). However, there is more than one tooth in the mouth. Hence the plural of *shen* (tooth) should not be in the dual form. I.E. thus explains that *shinnayim* is in the dual form because teeth come in two sets, an upper and a lower.

⁹⁸ The Hebrew reads *mi-yayin* (with wine), and *me-chalav* (with milk). The *mem* can have the meaning more than. Thus *mi-yayin* can mean more than wine, and *me-chalav*, more than milk.

that he will not eat an unclean thing and will not follow what his eyes see.⁹⁹ The latter is a ridiculous homily.¹⁰⁰

Jacob at first enumerated the tribes¹⁰¹ in the order of their birth. However, he listed Zebulun before Issachar because Issachar's inheritance fell between Zebulun and Dan.¹⁰²

13. AT THE SHORE OF THE SEA. This, too, is proof that Jacob prophesied.¹⁰³

The meaning of *le-chof* (at the shore) is, at the border of. It comes from the same root as *chofef* (covereth) in *He covereth (chofef) him all the day* (Deut. 33:12). The border of the sea is called *chof* because it "covers" the boats as boats cannot be anchored in places that are open to the wind.¹⁰⁴

⁹⁹ According to Krinsky the reference is to an oath that Judah took to be especially scrupulous in what he would eat and what he would look upon (women). Judah considered certain permitted foods as "unclean" and abstained from them. Judah took his oath of superpiety after the incident of Tamar (Gen. 39) as a form of penance and to ensure that henceforth he would act more saintly.

¹⁰⁰ It implies that the other brothers were not as saintly as Judah in that they did not take the same oath that Judah did (Krinsky). Or this interpretation is extremely far fetched because there is no allusion to it in the text.

¹⁰¹ Jacob in prophesying about his children first prophesied about the sons of Leah, then about the sons of the handmaids, and finally concerning the sons of Rachel. In prophesying about the sons of Leah, Jacob followed the order of their birth. However, in prophesying concerning the sons of the handmaidens he did not follow the order of their birth. That is what I.E. means by *Jacob at first listed the tribes in order of their birth*.

¹⁰² Hence Issachar is listed between Zebulun and Dan. Cf. Josh. 19.

¹⁰³ This verse is obviously a prophecy that Zebulun would inherit a portion which borders on the sea shore in the land of Israel. This supports I.E.'s contention that Jacob's final words to his children recorded in Chap. 49 are prophesies. Cf. I.E.'s comments on verse 1.

¹⁰⁴ Thus the border or shore (*chof*) protects or covers (*chofef*) the ships. Weiser suggests that what I.E. means by border is an inlet where the ships are anchored for protection.

AND HIS FLANK SHALL BE UPON ZIDON. His flank shall extend to Zidon.¹⁰⁵

14. ISSACHAR IS A LARGE-BONED ASS. Jacob compared Issachar to an ass whose bones are heavy.¹⁰⁶ *Chamor* (ass) is in the construct with *garem* (bones).¹⁰⁷ Due to the heaviness of his bones, he is wont to couch.¹⁰⁸

BETWEEN THE SHEEPFOLDS. *Ben ha-mishpatayim* (between the sheepfolds) means between the arranged rows.¹⁰⁹ It is possible that *mishpatayim* comes from the same root as *tishpot* (arrange) in *Lord, Thou wilt arrange* (*tishpot*) *peace for us* (Is. 26:12).

15. FOR HE SAW A RESTING-PLACE THAT IT WAS GOOD. When Issachar saw that his land and resting-place were pleasant, he, as an ass, bowed his shoulder to bear any and all burdens and became as a servant that pays levies. Scripture says this concerning Issachar because this tribe did not consist of warriors and its men did not want to leave their homes to go to war. Moses similarly said concerning Issachar, *Rejoice...Issachar, in thy tents* (Deut. 33:18). The levy mentioned in our verse may refer to Issachar's payment of a money levy to the king in

¹⁰⁵ His border shall extend to Zidon (Weiser)

¹⁰⁶ That is, strong (Krinsky).

¹⁰⁷ *Chamor garem* thus means an ass (*chamor*) of heavy bones (*garem*), rather than a heavy-boned ass. I.E.'s point is that *garem* is not an adjective modifying *chamor* (Filwarg, Weiser).

¹⁰⁸ According to Filwarg. The point is that this type of beast carries heavy loads and therefore often couches down to rest when burdened. It should be noted that I.E. is vague and that Weiser, Cherez and Krinsky offer other interpretations.

¹⁰⁹ I.E. does not tell us what he means by "arranged rows." The reference may be to the burdens borne by the ass which are arranged in two rows, one on the right side of the animal and one on the left (Krinsky), or to the rows of the sheep-folds (Weiser).

Israel in lieu of furnishing soldiers for his army, or it may refer to a payment of money to foreign nations that they should not attack them.¹¹⁰

16. DAN SHALL JUDGE HIS PEOPLE. Jacob hinted that Dan, although born of a handmaid, would have a standard just as the tribes born of the wives did.¹¹¹ Dan was thus a ruler over all the other tribes that were descended from the handmaids.¹¹²

[17. A SERPENT.] Jacob compared Dan in his strength to a serpent.¹¹³ It is also possible that *shefifon* (a horned snake) comes from the same root as *yeshufekha* (they shall bruise thy) in *they shall bruise thy* (*yeshufekha*) *head* (Gen. 3:15).¹¹⁴ According to this interpretation *shefifon ale orach* (a horned snake in the path) means the same as *nachash ale derech* (a serpent in the way).

