**Esnoga Bet Emunah**



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**Triennial Cycle (Triennial Torah Cycle) / Septennial Cycle (Septennial Torah Cycle)**

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| **Three and 1/2 year Lectionary Readings** | **First Year of the Reading Cycle** |
| **Nisan 24, 5769 – April 17/18, 2009** | **First Year of the Shmita Cycle** |

**Candle Lighting and Havdalah Times:**

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| --- | --- |
| **Atlanta, Georgia, U.S.**  Friday April 17, 2009 – Candles at 7:52 PM  Saturday April 18, 2009 – Havdalah 8:49 PM | **San Antonio, Texas, U.S.**  Friday April 17, 2009 – Candles at 7:43 PM  Saturday April 18, 2009 – Havdalah 8:39 PM |
| **Baton Rouge & Alexandria, Louisiana, U.S.**  Friday April 17, 2009 – Candles at 7:15 PM  Saturday April 18, 2009 – Havdalah 8:11 PM | **Sheboygan & Manitowoc, Wisconsin US**  Friday April 17, 2009 – Candles at 7:18 PM  Saturday April 18, 2009 – Havdalah 8:23 PM |
| **Bowling Green & Murray, Kentucky, U.S.**  Friday April 17, 2009 – Candles at 7:04 PM  Saturday April 18, 2009 – Havdalah 8:03 PM | **Brisbane, Australia**  Friday April 17, 2009 – Candles at 5:12 PM  Saturday April 18, 2009 – Havdalah 6:04 PM |
| **Miami, Florida, US**  Friday April 17, 2009 – Candles at 7:27 PM  Saturday April 18, 2009 – Havdalah 8:20 PM | **Bucharest, Romania**  Friday April 17, 2009 – Candles at 7:43 PM  Saturday April 18, 2009 – Havdalah 8:48 PM |
| **Nashville, & Cleveland Tennessee, US**  Friday April 17, 2009 – Candles at 7:04 PM  Saturday April 18, 2009 – Havdalah 8:03 PM | **Jakarta, Indonesia**  Friday April 17, 2009 – Candles at 5:34 PM  Saturday April 18, 2009 – Havdalah 6:23 PM |
| **New London, Connecticut USA**  Friday April 17, 2009 – Candles at 7:04 PM  Saturday April 18, 2009 – Havdalah 8:06 PM | **Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia**  Friday April 17, 2009 – Candles at 7:01 PM  Saturday April 18, 2009 – Havdalah 7:50 PM |
| **Olympia, Washington, U.S.**  Friday April 17, 2009 – Candles at 7:44 PM  Saturday April 18, 2009 – Havdalah 8:52 PM | **Manila & Cebu, Philippines**  Friday April 17, 2009 – Candles at 5:52 PM  Saturday April 18, 2009 – Havdalah 6:43 PM |
| **Philadelphia, Pennsylvania USA**  Friday April 17, 2009 – Candles at 7:22 PM  Saturday April 18, 2009 – Havdalah 8:24 PM | **Singapore, Singapore**  Friday April 17, 2009 – Candles at 6:51 PM  Saturday April 18, 2009 – Havdalah 7:40 PM |

**For other places see:** [**http://chabad.org/calendar/candlelighting.asp**](http://chabad.org/calendar/candlelighting.asp)

**Roll of Honor:**

**This Torah commentary comes to you courtesy of:**

His Honor Rosh Paqid Adon Hillel ben David and

beloved wife HH Giberet Batsheva bat Sarah,

His Honor Paqid Adon Mikha ben Hillel

His Honor Paqid Adon David ben Abraham,

Her Excellency Giberet Sarai bat Sarah and

beloved family,

His Excellency Adon Barth Lindemann and

beloved family,

His Excellency Adon John Batchelor and

beloved wife,

His Excellency Adon Ezra ben Abraham and

beloved wife HE Giberet Karmela bat Sarah,

Her Excellency Giberet Sandra Grenier

His Excellency Adon Stephen Legge and

beloved wife HE Giberet Angela Legge

His Excellency Adon Tracy Osborne and

beloved wife HE Giberet Lynn Osborne

His Excellency Rev. Dr. Adon Chad Foster and

Beloved wife HE Giberet Tricia Foster

**For their regular and sacrificial giving, providing the best oil for the lamps, we pray that G-d’s richest blessings be upon their lives and those of their loved ones, together with all Yisrael and her Torah Scholars, amen ve amen!**

**Also a great thank you and great blessings be upon all who send comments to the list about the contents and commentary of the weekly Torah Seder and allied topics**.

**If you want to subscribe to our list and ensure that you never lose any of our commentaries, or would like your friends also to receive this commentary, please do send me an E-Mail to** [**benhaggai@GMail.com**](mailto:benhaggai@GMail.com) **with your E-Mail or the E-Mail addresses of your friends. Toda Rabba!**

**Shabbat Mevar’chim HaChodesh Iyar**

**Sabbath of the Proclamation of the New Moon for the Month of Iyar**

**Thursday Evening April 23 – Saturday Evening April 25**

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Shabbat** | **Torah Reading:** | **Weekday Torah Reading:** |
| וְיִתֶּן-לְךָ |  |  |
| **“V’Yiten L’kha”** | Reader 1 – B’Resheet 27: | Reader 1 – B’Resheet 28:10-12 |
| **“And may give to you”** | Reader 2 – B’Resheet 27: | Reader 2 – B’Resheet 28:13-15 |
| **“Te otorgue”** | Reader 3 – B’Resheet 27: | Reader 3 – B’Resheet 28:16-19 |
| B’Resheet (Gen.) 27:28 – 28:9  B’midbar (Num.) 28:9-15 | Reader 4 – B’Resheet 27: |  |
| Ashlamatah: Micah 5:6-14 + 6:8 | Reader 5 – B’Resheet 27: |  |
| Special Ashlamatah: I Sam. 20:18,42 | Reader 6 – B’Resheet 27: | Reader 1 – B’Resheet 28:10-12 |
| Psalms 22 | Reader 7 – B’Resheet 27: | Reader 2 – B’Resheet 28:13-15 |
| Pirke Abot: Prologue | Maftir – B’Midbar 28:9-15: | Reader 3 – B’Resheet 28:16-19 |
| N.C.: Jude 6-7 | Micah 5:6-14 + 6:8  I Sam. 20:18,42 |  |