18. [I WAIT FOR THY SALVATION, O LORD.] When the serpent bites the horse's heel, it is afraid that the rider will smash its head with his sword. Hence the prophet prayed, *I wait for Thy salvation, O Lord*.¹¹⁵ The "thy" of *Thy salvation* refers to Dan.¹¹⁶ The meaning of our verse is: I trust to God for thy salvation. It is also possible that

¹¹⁰ *Vat. Ebr.* 38 reads, "or to foreign nations who attacked them." The point is that the tribe of Issachar were as servants (*mas oved*) because they paid a levy either to the king of Israel or to foreign nations.

¹¹¹ For the standards see Num. 2. The four tribes with standards were: Reuben, Judah, Ephraim and Dan. The first three were descended from Jacob's wives, Dan was the son of Bilhah, Rachael's handmaid.

¹¹² This explains *Dan shall judge his people*, i.e., he shall be a ruler over the tribes descended from the handmaids.

¹¹³ Scripture says that Dan shall be a serpent in the way. I.E. points out that Jacob compared Dan to a serpent only with regard to his ability to harm his enemies.

¹¹⁴ Hence *shefifon* means a snake. It is so called because it bruises (Krinsky).

¹¹⁵ When the serpent strikes (*that biteth the horse's heels, so that his rider falleth backward*), he is not out of danger. The rider can still kill him. Hence Jacob prayed that God be with Dan so that when he struck his enemy he would escape safely.

¹¹⁶ The *caf* of *li-shu'atekha* (for thy salvation) does not refer to God but to Dan. I.E. interprets thus because he believes our verse to be a prayer to God on behalf of Dan.

Scripture employs a noun (salvation) in place of an infinitive.¹¹⁷ Our verse should thus be rendered: I trust that God will save thee. *Thy salvation* in *We will shout for joy in thy salvation* (Ps. 20:6) is similar.¹¹⁸ The aforementioned is the case whether the "thy" of *thy salvation* (Ps. 20:6) refers to King David or to the anointed, his son.¹¹⁹ Rabbi Samuel Ha-Nagid says that the word *va-yomer* has been omitted from our clause and it should be read as if written: and he will say (*va-yomer*), I wait for Thy salvation, O Lord.¹²⁰

Rabbi Isaac¹²¹ explains our verse as follows: when the prophet Jacob prophetically saw his son Dan in the form of a serpent, he was overtaken by fright and exclaimed, "Save me, O Lord."¹²²

19. GAD. Jacob prophesied that a troop (an army) would attack Gad but that he would ultimately be victorious.¹²³

SHALL TROOP UPON HIM. *Yegudennu* (shall troop upon him) is similar to *yegudennu* (he invadeth) in *the people that he invadeth*

¹¹⁷ I.E. interprets *li-shu'atekha* (for thy salvation) as if written *le-hoshi'akha*. The latter is a verb, the former a noun.

¹¹⁸ Here, too, the "thy" in *thy salvation* does not refer to God.

¹¹⁹ The Messiah (Cherez). Any of the Judean kings descended from David (Weiser). The point is that the *caf* suffixed to *yeshu'ah* (salvation or victory) does not refer to God. The same holds true in our verse (Filwarg, Cherez). *Vat. Ebr.* 38 reads, "Thy salvation (thy victory) is similar in that "thy" refers either to David or to the anointed his son."

¹²⁰ The subject of *va-yomer* is Dan, i.e., Dan after biting the horse's heel will say, *I wait for Thy salvation, O Lord* (Filwarg). According to this interpretation "thy" in *Thy salvation* refers to God.

¹²¹ According to Weiser, the reference is to Rabbi Isaac, one of the early Gaonim of Sura.

¹²² "Save me, O Lord" is a paraphrase of, *I wait for Thy salvation, O Lord*. According to this interpretation also, "thy" in *Thy salvation* refers to God. The reason for Jacob's fright was explained by I.E. at the beginning of his comment.

¹²³ This is the meaning of *But he shall troop upon their heel*, heel meaning in the end. Cf. I.E.'s comments on Gen. 3:15.

(yegudennu) (Hab. 3:16).¹²⁴ *Yagud* (he shall troop), like *gedud* (a troop), comes from the root *gimel, dalet, dalet*.¹²⁵ It is vocalized with a *shuruk* in place of a *cholam* like the word *yarun* (doth sing) in *But the righteous doth sing (yarun) and rejoice* (Prov. 29:6).¹²⁶ We do not know exactly to what incident Jacob was referring because we don't know all the tribulations that our ancestors endured.¹²⁷

20. AS FOR ASHER. Some say that the *mem* of *me-asher* (as for Asher) is superfluous.¹²⁸ However, I believe that what our clause means is: from the land of Asher "fat bread" will come.¹²⁹ Bread in our verse is in the feminine.¹³⁰ We find the same to be the case with the words

¹²⁴ Hence *Gad gedud yegudennu* (Gad, a troop shall troop upon him) means, Gad, a troop shall invade or attack him.

¹²⁵ I. E.'s point is that *gedud* (a troop), *yegudennu* (shall troop upon him) and *yagud* (he shall troop) all come from the same double root, *gimel, dalet, dalet*. That *gedud* comes from this root is obvious. That *yagud* and *yegudennu* (*yagud* plus the suffix *nu*) come from this root is not as apparent. Double root letters are vocalized with a *cholam* and *ayin vav* roots with a *shuruk* in the *kal* imperfect. It thus appears that *yagud* and *yegudennu* come from the root *gimel, vav, dalet*, hence I.E.'s comment.

¹²⁶ *Yarun* comes from the root *resh, nun, nun*, so it should have been vocalized *yaron*. We thus see that at times a double root is vocalized as an *ayin vav* (Cherez).

¹²⁷ Cherez. We do not know when the tribe of Gad was attacked by an invading army.

¹²⁸ None of the other tribes have a *mem* prefixed to their names (Weiser). Our verse should thus be translated: Asher, his bread shall be fat.

¹²⁹ Or fat food, following *Vat. Ebr.* 38 which reads *lechem shamen*. Our texts have *lechem va-shemen* (bread and oil). However, this reading is incorrect in view of I.E.'s interpretation of *shemenah* as being an adjective of *lechem*. See next note. According to this interpretation the *mem* prefixed to Asher is a preposition meaning from.

¹³⁰ The text reads, *shemenah lachmo* (his bread shall be fat). *Shemenah* is a feminine, the masculine being *shamen*. In other places *lechem* is in the masculine, i.e., Num. 4:7; I Sam. 9:7.

house,¹³¹ place,¹³² hand,¹³³ fire,¹³⁴ eye,¹³⁵ wind,¹³⁶ land,¹³⁷ chest¹³⁸ and people.¹³⁹

[ROYAL DAINTIES.] The meaning of *ma'adanne melekh* (royal dainties) is known.¹⁴⁰ Moses similarly said concerning Asher, *And let him dip his foot in oil* (Deut. 33:24).¹⁴¹

21. NAPHTALI IS A HIND LET LOOSE. The word *sheluchah* (let loose) means a gift,¹⁴² and the one who receives such a gift responds with goodly words.¹⁴³

¹³¹ *Bayit* (house) is masculine in Deut. 22:8 and feminine in II Kings 15:5.

¹³² *Makom* (place) is masculine in Gen. 1:9 and feminine in Job 20:9.

¹³³ *Yad* (hand) is masculine in Ezek. 2:9 and feminine in Ex. 14:31. *Yad* is generally feminine.

¹³⁴ *Esh* (fire) is masculine in Ps. 104:4 and feminine in Num. 16:35.

¹³⁵ *Ayin* (eye) is masculine in Prov. 4:25 and feminine in Gen. 3:7. *Ayin* is generally feminine.

¹³⁶ *Ru'ach* (wind) is masculine in Job 1:19 and feminine in Gen. 1:2.

¹³⁷ *Eretz* is masculine in Is. 9:18 and feminine in Gen. 1:2. *Eretz* is generally feminine.

¹³⁸ *Aron* (chest) is masculine in Num. 10:33 and feminine in I Sam. 4:17. It is generally masculine.

¹³⁹ *Am* (people) is masculine in Gen. 11:6 and feminine in Ex. 5:16. *Am* is usually masculine.

¹⁴⁰ The meaning of *ve-hu yitten ma'adanne melekh* (and he shall yield royal dainties) is that Asher will provide kings with food for their enjoyment. He will do so because his land is very fertile and produces the choicest foods (*Cherez*).

¹⁴¹ Moses similarly said that Asher's land would be fertile, for the aforementioned is the meaning of Moses' blessing (Deut. 33:24).

¹⁴² I Kings 9:16, *and given it for a portion* (*shilluchim*) *unto his daughter*. The meaning of *Naphtali is a hind let loose* thus is: Naphtali is as beloved and as beautiful as a hind given as a gift (Weiser). Filwarg suggests rendering: Naphtali has a land which is as precious as a hind given as a gift.

¹⁴³ *He giveth* cannot refer to *ayyalah* (hind) which is feminine. Hence it must refer to the one receiving the gift.

Others say that *hind* refers to Deborah and that *He giveth goodly words* alludes to Barak who joined her in a song to God.¹⁴⁴ Scripture mentions Naphtali¹⁴⁵ because Barak came from the tribe of Naphtali.¹⁴⁶

22. JOSEPH IS A FRUITFUL VINE. *Ben* means a branch¹⁴⁷ and it is a feminine noun.¹⁴⁸ *Ben* in *And the branch (ben) that Thou madest strong for Thyself* (Ps. 80:16) has a similar meaning. Grammatically speaking *porat* (fruitful) is a *po'elet*. A feminine singular participle can come in two paradigms,¹⁴⁹ viz., *oyevah* and *oyevet*, and similarly *porah* and *porat*.¹⁵⁰ The word *porat* is related to the word *poriyyah* (fruitful) (Ps. 128:3). There is a commentator who connects *porat* to the word *porot* (branches) in *And brought forth branches* (*porot*) (Ezek. 17:6).¹⁵¹

The Bible repeats the phrase *ben porot* twice in succession, for that is Hebrew style. Compare, *For, lo, Thine enemies, O Lord, For, lo, Thine enemies shall perish* (Ps. 92:10). The repetition of a phrase indicates

¹⁴⁴ Cf. Jud. 5:1.