**Rashi & Targum Pseudo Jonathan**

**for: B’Resheet (Genesis) 27:28 – 28:9**

| **RASHI** | **TARGUM PSEUDO JONATHAN** |
| --- | --- |
| 28. And may G-d give you of the dew of heaven, and of the fatness [riches] of the land, and abundance of grain and wine. | 28. Therefore the Word of the Lord give you of the good dews which descends from the heavens, and of the good fountains that spring up, and make the herbage of the earth to grow from beneath, and plenty of provision and wine. |
| 29. Peoples will serve you and nations bow to you. Be master over your brothers, and your mother's sons will bow to you. Those who curse you are cursed, and those who bless you are blessed." | 29. Let peoples be subject to you, all the sons of Esau, and kingdoms bend before you, all the sons of Keturah; a chief and a ruler be you over your brethren, and let the sons of your mother salute you. Let them who curse you, my son, be accursed as Bileam bar Beor; and them who bless you be blessed as Mosheh the prophet, the scribe of Israel. [JERUSALEM. Let peoples serve before you, all the sons of Esau: all kings be subject to you, all the sons of Ishmael: be you a chief and a ruler over the sons of Keturah: all the sons of Laban the brother of your mother will come before you and salute you. Whosoever curses you, Jakob, my son, will be accursed as Bileam ben Beor; and whosoever blesses you will be blessed as Mosheh the prophet and scribe of Israel.] |
| 30. It was when Yitschaq had finished blessing Ya’aqob, and Ya’aqob had just left the presence of Yitschaq, his father, that Esav came back from his trapping. | 30. And it was when Izhak had finished blessing Jakob, and Jakob had only gone out about two handbreadths from Izhak his father, that Esau his brother came in from his hunting. |
| 31. He too made a tasty dish and brought it to his father. He said to his father, "Let my father rise and eat of his son's trapping, that your soul may bless me." | 31. And the Word of the Lord had impeded him from taking clean venison; but he had found a certain dog, and killed him, and made food of him, and brought to his father, and said to his father, Arise, my father, and eat of my venison, that your soul may bless me. |
| 32. Yitschaq, his father, said to him, "Who are you?" He said, "I am your son, your firstborn, Esav." | 32. And Izhak his father said to him, Who are you? And he said, I am your firstborn, Esau. |
| 33. Yitschaq was seized with a powerful trembling; and said, "Who, then, is he who trapped [deer] and brought it to me. I ate all of it before you came, and I blessed him. He will be blessed." | 33. And Izhak was moved with great agitation when he heard the voice of Esau, and the smell of his food rose in his nostrils as the smell of the burning of Gehinom; and he said, Who is he who has got venison, and came to me, and I have eaten of all which he brought me before you came, and I have blessed him, and he will, too, be blessed? |
| 34. When Esav heard his father's words, he wailed a most loud and bitter cry, and he said to his father, "Bless me too, my father." | 34. When Esau heard the words of his father, he cried with a cry exceeding great and bitter, and said to his father, Bless me, me also, my father! |
| 35. [Yitschaq] said, "Your brother came with cunning and he took your blessing." | 35. And he said, Your brother has come with subtlety, and has received from me your blessing. |
| 36. [Esav] said, "Is he not rightly called Ya’aqob? He has deceived me twice; he took my birthright, and now he has taken my blessing." He said, "Have you not saved a blessing for me?" | 36. And he said, His name is truly called Jakob; for he has dealt treacherously with me these two times: my birthright he took, and, behold, now he has received my blessing! And he said, Have you not reserved a blessing for me? |
| 37. Yitschaq replied and said to Esav. "Behold, I have made him your master, and all his brothers I have given him as slaves. I have sustained him with grain and wine. Where--- What can I do for you, my son?" | 37. And Izhak answered and said to Esau, Behold, I have appointed him a ruler over you, and all his brethren have I made to be his servants, and with provision and wine have I sustained him: and now go, leave me; for what can I do for you, my son? |
| 38. Esav said to his father, "Do you have only one blessing, my father? Bless me too, my father," and Esav raised his voice and wept | 38. And Esau answered his father, Have you but one blessing, my father? Bless me, me also, my father. And Esau lifted up his voice and wept. |
| 39. Yitschaq, his father replied and said to him, "Behold the fatness [richness] of the earth will be your dwelling, and of the dew of heaven from above. | 39. And Izhak answered and said to Esau, Behold, among the good fruits of the earth will be your habitation, and with the dews of the heavens from above. |
| 40. You will live by your sword, and you will serve your brother. When you have cause to be grieved, you will throw off his yoke from your neck. | 40. And upon your sword will you depend, entering at every place: yet you will be supple and credulous, and be in subjection to your brother; but it will be that when his sons become evil, and fall from keeping the commandments of the Law, you will break his yoke of servitude from off your neck. [JERUSALEM. And by your weapons you will live, and before your brother be subject. And it will be when the sons of Jakob labour in the Law, and keep the commandments, they will set the yoke of subjection on your neck; but when the sons of Jakob withdraw themselves and study not the Law, nor keep the commandments, behold, then will you break their yoke of subjection from off your neck.] |