¹⁴⁵ Scripture tells us that Deborah sat...in the hill country of Ephraim (Jud. 4:5). The latter indicates that Deborah was not a Naphtalite. The question arises, "If Deborah was not a Naphtalite why mention her in a prophecy which pertains to Naphtali?" I.E. answers that Barak, the general whom Deborah inspired to lead Israel to victory and who joined her in song to God, came from the tribe of Naphtali. Cf. Jud. 4:6, *Barak...out of Kedesh-naphtali*.

¹⁴⁶ Filwarg suggests rendering, "Scripture mentions Naphtali because the battle in which Deborah and Barak played a key role took place in the territory of Naphtali." The literal reading of I.E. is, *Scripture mentions Naphtali because of his inheritance*.

¹⁴⁷ *Ben* means a son. Metaphorically speaking, the branch is the son of the tree. Hence *ben* can also mean a branch (Cherez).

¹⁴⁸ *Ben* is usually masculine. However, *porat* is feminine. Thus *ben* in *ben porat yosef* (Joseph is a fruitful branch) has to be feminine. If *ben* was masculine our phrase would read *ben poreh yosef*.

¹⁴⁹ The two paradigms being *po'alah* and *po'elet*, examples of which are *oyevah* and *oyevet*. A more common example would be *kotevah* and *kotevet*, or *shomerah* and *shomeret*. The translation follows *Vat. Ebr.* 38. Our texts have *oyeveha* and *oyavti*. The latter appears to be a scribal error (Weiser, Krinsky, Cherez).

¹⁵⁰ *Porah* is a *po'alah* and *porat* is a *po'elet*.

¹⁵¹ In this case *ben* means a plant and *porat* a branch. According to this interpretation *ben porat yosef* means Joseph is a plant containing branches (Krinsky).

permanence. According to the second quoted interpretation¹⁵² a *tav* has been substituted for a *heh*¹⁵³ as in the case of the *tav* of *ve-shavat* (then it shall return) in *then it shall return (ve-shavat) to the prince* (Ezek. 46:17).¹⁵⁴

[ITS BRANCHES RUN OVER THE WALL.] Joseph was as a fruitful vine. He gave birth to branches, each one of which ran over the wall; i.e., the branches were so tall that they ran over fortified walls.¹⁵⁵

Scripture here combines *banot* (branches) with *tza'adah* (run)¹⁵⁶ in a manner similar to *Dead flies (zevuv) make the ointment of the perfumer fetid (yavish)* (Eccles. 10:1).¹⁵⁷

23. HAVE DEALT BITTERLY WITH HIM. Rabbi Samuel Ha-Nagid explains this verse as meaning: they set his gall for a target (*va-yemareruhu*)¹⁵⁸ and then the archers shot at him (*va-robbu*).¹⁵⁹ The word *rabbim* (archers) in *Call together the archers (rabbim) against Babylon, All them that bend the bow* (Jer. 50:29) is similar to *va-robbu*

¹⁵² That *porat* is related to *porot* (in Ezek. 17:6)

¹⁵³ In the word *porat*. If *porat* means a branch then our verse should have read *ben porah*, since *porah* is the singular of *porot* (branches). Thus *porat* is a variation of *porah*.

¹⁵⁴ The verse should have read *ve-shavah* instead of *ve-shavat*. Thus we see that a *tav* has been substituted for a *heh*.

¹⁵⁵ I.E. explains *shur* (wall) to mean a wall which serves a defensive purpose (Krinsky). Such walls are high and strong. I.E. is saying that the branches grew very high (Cohen) or that the branches were so tall that they needed a mighty wall to support them (Krinsky).

¹⁵⁶ *Banot* is a noun in the plural, while *tza'adah* is a verb in the singular. If consistent, the text should read, *banot tza'adu*. I.E. explains that the combination of plural and singular means each one of the branches will run over the wall.

¹⁵⁷ Wherein *zevuv* is in the plural and *yavish* is in the singular. The meaning of this verse is that each one of the dead flies makes the ointment of the perfumer fetid. Cf. I.E.'s comments on Eccles. 10:1.

¹⁵⁸ *Mererah* means gall, hence Rabbi Samuel Ha-Nagid's interpretation.

¹⁵⁹ Reading *yaru*, as in *Vat. Ebr.* 38.

in our verse.¹⁶⁰ *His archers compass me round about...He poureth out my gall upon the ground* (Job 16:13) is similar to our verse.¹⁶¹

AND HATED HIM. First they hated him and then they set up his gall as a target. We must thus explain *va-yistemuhu* to mean, and they had hated him.¹⁶² This¹⁶³ alludes to Joseph's brothers who sold him into slavery.

24. BUT HIS BOW ABODE FIRM. His bow abode in a firm place.¹⁶⁴

WERE MADE SUPPLE. *Va-yafozzu* means, and they strengthened themselves. I believe that *va-yafozzu* comes from the same root as *mefazzez* (leaping) (II Sam. 6:16).¹⁶⁵ There are those who connect *va-yafozzu* to the word *paz* (pure gold).¹⁶⁶ However, their interpretation makes no sense.

The meaning of our text (v. 23 and 24) is that the archers hated Joseph and gathered together to spill his gall. However, his adversaries were afraid of him because his bow and hands were strong. They therefore could not overcome him.

¹⁶⁰ We thus see that the word *rabbim* means archers. *Va-robbu* is its verbal form. The root of the word is *resh, bet, bet*.