| 41. Esav hated Ya’aqob because of the blessing with which his father blessed him, and Esav said in his heart, "The mourning days for my father are approaching. I will then kill my brother, Ya’aqob." | 41. And Esau kept hatred in his heart against Jakob his brother, on account of the order of blessing with which his father had blessed him. And Esau said in his heart, I will not do as Kain did, who slew Habel in the life (time) of his father, for which his father begat Sheth, but will wait till the time when the days of mourning for the death of my father come, and then will I kill Jakob my brother, and will be found the killer and the heir. |
| 42. Rivkah was informed about the words of Esav, her older son, and she sent [a messenger] to call Ya’aqob, her younger son, and she said to him. "Behold, your brother Esav is consoled through you, [for he intends] to kill you. | 42. And the words of Esau her elder son, who thought in his heart to kill Jakob, were shown by the Holy Spirit to Rivekah, and she sent, and called Jakob her younger son, and said to him, Behold, Esau your brother lies in wait for you, and plots against you to kill you. |
| 43. Now my son listen to me. Get up and flee to Lavan, my brother, to Charan. | 43. And now, my son, hearken to me: arise, escape for your life, and go unto Laban my brother, at Haran, |
| 44. Remain with him a short time until your brother's fury has subsided. | 44. and dwell with him a few days, until the wrath of your brother be abated, |
| 45. Until your brother's rage toward you has subsided, and he has forgotten what you did to him. I will then send [for you] and bring you [back] from there. Why should I lose both of you on one day?" | 45. until your brother's anger have quieted from you, and he have forgotten what you have done to him; and I will send and take you from thence. Why should I be bereaved of you both in one day: you being slain, and he driven forth, as Hava was bereaved of Habel, whom Kain slew, and both were removed from before Adam and Hava all the days of the life of Adam and Hava? [JERUSALEM. Until the time when the bitterness of your brother will be turned away from you.] |
| 46. Rivkah said to Yitschaq, "I am disgusted with my life because of the daughters of Chet. If Ya’aqob marries a woman of the daughters of Chet, like these, from the daughters of the land, what is life [worth] to me." | 46. And Rivekah said to Izhak, I am afflicted in my life on account of the indignity of the daughters of Heth. If Jakob takes a wicked/ Lawless wife from the daughters of Heth, such as these of the daughters of the people of the land, what will life be to me? |
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| 1. Yitschaq called Ya’aqob and blessed him. He commanded him and said to him, "Do not marry a woman of the daughters of Canaan. | 1. And Izhak called Jakob, and blessed him, and commanded him, and said to him, You will not take a wife from the daughters of the Kenaanaee. |
| 2. Set out and go to Padan Aram, to the house of Betuel, your mother's father, and marry one of the daughters of Lavan, your mother's brother. | 2. Arise, go to Padan of Aram, to the house of Bethuel your mother's father, and take from thence a wife from the daughters of Laban you mother's brother. |
| 3. May the Almighty, Shaddai, bless you, make you fruitful and multiply you. May you become an assembly of peoples. | 3. And El Shadai will bless you with many possessions, and increase you and multiply you into twelve tribes, and you will be worthy of the congregation of the sons of the Sanhedrin, the sum of which is seventy, according to the number of the nations (of the Gentiles). |
| 4. May He give you the blessing of Avraham, to you and to your descendants with you, that you may inherit the land of your dwelling which G-d gave to Avraham. | 4. And He will give the blessing of Abraham to you, and to your sons with you, and cause you to inherit the land of your sojourning, which he gave unto Abraham. |
| 5. Yitschaq sent Ya’aqob on his way, and he went to Paddan Aram, to Lavan, son of Betuel the Aramean, the brother of Rivkah, mother of Ya’aqob and Esav. | 5. And Izhak sent Jakob away, and he went to Padan Aram unto Laban bar Bethuel the Armaite, the brother of Rivekah the mother of Jakob and Esau. |
| 6. Esav saw that Yitschaq blessed Ya’aqob, and sent him to Paddan Aram, to find a wife there; and as he blessed him, he commanded him saying, "Do not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan." | 6. And Esau considered that Izhak had blessed Jakob, and had sent him to Padan Aram to take to him from thence a wife, when he blessed him, and commanded him, saying, You will not take a wife of the daughters of the Kenaanites; |
| 7. And Ya’aqob listened to his father and mother, and went to Paddan Aram. | 7. and that Jakob obeyed the word of his father, and the word of his mother, and was gone to Padan Aram: |
| 8. Esav [thus] realized that the daughters of Canaan were evil in the eyes of Yitschaq, his father. | 8. and Esau considered that the daughters of Kenaan were evil before Izhak his father, |
| 9. Esav [then] went to Yishmael, and took Mochalat, the daughter of Yishmael, the son of Avraham and sister of Nevayot, in addition to his other wives for a wife. | 9. and Esau went unto Ishmael, and took to wife Mahalath, who is Besemath the daughter of Ishmael bar Abraham, the sister of Nebaioth from his mother, besides his other wives. |
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**Rashi & Targum Pseudo Jonathan**

**for: B’midbar (Num.) 28:9-15**

| **RASHI** | **TARGUM PSEUDO JONATHAN** |
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| 9. On the Shabbat day [the offering will be] two yearling lambs without blemish, and two tenths [of an ephah] of fine flour as a meal-offering, mixed with [olive] oil, and its libation. | 9. but on the day of Shabbat two lambs of the year without blemish, and two‑tenths of flour mixed with olive oil for the mincha and its libation. |
| 10. This is the burnt-offering on its Shabbat, in addition to the constant (daily) burnt-offering and its libation. | 10. On the Sabbath you will make a Sabbath burnt sacrifice in addition to the perpetual burnt sacrifice and its libation. |
| 11. At the beginning of your months you will bring a burnt-offering to Adonai, two young bulls, one ram, seven yearling lambs, [all] without blemish. | 11. And at the beginning of your months you will offer a burnt sacrifice before the Lord; two young bullocks, without mixture, one ram, lambs of the year seven, unblemished; |
| 12. And three tenths [of an ephah] of fine flour as a meal-offering mixed with the [olive] oil for each bull, two tenths [of an ephah] of fine flour as a meal-offering, mixed with the [olive] oil for the one ram, | 12. and three tenths of flour mingled with oil for the mincha for one bullock; two tenths of flour with olive oil for the mincha of the one ram; |
| 13. And one tenth [of an ephah] of fine flour as a meal-offering mixed with the [olive] oil for each lamb. A burnt-offering of pleasing aroma, a fire-offering to Adonai. | 13. and one tenth of flour with olive oil for the mincha for each lamb of the burnt offering, an oblation to be received with favour before the Lord. |
| 14. Their libations [will be], one half of a hin for (a) bull, one third of a hin for the ram, and one fourth of a hin for (the) lamb, of wine. This is the burnt-offering of each [Rosh] Chodesh, at its renewal throughout the months of the year. | 14. And for their libation to be offered with them, the half of a hin for a bullock, the third of a hin for the ram, and the fourth of a hin for a lamb, of the wine of grapes. This burnt sacrifice will be offered at the beginning of every month in the time of the removal of the beginning of every month in the year; |
| 15. And [You will also bring] one he-goat for a sin offering to Adonai, in addition to the constant (daily) burnt-offering it shall be done, and its libation. | 15. and one kid of the goats, for a sin offering before the Lord at the disappearing (failure) of the moon, with the perpetual burnt sacrifice will you perform with its libation. |
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**Reading Assignment:**

**Torah With Targum Onkelos and Rashi’s Commentary – Vol. 1**

**The Book of Genesis: Hebrew/English**

By: A.M. Silberman & M. Rosenbaum

Published by: BN Publishing (2007)

pp. 125-131.

**The Torah Anthology: Yalkut Me’Am Lo’Ez - Vol II: The Patriarchs**

By: Rabbi Ya’aqob Culi

Published by: Moznaim Publishing Corp. (New York, 1988)

Vol. II, pp. 506-523. (This is the end of Vol. II, you should have Gen. Vol. III by now)

**Welcome to the World of P’shat Exegesis**

In order to understand the finished work of the P’shat mode of interpretation of the Torah, one needs to take into account that the P’shat is intended to produce a catechetical output, whereby a question/s is/are raised and an answer/a is/are given using the seven Hermeneutic Laws of R. Hillel and as well as the laws of Hebrew Grammar and Hebrew expression.

The Seven Hermeneutic Laws of R. Hillel are as follows

[cf. <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/view.jsp?artid=472&letter=R>]:

**1. Ḳal va-ḥomer:** "Argumentum a minori ad majus" or "a majori ad minus"; corresponding to the scholastic proof a fortiori.

**2. Gezerah shavah:** Argument from analogy. Biblical passages containing synonyms or homonyms are subject, however much they differ in other respects, to identical definitions and applications.

**3. Binyan ab mi-katub eḥad:** Application of a provision found in one passage only to passages which are related to the first in content but do not contain the provision in question.

**4. Binyan ab mi-shene ketubim:** The same as the preceding, except that the provision is generalized from two Biblical passages.

**5. Kelal u-Peraṭ and Peraṭ u-kelal:** Definition of the general by the particular, and of the particular by the general.

**6. Ka-yoẓe bo mi-maḳom aḥer:** Similarity in content to another Scriptural passage.

**7. Dabar ha-lamed me-'inyano:** Interpretation deduced from the context.

**Rashi Commentary for: B’Resheet (Gen.) 27:28 – 28:9**

**28. And may the Lord give you**-May He give and repeatedly give (444 Gen. Rabbah 66: 3). According to its simple meaning, it refers back to the previous topic: “Look, the fragrance of my son” which God has given him, “is like the fragrance of a field, etc.,” and furthermore, “May He give you of the dew of the heavens, etc.”

**of the dew of the heavens** [It is to be interpreted] according to its simple meaning, and there are Midrashic interpretations of many kinds. (Another explanation: What is the meaning of **הָאֱלֹהִים**? [i.e., why is the Divine Name which signifies God’s attribute of Justice used here? To teach that He will treat you] with justice. If you deserve it, He will give to you, and if not, He will not give to you. But to Esau he said, “The fat places of the earth will be your dwelling place.” Whether righteous/ generous or wicked/Lawless, He will give to you. And from him [Isaac], Solomon learned; when he built the Temple, he arranged his prayer, [saying that] an Israelite, who has faithful obedience and justifies the Divine decree upon himself, will not complain about You; therefore (I Kings 8:39): “and give to every man [Israelite] according to his ways,” for You know what is in his heart. But a gentile lacks faithfulobedience; therefore [Solomon] said (ibid. verse 43): “You will hear in heaven, etc., and do according to all that the stranger calls upon You for,” i.e., whether he is deserving or undeserving, give to him, so that he should not complain about You. [This is found] in an old and correct edition of *Rashi*.) [From *Tanchuma* Buber, *Toledoth* 14]

**29.** **your mother’s sons** But Jacob said to Judah, “your father’s sons” because he [Jacob] had sons from many mothers, but here, since he [Isaac] had married only one wife, he said, “your mother’s sons” (*Gen. Rabbah* 66:4).