¹⁶¹ In that it speaks of the gall as a target for archers (Cherez).

¹⁶² *Va-yistemuhu* (and hated him) follows *va-robbu* (and they shot at him). Logically, *va-yistemuhu* should come first, i.e., the sequence should be they hated him, they set his gall as a target, and they shot at him. Hence *va-yistemuhu* should be taken as a pluperfect (Weiser).

¹⁶³ The archers who hated and shot at Joseph.

¹⁶⁴ *Be-etan* literally means in firm, which is short for *be-makom etan* (in a firm place) (Weiser).

¹⁶⁵ One who leaps gathers up strength (Filwarg). One who leaps strengthens (tightens) his girdle (Cherez quoting Kimchi).

¹⁶⁶ They explain *va-yafozzu zero'e yadav* (and the arms of his hand were made supple) to mean, and the arms of his hand were gilded, an allusion to the golden ring Pharaoh gave him. Cf. Rashi.

BY THE HANDS OF THE MIGHTY ONE OF JACOB. FROM THENCE. *The Mighty One of Jacob* alludes to the Lord. From the power that Joseph received from *the Mighty One of Jacob* he was able to become, and indeed became, "the shepherd of the stone of Israel."¹⁶⁷ And so it was, for we read, *And Joseph sustained his father, and his brethren, and all his father's household, with bread* (Gen. 47:12). Jacob employed the term *Mighty One of Jacob* for God¹⁶⁸ because God knew of his deep love for Joseph.¹⁶⁹

The meaning of *stone* is the very thing.¹⁷⁰ Some say¹⁷¹ that *mi-sham* (from thence) should be interpreted from that time. However, we never find the word *sham* (there) to have this meaning anywhere in Scripture. This commentator also interprets *the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel* as meaning: the one whose heart died and was as stone,¹⁷² but who revived to feed (*ro'eh*), i.e., to live by eating. However, this interpretation is farfetched.

¹⁶⁷ *The Stone of Israel* refers to the children of Israel (Cherez).

¹⁶⁸ Jacob could have employed the term, the Mighty One of Abraham or the Mighty One of Isaac (Krinsky).

¹⁶⁹ Joseph became "the shepherd of Israel" because of Jacob's merit. God chose Joseph for this great honor and thereby elevated him above all his brothers because the Lord knew Jacob's love for Joseph. Hence *By the hands of the Mighty One of Jacob etc.* means: you became the shepherd of the stone (children) of Israel from the power that came to you from the God who knew of my deep love for you.

¹⁷⁰ *Stone* represents essence, the very thing. The reference is to Jacob and his family. Cf. Rashi.

¹⁷¹ The reference is to Rabbi Isaac ibn Giat (Weiser, Cherez).

¹⁷² The reference is to Jacob whose heart died within him when he was told that Joseph was alive (Gen. 45:26, 27). In I Sam. 25:37 such an experience is described as the heart turning to stone (Weiser, Cherez). According to Krinsky the reference is to Jacob and his family who would have died (their hearts would have turned to stone) had Joseph not fed them.

25. EVEN BY THE GOD OF THY FATHER. I believe that this verse is connected to the preceding one.¹⁷³ Its meaning is: the power which you possess came to you *from the God of thy father, who shall help thee*.

The *mem* of *me-el* (even by God) is also to be prefixed to *ve-et* (and by).¹⁷⁴ The *mem* of *me-el* is like the *bet* of *be-el* (as God) (Ex. 6:3) which is also to be prefixed to *u-ve-shemi* (but by my name).¹⁷⁵ Thus *And from the Almighty, who shall bless thee* repeats the idea contained in *From the God of thy father, who shall help thee*.

Saadia Gaon explains the phrase *me-el avikha* to mean, I will ask of the God of thy fathers.¹⁷⁶ It is possible that *With blessings of heaven above* is connected to, *From the God of thy father*.¹⁷⁷ The meaning of

¹⁷³ *Even by God* literally reads, from the God (*me'el*). This term presents a problem. What came from God? I.E.'s answer is that from God refers to Joseph's power which is referred to in the previous verse.

¹⁷⁴ That is, *ve-et* is to be read as if written *u-me-et* (and from by).

¹⁷⁵ Our text is thus to be read as if written: From the God of thy father who shall help thee, and from the Almighty who shall bless thee. Ex. 6:3 literally reads: *and I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, as God Almighty* (*be-el shaddai*) *but my name* (*u-shemi*) *YHVH I made Me not known to them*. According to I.E. we should read the aforementioned as if written: and I appeared...as God Almighty (*be-el shaddai*) but with My name (*u-ve-shemi*) *YHVH I made Me not known to them*.

¹⁷⁶ Saadia, too, was bothered by the term *from the God*. He explained *from the God* not as connected to the previous verse, but as a new thought; viz., I will ask of the God of thy fathers that he help thee and of the Almighty that he bless thee (Cherez).

¹⁷⁷ This interpretation, like the previous one, deals with the problem of verse 25 opening with the words *From the God*. It similarly rejects the notion that verse 25 is connected to verse 24. It, too, sees in verse 25 a new thought. It explains *From the God* as relating to the blessings mentioned in the second half of the verse, which shall come to you *from the God of thy father*.

our text is explained by *They (the blessings) shall be on the head of Joseph, And on the crown of the prince among his brethren* (v. 26).¹⁷⁸

BLESSINGS OF THE DEEP. Moses similarly said, *And for the precious things of the earth and the fullness thereof* (Deut. 33:13).¹⁷⁹ The word *tehom* (the deep) is feminine both in our verse and in Deut. (33:16). It is similarly feminine in *The deep (tehom) made it to grow* (Ezek. 31:4).¹⁸⁰

The meaning of *With blessings of heaven above, Blessings of the deep that coucheth beneath* is that rain will descend from the heavens above upon the land of Joseph and that the deep which coucheth beneath the earth will fill its rivers and springs with an abundance of water.

BLESSINGS OF THE BREASTS, AND OF THE WOMB. Jacob likened the breasts to heaven and the womb to the earth,¹⁸¹ its meaning being that Joseph will be blessed with many children.¹⁸² The opposite of

¹⁷⁸ Verse 26 seems to conclude the blessing started in verse 25. The sequence thus appears to be: From God shall come to you blessings of the heavens above, of the deep that coucheth beneath, blessings of the breasts and womb. The aforementioned blessings shall be added to my mighty blessings and to the blessings of my progenitors and shall be on the head of Joseph and on the crown of the head of the prince among his brethren (Krinsky).

¹⁷⁹ So Cherez. The point is that the blessing of the deep means that the land will be well watered and fertile, as Moses blessed the tribe of Joseph with a fertile land. Krinsky suggests that our text is corrupt and that the proof text should read: *For the precious things of heaven, for the dew, And for the deep that coucheth beneath* (Deut. 33:13). In this case I.E. is pointing out that Jacob and Moses' blessings are identical.

¹⁸⁰ Our verse reads, *tehom rovetzet* (the deep that coucheth). Deut. 33:13 reads, *u-mi-tehom rovetzet* (and for the deep that coucheth). *Rovetzet* (coucheth) is feminine, hence *tehom* (the deep) must be feminine. Ezek. 31:4 reads, *tehom romematehu* (the deep made it to grow). Since *romematehu* is feminine, *tehom*, too, must be feminine. I.E. makes this point because *tehom* is masculine in Ps. 42:8. Thus we see that *tehom* is both masculine and feminine.

¹⁸¹ Our verse reads, *With blessings of heaven...Blessings of the deep...Blessings of the breasts, and of the womb*. According to I.E. breast and womb are similar to heaven and earth in that they produce life-giving substance and bring forth fruit. Hence they are included in the same verse.

¹⁸² For an alternate interpretation see Krinsky and Cherez.

this blessing is the curse, *Give them a miscarrying womb and dry breasts* (Hos. 9:14).

26. THE BLESSINGS OF THY FATHER. These blessings which I have blessed you with are mighty and are added to the blessing with which my progenitors blessed me.¹⁸³

[PROGENITORS.] *Horai* is to be rendered my begetters.¹⁸⁴ *Va-tahar* (and she gave birth to) in *and she gave birth to* (va-tahar) *Miriam* (I Chron. 4:17)¹⁸⁵ and *horah* (brought forth) in, *A man-child is brought forth* (horah) (Job 3:3)¹⁸⁶ are similar.

UNTO THE UTMOST BOUND. *Ta'avat* (utmost bound of) comes from the same root as *ve-hitavvitem* (and ye shall mark out your line) (Num. 34:10). The meaning of our verse is: these blessings will be as high as the line marked out by the everlasting hills.

THE PRINCE AMONG HIS BRETHREN. *Nezir* (prince of) comes from the same root as *nezer* (crown).¹⁸⁷ It is in the construct with *echav*

¹⁸³ The point being, may you be blessed with the mighty blessings with which I bless you (*birkat avikhah gaveru*) plus the blessings with which my begetters blessed me (*al birkat horai*). Cherez explains that I.E. interprets *al* (beyond) as meaning *im* (with, plus).

¹⁸⁴ The root of *horai* is *heh, resh, heh* which means to be pregnant or to conceive. However, inasmuch as *horai* is in the plural it must refer to both Jacob's mother and father. We obviously cannot explain *horai* as meaning the ones who bore me. Rather it must be interpreted to mean the ones who begot me (Cherez).

¹⁸⁵ Here, too, the root *heh, resh, heh* does not mean to conceive or be pregnant with, for Chronicles deals with births and not with pregnancies. Thus *va-tahar* in I Chron. 4:17 means she gave birth to.

¹⁸⁶ Here, too, the root *heh, resh, heh* does not mean to conceive but to bring forth, for its parallel reads *ivaled* (I was born).

¹⁸⁷ It means crowned, the one who was crowned over his brethren (Krinsky, Weiser and Cherez). Filwarg suggests reading, "From the same root as *nazir* (Nazirite)." This reading fits in very well with I.E.'s comparison of *nezir* to *nediv*, for *nazir* has the same vocalization as *nadiv*, both in the absolute and in the construct. Thus in the absolute we have *nazir* and *nadiv* and in the construct *nezir* and *nediv*.

(his brethren) and is therefore vocalized *nezir*. Compare, *nediv lev* (willing-hearted) (Ex. 35:22).