**Those who curse you will be cursed, and those who bless you will be blessed** But concerning Balaam, Scripture says (Num. 24:9): “Those who bless you will be blessed, and those who curse you will be cursed” (*Gen. Rabbah* ibid.). [The reason for this is that, for] the righteous/generous—their beginning is suffering and their end is tranquility; and thus, those who curse them and cause them pain precede those who bless them. Isaac therefore mentioned the curse of those who curse before the blessing of those who bless. As for the wicked/Lawless, however, their beginning is tranquility, and their end is suffering; Balaam, therefore, mentioned the blessing before the curse. [From *Gen. Rabbah* 66:4]

**30.** **had just left** Heb. **יָצֹא יָצָא**, [lit., going out, had gone out.] This one was leaving, and that one was coming in. [From *Gen. Rabbah* 66:5]

**33.** **And Isaac shuddered** [ **וַיֶּחֱרַד** is to be explained] as the *Targum*, an expression of bewilderment. According to the *Midrash*, however, he [actually shuddered because] he saw Gehinnom open beneath him. [From *Tanchuma, Vezoth Haberachah* 1]

**Who then** [the word] **אֵפוֹא** is an expression by itself, which has many usages. Another explanation: **אֵפוֹא** is a combination of **אַיּה** [where] and **פֺּה** [here], [so that **אֵפוֹא** **מִי** means]: Who is he and where is he, who hunted game?

**and I ate of everything** Any flavors I wished to taste, I tasted in it (*Gen. Rabbah* 67:2).

**He, too, will be blessed** That you should not say that had Jacob not deceived his father, he would not have received the blessings. Therefore, he concurred and blessed him intentionally (*Gen. Rabbah* 67:2).

**35.** **with cunning** with cleverness. [From *Targumim*]

**36.** **And he said, “Is it for this reason that he was named Jacob** - **הֲכִי** is an expression denoting the interrogative, as in (below 29:15): “Is it because (**הֲכִי**) you are my kinsman…?” Was he named Jacob (**יַעֲקֹב**) because of the future, because he was destined to deceive me (**לְעָקִבֵנִי**)? *Midrash Tanchuma* (Buber, *Toledoth* 23) [asks]: Why did Isaac shudder? He said, “Perhaps I am guilty of an iniquity/ Lawlessness, for I have blessed the younger son before the older one, and thus altered the order of the relationship.” [Thereupon], Esau started crying, “He has already deceived me twice!” His father said to him, “What did he do to you?” He replied, “He took my birthright.” He [Isaac] said, “That is why I was troubled and shuddered, for [I was afraid that] perhaps I [had] transgressed the line of strict justice, [but] now [that I know that] I actually blessed the firstborn, ‘he too will be blessed’.”

**for he has deceived me** Heb. **וַיַּעְקְבֵנִי.** [To be explained] according to the *Targum* [meaning]: and he lay in wait for me.

**reserved** [**אָצַלְתָּ**] an expression of separation, as in **וַיָּאצֶל** (“and he separated”) (Num. 11:25).

**37.** **Behold...a master** This is the seventh blessing [given to Jacob] and yet he puts it first? Rather, he said to him, “What use will a blessing be to you? If you acquire property, it will be his, for I have made him a master over you, and whatever a slave acquires, belongs to his master.” [From Gen. 67:5]

**so for you then, what will I do** Where will I seek for something to do for you?

**38** **Have you [but] one blessing** The “hey” [**הַבְרָכָה**] indicates an interrogative expression, as in (Num. 13:19): “are they in open cities (**הַבְּמַחֲנִים**)?”

**39** **Behold...the fat places of the earth** This is the part of Italy belonging to Greece (from *Gen. Rabbah* 67:6).

**40** **And...by your sword** -  **וְעַל-חַרְבְּךָ** is the same as **בְּחַרְבְּךָ** [by your sword]. Sometimes **עַל** takes the place of the letter “beth,” as in (Ezek. 33:26); “You stood by your sword (**עַל-חַרְבְּכֶם**),” [which is the same as] **בְּחַרְבְּכֶם** (Exod. 6:26); “by their hosts (**עַל-צִבְאֹתָם**)” [is the same as בְּ**צִבְאֹתָם**].

**and it will be, when you grieve** [**תָּרִיד**] is an expression of pain, as in (Ps. 55:3): “I will lament (**אָרִיד**) in my speech”; i.e., when the Israelites will transgress the Torah, and you will have cause to grieve about the blessings that he took, “you will break his yoke,” etc. [From *Targum Onkelos*]

**41** **Let the days of mourning for my father draw near** As its apparent meaning, “that I should not grieve my father,” and there are various Midrashic explanations.

**42** **And Rebecca was told of** She was told by Divine Inspiration what Esau was thinking in his heart. [From *Gen. Rabbah* 67:9]

**regrets [his relationship] to you** Heb. **מִתְנַחֵם**. He regrets the brotherly relationship, to consider other [than brotherly] thoughts, to behave towards you as a stranger and to kill you. The *Midrash Aggadah* (*Gen. Rabbah* 67:9), however, explains [it as an expression of consolation]: In his eyes, you are already dead, and he has drunk a cup of consolation [a cup of wine customarily drunk in the house of mourning] over you. But according to its simple meaning, it is an expression of consolation. By killing you he consoles himself about [losing] the blessings (*Tanchuam* Buber, *Vayetzei* 1).

**44** **a few days** Heb. **יָמִים אֲחָדִים**, few.

**45** **Why should I be bereft** Heb. **אֶשְׁכַּל**. I will be bereft of both of you. [This teaches that] one who buries his children is called **שָׁכוּל**, bereft. And so, concerning Jacob, it is said (below 43:14): “As I am bereft (**שָׁכֹלְתִּ**י), I shall be bereft **(שָׁכָלְתִּי**).” **of both of you** If he rises up against you and you kill him, his sons will rise up and kill you. And the Divine Spirit poured itself upon her and she prophesied that they would die on the same day, as is delineated in (*Sotah* 13a).

**46** **I am disgusted with my life** Heb. **קַצְתִּ**י, I am disgusted with my life.

**2** **to Padan** Heb. **פַּדֶּנָה** like **לְפַדָּן**. [From *Targum Onkelos*]

**to the house of Bethuel** Heb. **בֵּיתָה** to the house of (**לְבֵית**) Bethuel [*Targum Onkelos*]. Any word that requires a “lamed” at the beginning may take a “hey” at the end instead. [From *Yev.* 13b]

3. **And...the Almighty God** Heb. **שַׁדַּי**. May He Who has enough (**שֶׁדַּי**) blessings for those who are blessed from His mouth, bless you.