27. BENJAMIN. Jacob compared Benjamin to a wolf because Benjamin was mighty. The men of Gibeah are proof of this.¹⁸⁸

THE PREY. *Ad* (the prey) has the same meaning as the Aramaic word for spoil (*ada*).¹⁸⁹ Similarly, *ad* in *Then is the prey* (*ad*) of a great spoil divided (Is. 33:23) and in *Until the day that I rise up to the prey* (*ad*) (Zeph. 3:8); and *iddim* (a polluted garment) (Is. 64:5).¹⁹⁰

[AND AT EVEN HE DIVIDETH.] At even he divideth among his children the prey that he has taken as spoil. Joshua says¹⁹¹ that our verse alludes to King Saul who defeated the Amalekites.¹⁹² He explains *In the morning* as alluding to the beginning of Israel's kingdom¹⁹³ and *at even* as referring to the period of Israel's exile with regard to Mordecai. However, this interpretation is the way of the Midrash.¹⁹⁴ Onkelos' interpretation of our verse is well known.¹⁹⁵

¹⁸⁸ At Gibeah 26,700 Benjamites defeated an army of 400,000 Israelites. Cf. Jud. 20.

¹⁸⁹ Reading *kemo targum shelal* as in *Vat. Ebr.* 38 rather than *targum shalal* as in the printed manuscripts. Also cf. Kimchi's commentary on Is. 33:23.

¹⁹⁰ I.E. on Is. 64:5 notes that a garment taken in spoil is polluted by blood. He points out that *iddim* and *ed* are similar. I.E. interprets *ed* (prey) to mean spoil.

¹⁹¹ A Karaite scholar.

¹⁹² Thus Saul is likened to a wolf who takes spoil. Saul defeated the Amalekites and despoiled them. Cf. I Sam. 15.

¹⁹³ At the beginning of Israel's kingdom Saul, who came from the tribe of Benjamin, despoiled Amalek. In exile, Mordecai the Benjamite despoiled Haman who was an Amalekite. Cf. Es. 8:1,2, *On that day did king Ahasuerus give the house of Haman...unto Esther the queen...And Esther set Mordecai over the house of Haman.*

¹⁹⁴ Cf. *Bereshit Rabbah* 99:3 and *Tanchuma* 1:14; 2:15. It is hard to understand why I.E. quotes this interpretation in the name of a Karaite when it is found in the Midrash.

¹⁹⁵ Onkelos explains the "spoil" as referring to the portions which the priests received from sacrifices offered in the temple which was erected in the territory of Benjamin.

28. EVERY ONE ACCORDING TO HIS BLESSING. The blessing which Jacob gave each one of his sons came to pass upon each one. The meaning of *every one according to his blessing* is similar in meaning to *each man according to the interpretation of his dream* (Gen. 41:11).¹⁹⁶

29. AND HE CHARGED THEM. He (Jacob) charged that all should go along with Joseph to bury him.¹⁹⁷

33. HE GATHERED UP HIS FEET INTO THE BED. Until then he had been sitting on the bed with his feet dangling over its edge as is contemporarily the custom in Christian communities. The beds in Moslem countries are constructed differently from the beds in Christian countries.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁶ Joseph's interpretation of the dreams came true for the butler and the baker, *each man according to the interpretation of his dream*. (Gen. 41:11).

¹⁹⁷ *And he charged them* refers to *bury me with my fathers*. In the text they are not directly connected, hence I.E.'s comment. Krinsky points out that Jacob had made Joseph take an oath to bury him in the cave of Machpelah (Gen. 47:30). He now commanded all of his sons to join Joseph in his burial. Therefore, according to Krinsky, I.E. notes that the charge in our verse was to all of Jacob's sons.

¹⁹⁸ I.E. explains that Egyptian beds were the same as the beds used in Christian countries; hence it was possible for Jacob's feet to dangle from his bed. However, had his bed been like those used in Moslem countries, that is, a bed that lies flat on the ground, this would have been impossible. I.E. makes this point so that readers in Moslem countries could understand how Jacob could be in bed with his feet over its side.

CHAPTER 50

2. AND THE PHYSICIANS EMBALMED ISRAEL. They powdered his body with a preservative.¹ It is possible, though a bit far fetched, that *chanetah* (putteth forth) in *The fig-tree putteth forth* (chanetah) *her green figs* (Cant. 2:13) is analogous to *va-yechantu* (embalmed).²

5. WHICH I HAVE DIGGED. *Kariti* means I have digged. *Kariti* is similar to *yikhreh* in *if a man shall dig* (yikhreh) *a pit* (Ex. 21:33).³

7. AND WITH HIM WENT UP ALL THE SERVANTS OF PHARAOH. All of Egypt with the exception of Joseph are called servants of Pharaoh.⁴

[9. CHARIOTS. The word *rechev* (chariot) is similar in meaning to *mirkevet* (chariot).⁵

¹ This according to I.E. is the way a body is embalmed (Weiser). Krinsky holds that I.E. believes that only Jacob was embalmed in this manner so that his body would be spared the desecration that the usual embalming procedure entails.

² Cf. I.E.'s comment on Cant. 2:13, "*Chanetah* means sweetened. Others say it means powdered, from the word *va-yechantu*."

³ According to Krinsky, I.E. believes that Jacob prepared his own grave in the cave of Machpelah.