**4** **the blessing of Abraham** that He said to him (above 12:2): “And I will make you into a great nation”; (above 22:18): “[And all the nations of the world] will bless themselves with your seed.” May those aforementioned blessings be for you. May that nation and that blessed seed emanate from you. [From *Tanchuma, Vezoth Haberachah* 1]

**5** **the mother of Jacob and Esau** I do not know what this teaches us. [I.e., We already know from the narrative that Rebecca was their mother.]

**7** **And Jacob listened** This is connected to the aforementioned topic: When Esau saw that Isaac had blessed [Jacob] and that he had sent him off to Padan- aram, and that Jacob listened to his father and went to Padan-aram, and that the daughters of Canaan were displeasing [to his father], then he, too, went to Ishmael.

**9** **the sister of Nebaioth** Since it says, “the daughter of Ishmael,” do I not know that she was the sister of Nebaioth? But this teaches us that Ishmael died after he had betrothed her to Esau, before her marriage, and her brother Nebaioth gave her hand in marriage. This also teaches us that Jacob was sixty-three years old at that time, for Ishmael was seventy-four years old when Jacob was born. Ishmael was fourteen years older than Isaac, and Isaac was sixty years old when they were born, hence [Ishmael was] seventy-four. He lived one hundred and thirty seven years, as it is stated (above 25:17): “and these are the years of the life of Ishmael,” etc. Consequently, Jacob was sixty-three at Ishmael’s death. We learn from here that he hid for fourteen years in the house of Eber and afterwards went to Haran. [This can be deduced from the fact that] he stayed in Laban’s house before Joseph’s birth only fourteen years, as it is said (below 31:41): “I worked for you fourteen years for your two daughters and six years for your sheep,” and the payment for the sheep took place after Joseph was born, as it is said (below 30:25): “And it came to pass when Rachel had given birth to Joseph, etc.,” and Joseph was thirty years old when he became ruler, and from then until Jacob descended to Egypt were nine years: seven of plenty and two of famine. And Jacob said to Pharaoh (below 47:9): “The days of the years of my sojournings are one hundred and thirty years.” Go forth and figure 14 years before Joseph was born, plus the 30 years of Joseph’s age, plus the 9 years from the time he became ruler until Jacob came. The total is 53. And when he [Jacob] left his father, he was 63, totaling 116. Yet he said [to Pharaoh, “I am] one hundred and thirty years old.” Hence, there are fourteen years missing. Thus, you learn that after he had received the blessings, he hid in the house of Eber for fourteen years. [From *Meg.* 17:1] (However, he was not punished [for these fourteen years] because of the merit [of having studied] Torah, for Joseph was separated from his father only twenty-two years, i.e., from age seventeen until age thirty-nine, corresponding to the twenty-two years that Jacob was separated from his father [when] he did not honor him. These are the twenty years in Laban’s house, plus the two years that he spent traveling [home], as it is written (below 33:17): “And he built himself a house, and for his cattle he made booths.” Our Rabbis of Blessed Memory inferred from this verse that he spent eighteen months on the road, for the house was for the rainy season, and the booths were for the summer. And, according to the calculation of the verses, which we calculated above, from the time he left his father until he went down to Egypt, at the age of one hundred and thirty, we find an additional fourteen years, therefore, it is certain that he hid in the house of Eber to learn Torah while on his way to the house of Laban. And because of the merit of the Torah, he was not punished for them [those fourteen years], and Joseph was separated from him for only twenty-two years-measure for measure. The above is from an old *Rashi* text).

**to his other wives** He added wickedness/Lawlessness upon his wickedness/Lawlessness, for he did not divorce the first ones. [From *Gen. Rabbah* 67:13]