⁴ The verse speaks of *the servants of Pharaoh, the elders of his house*. If the aforementioned are elders, why does the Bible refer to them as servants? Hence I.E.'s comment. According to Cherez and Krinsky, I.E. was troubled by the clause *all the servants of Pharaoh*. If all the servants went along with Joseph to bury Jacob then no servants remained in Egypt to serve Pharaoh. This appears highly unlikely. Hence I.E. points out that *all the servants* refers to the Egyptians who accompanied Jacob's family, for all the Egyptians are called Pharaoh's servants.

⁵ Cf. Gen. 41:43, *mirkevet ha-mishneh* (the second chariot). This comment is omitted in some editions of the *Mikraot Gedolot*.

HORSEMEN. The meaning of *parashim* (horsemen) is well-known.]

10. AND HE MADE A MOURNING FOR HIS FATHER SEVEN DAYS. This, as our sages of blessed memory say, took place after they interred Jacob.⁶

12. AND HIS SONS DID UNTO HIM. That is: And behold his sons did as he commanded them, namely, carried him and buried him in the place that he commanded them to inter him.⁷

15. IT MAY BE THAT JOSEPH WILL HATE US. Perhaps Joseph will harbor a hatred for us. *Yistemenu* (will hate us) is analogous to *va-yistom* in *And Esau hated* (*va-yistom*) *Jacob* (Gen. 27:41).⁸

The word *lu* (it may be) is used in Scripture in many ways.⁹

17. I PRAY THEE. *Anna* (I pray thee) is a conciliatory expression.

19. [FOR AM I IN THE PLACE OF GOD.] Saadiah Gaon explains this as meaning: am I in the place of God that you fall before my face and say, *Behold, we are thy bondmen?*

20. TO PASS. *Aso* (to pass) is an infinitive.¹⁰

⁶ What I.E. means is, even though the actual burial of Jacob is reported in verse 13, it occurred before *he made a mourning for his father seven days*. This is so because the sages of the talmud say that mourning commences after the burial of the deceased. Cf. *Sanhedrin*. 47b.

⁷ Since the mourning described in verse 10 took place after the burial of Jacob we cannot interpret *And his sons did unto him*, etc., as a report of what happened after the mourning for Jacob. It is rather a report of what Jacob's sons did for their father.

⁸ There, too, I.E. interprets: and Esau harbored hatred toward Jacob.

⁹ Cf. Rashi, "*Lu* is sometimes used to denote a request, or to denote, would that...*lu* is also used to denote if and perhaps...and *lu* is also sometimes used to denote it may be."

¹⁰ The usual form of this infinitive is *asot*, hence I.E.'s comment.

23. CHILDREN OF THE THIRD GENERATION. In view of the fact that *bene* (children of) is in the construct with *shillechim* (third), the children referred to are the fourth generation.¹¹

WERE BORN. *Yulledu* (were born) means grew up.¹²

26. AND THEY EMBALMED HIM. The physicians.¹³

AND HE WAS PUT IN A COFFIN. Someone put him in a coffin.¹⁴ The root of *va-yisem* is *yod, sin, mem* and follows the paradigm of *va-yitzer* (formed) (Gen. 2:7).¹⁵ However, Rabbi Jonah, the grammarian, says that *va-yisem* is vocalized with a *chirik* in place of a *shuruk*.¹⁶ However, I consider this interpretation to be far-fetched.¹⁷

¹¹ The children of the third generation are the fourth generation.

¹² They weren't actually born on his knees. Joseph raised them; that is, he hugged them and placed them on his knees as a father does when raising his children.

¹³ The text doesn't say who embalmed him. However, in view of verse 2, the reference must be to the physicians. Our text is thus abridged. It should have read: And the physicians embalmed Israel (Weiser).

¹⁴ According to I.E. *va-yisem* is a *kal* which means, and he put. However, the subject has been omitted. Hence we must interpret it as, and someone put. Similarly the word *oto* (him) is to be added to the text. Hence *va-yisem ba-aron* should be rendered, and someone put him in a coffin.

¹⁵ *Va-yitzer* is a *peh yod, kal*. So is *va-yisem*.

¹⁶ According to Rabbi Jonah ibn Janach *va-yisem* is a *hofal* from the root *yod, sin, mem* meaning, and he was put. However, if *va-yisem* was a *hofal* it would have been vocalized *va-yusem*. Hence Rabbi Jonah says that *va-yisem* has been vocalized with a *chirik* in place of a *shuruk*. According to Rabbi Jonah *va-yisem ba-aron* is to be rendered: and he was put in a coffin. The advantage of this interpretation is that one does not have to add the pronoun *oto* (him) to the text and the subject is not omitted from the verse.

¹⁷ If Scripture intended to use a *hofal*, it would have vocalized *va-yisem* like a *hofal*. In his *Sefer Ha-Tzachot* I.E. sharply criticizes Ibn Janach for suggesting that Biblical words be read other than as written. I.E. writes, "Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul not to believe the words of the grammarian (Ibn Janach) who noted in his book (*Sefer Ha-Rikmah*) more than a hundred (Biblical) words that require change...Heaven forbid such a notion...his book is fit to be burned."

[IN A COFFIN.] The reason why *ba-aron* (in a coffin) is vocalized with a *kamatz* is that it signifies the coffin which he had prepared for himself.¹⁸

¹⁸ *Be-aron* means in a coffin. *Ba-aron* on the other hand means in the coffin. Hence our verse must be referring to a specific coffin, i.e., to the coffin that Joseph prepared for himself.

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