**Ketubim: Targum Tehillim (Psalms) 22:1-32**

| **JUDAICA PRESS TRANSLATION** | **TARGUM** |
| --- | --- |
| 1. For the conductor, on the ayeleth hashachar, a song of David. | For praise; concerning the strength of the regular morning sacrifice; a psalm of David. |
| 2. My God, my God, why have You forsaken me? [You are] far from my salvation [and] from the words of my moaning. | 2. My God, my God, why have You left me far from my redemption? – are the words of my outcry. |
| 3. My God, I call out by day and You do not reply, and at night I do not keep silent. | 3. O God, I call by day and You will not accept my prayer; and by night I have no quiet |
| 4. But You are holy; You await the praises of Israel. | 4. But You are holy, who make the world rest on the psalms of Israel. |
| 5. Our ancestors trusted in You; they trusted and You rescued them. | 5. Our fathers hoped in You; they hoped in Your Word, and You saved them. |
| 6. They cried out to You and they escaped; they trusted in You and they were not shamed. | 6. In Your presence they prayed and were saved; and on You they relied, and were not disappointed. |
| 7. But I am a worm and not a man; a reproach of man, despised by peoples. | 7. But I am a feeble worm, not a rational man; the reproach of the sons of men, and the butt of the Gentiles. |
| 8. All who see me will mock me; they will open their lips, they will shake their head. | 8. All who see me will gloat over me, attacking with their lips; they will shake their heads. |
| 9. One should cast his trust upon the LORD, and He will rescue him; He will save him because He delights in him. | 9. Let him give praise in the presence of the LORD; and He has delivered him, He saved him because He favoured him. |
| 10. For You drew me from the womb; You made me secure on my mother's breasts. | 10. Because You took me out of the womb; You gave me hope on my mother’s breasts. |
| 11. Upon You, I was cast from birth; from my mother's womb You are my God. | 11. By Your aid I was pulled forth from [her] bowels; from my mother’s womb You are my God. |
| 12. Do not distance Yourself from me, for distress is near; for there is none to help. | 12. Be not far from me, for trouble is near, for there is no redeemer. |
| 13. Great bulls have surrounded me; the mighty ones of Bashan encompassed me. | 13. The Gentiles have surrounded me, who are like many bulls; the princes of Mathnan have hemmed me in. |
| 14. They opened their mouth against me [like] a tearing, roaring lion. | 14. They open their mouths at me like a roaring and ravaging lion. |
| 15. I was spilled like water, and all my bones were separated; my heart was like wax, melting within my innards. | 15. Like water I am poured out; all my bones are crushed; my heart is melting like wax within my bowels. |
| 16. My strength became dried out like a potsherd, and my tongue cleaves to my palate; and You set me down in the dust of death. | 16. My strength has dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue is stuck to my palate; and You have brought me to the grave. |
| 17. For dogs have surrounded me; a band of evildoers has encompassed me, like a lion, my hands and feet. | 17. Because the wicked/Lawless have surrounded me, who are like many dogs; a gathering of evildoers has hemmed me in, biting my hands and feet like a lion. |
| 18. I tell about all my bones. They look and gloat over me. | 18. I will tell of all the wounds of my bones; those who see me despise me. |
| 19. They share my garments among themselves and cast lots for my raiment. | 19. They divide my clothing for themselves; and for my cloak they will cast lots. |
| 20. But You, O LORD, do not distance Yourself; my strength, hasten to my assistance. | 20. You, O LORD, do not be far off; O my strength, hurry to my aid. |
| 21. Save my soul from the sword, my only one from the grip of the dog. | 21. Save my soul from those who slay with the sword; from the power of the dog [save] the breath of my body. |
| 22. Save me from the lion's mouth, as from the horns of the wild oxen You answered me. | 22. Redeem me from the mouth of the lion; and from kings who are strong and tall as a bull You have received my prayer. |
| 23. I will tell Your name to my brothers; in the midst of the congregation I will praise You. | 23. I will tell of the might of Your name to my brothers; in the midst of the assembly I will praise You. |
| 24. You who fear the Lord, praise Him; all the seed of Jacob, honor Him, and fear Him, all the seed of Israel. | 24. O you who fear the LORD, sing praise in His presence; all the seed of Jacob, give Him glory; and be afraid of Him, all you seed of Israel. |
| 25. For He has neither despised nor abhorred the cry of the poor, neither has He hidden His countenance from him; and when he cried out to Him, He hearkened. | 25. For He does not despise or scorn the prayer of the poor; and He has not removed His presence from their midst; and when they pray in His presence, he accepts [their prayer]. |
| 26. Because of You is my praise in the great congregation; I pay my vows in the presence of those who fear Him. | 26. My psalm in the assembly of many people is from You; I will fulfil my vows before those who fear Him. |
| 27. The humble will eat and be sated; they will praise the LORD, those who seek him; your hearts will live forever. | 27. The humble will eat and be satisfied; those who seek the LORD will sing praise in His presence; the spirit of prophecy will dwell in the thoughts of your hearts forever. |
| 28. All the ends of the earth shall remember and return to the LORD, and all the families of the nations will prostrate themselves before You. | 28. All the ends of the earth will remember His offerings and will repent in the presence of the LORD; and all the families of the Gentiles will bow down before You. |
| 29. For the kingship is the LORD's, and He rules over the nations. | 29. For kingship is from the presence of the LORD, and He rules over the Gentiles. |
| 30. They will eat all the best of the earth and prostrate themselves; before Him will all those who descend to the dust kneel, and He will not quicken his soul | 30. All who are fat on earth have eaten and bowed down; all who descend to the grave prostrate themselves before Him; but the soul of the wicked/Lawless will not live. |
| 31. The seed that worships Him; it will be told to the generation concerning the LORD. | 31. The seed of Abraham will worship in His presence; and they will tell the mighty greatness of the LORD to a later generation. |
| 32. **They will come and tell His righteousness/ generosity to the newborn people, that which He has done**. | 32. **Their children will return and recount His generosity; to His people yet to be born [they will recount] the wonders He performed**. |
|  |  |

**Rashi’s Commentary for: Psalm 22:1-32**

**1** **ayeleth hashachar** The name of a musical instrument. Another explanation: Concerning the nation of Israel, which is a beloved hind **אַיֶּלֶת אֲהָבִים**, who looks forth like the dawn (**שָׁחַר**) (Song 6:10). Our Sages, however, interpreted it as referring to Esther (Mid. Ps. 22:1, Meg. 15b). Menachem (p. 22) interprets **אַיֶּלֶת** as an expression of strength, as (verse 20): “My strength (**אֱיָלוּתִי**), hasten to my assistance.”

**2** **why have You forsaken me?** They are destined to go into exile, and David recited this prayer for the future.

**far from my salvation** and from the words of my moaning.

**3** **I call out by day** I call out to You every day, and You do not answer.

**4** **But You are holy** and You wait to hear the praises of Israel from time immemorial.

**7** **But I am a worm** He refers to all Israel as one man.

**8** **they will open** Heb. **יַפְטִירוּ**, they open, as (in Exod. 13:12, 13): “all that open (**פֶּטֶר**) the womb,...and firstling (**וְכָל-פֶּטֶר**) of a donkey.”

**9** **One should cast his trust upon the Lord** Heb.  גֹּל, lit. to roll. A person should roll his burden and his load upon His Creator so that He rescue him.

**10** **drew me** Heb. **גֹחִ**י, who took me out and drew me out, as (in Job 40:23): “he will draw (**יָגִיחַ**) the Jordan into his mouth.”

**You made me secure on my mother’s breast** You prepared breasts for a person, upon which to rely for sustenance.

**11** **Upon You, I was cast from birth** I was cast from birth since You took me out of the womb, as Scripture states (in Isa. 46:3): “who are carried from birth.” From the time the tribes were born, He carried them and led them.

**13** **Great bulls** Mighty kingdoms.

**the mighty ones of Bashan** That too is an expression of the bulls of Bashan, which are fat.

**encompassed me** Heb. **כִּתְּרוּנִ**י. They encompassed me like a crown (**כִּתְּר**), which encompasses the head.

**14** **a tearing lion** Nebuchadnezzar.

**15** **like wax** Wax, which melts from the heat of the fire.

**16** **my palate** Heb. **מַלְקוֹחָ**י. This is the palate which is called palayc (palais) in Old French, gaumen in German. When a person is distressed, he has no saliva in his mouth.

**and in the dust of death** To the crushing of death.

**You set me down** Heb. **תִּשְׁפְּתֵנִי** You set me down, an expression of setting a pot, as (in Ezek. 24:3, II Kings 4:38): “set on (**שְׁפֹת**) the pot.”

**17** **like a lion, my hands and feet** As though they are crushed in a lion’s mouth, and so did Hezekiah say (in Isa. 38:13): “like a lion, so it would break all my bones.”

**18** **I tell about all my bones** The pain of my bones.

**They look** They rejoice at my misfortune.

**19** **and cast lots for my raiment** They plunder our property.

**20** **my strength** Heb. **אֱיָלוּתִי**, my strength, as (below 88:5): “I was as a man without strength (**אֱיָל**),” and as (Gen. 31:29): “It is within the power (**לְאֵל**) of my hand.”

**22** **Save me from the lion’s mouth** as You answered me from the horns of the wild oxen. This is the Amorite, “whose height is as the height of the cedar trees” (Amos 2:9); the thirty-one kings.

**23** **I will tell Your name to my brothers** when any of my assemblies gathers, and so I will say to them, “You who fear the Lord, praise Him.” This refers to the proselytes, and “all the seed of Jacob.”

**24** **and fear** Heb. **וְגוּרוּ**, an expression of fear.

**25** **the cry of the poor** Every [expression of] **עֱניה** in Scripture is an expression of a cry. **עֱנוּת** can also be interpreted as an expression of humility, as (in Exod. 10:3): “to humble yourself **(לֵעָנֹת)**,” because he (the poor man) humbles himself and prays before You.

**27** **The humble will eat** at the time of our redemption in the days of our Messiah.

**your hearts will live forever** I will say all this before them.

**28** **will remember and return to the Lord** The nations shall remember the evil that befell us when they see the good and return to the Lord.

**29** **For the kingship is the Lord’s** For they will see that the kingship and the rule has returned to You.

**30** **They will eat all the best of the earth and prostrate themselves** Lit. they will eat and prostrate themselves all the best of the earth. This is a transposed verse. The humble will eat all the best of the earth and prostrate themselves to the Lord with praise and thanksgiving for the good. [People at] all the ends of the earth will see all this and return to the Lord.

**before Him will...kneel** Then all the dead of nations [will kneel] from Gehinnom but He will not have mercy upon them to revive their souls from Gehinnom.

**his soul** [The soul] of each one.

**He will not quicken** Lit. He did not quicken. Our Sages (Mid. Ps. 22:32) derived from this verse that the dead, before their death, at the time their soul is taken, see the countenance of the Shechinah.

**31** **The seed that worships Him** The seed of Israel, who constantly worship Him.

**it will be told to the generation concerning the Lord** Transpose the verse and explain it thus: It will be told to the last generation in the name of the Lord and in His praise what He did for that seed.

**32** **They will come** The first ones shall come and tell His righteousness/generosity to the newborn people, for He performed righteous/generous deeds for them.

**Ashlamatah: Mikha (Micah) 5:6-14 + 6:8**

6. And the remnant of Jacob will be in the midst of many peoples, as dew from the LORD, as showers upon the grass, that are not looked for from man, nor awaited at the hands of the sons of men. **{P}**

7. And the remnant of Jacob will be among the nations, in the midst of many peoples, as a lion among the beasts of the forest, as a young lion among the flocks of sheep, who, if he go through, treads down and tears in pieces, and there is none to deliver.

8. Let Your hand be lifted up above Your adversaries, and let all Your enemies be cut off.

9. And it will come to pass in that day, says the LORD, that I will cut off your horses out of the midst of you, and will destroy your chariots;

10. And I will cut off the cities of your land, and will throw down all your strongholds;

11. And I will cut off witchcrafts out of your hand; and you will have no more soothsayers;

12. And I will cut off your graven images and your pillars out of the midst of you; and you will no more worship the work of your hands.

13. And I will pluck up your Asherim out of the midst of you; and I will destroy your enemies.

14. And I will execute vengeance in anger and fury upon the nations, because they hearkened not. **{P}**

1. Hear you now what the LORD says: Arise, contend you before the mountains, and let the hills hear your voice.

2. Hear, O you mountains, the LORD'S controversy, and you enduring rocks, the foundations of the earth; for the LORD has a controversy with His people, and He will plead with Israel.

3. O My people, what have I done unto you? And wherein have I wearied you? Testify against Me.

4. For I brought you up out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed you out of the house of bondage, and I sent before you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam.

5. O My people, remember now what Balak king of Moab devised, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him; from Shittim unto Gilgal, that you may know the righteous/generous acts of the LORD.

6. “Wherewith will I come before the LORD, and bow myself before God on high? Will I come before Him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old?

7. Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Will I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?”

8. **It has been told you, O man, what is good, and what the LORD does require of you: only to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God. {S}**

**Special Ashlamatah: I Sam. 20:18,42**

18. And Jonathan said unto him: “Tomorrow is the New Moon; and you (David) will be missed, your seat will be empty.”

42. And Jonathan said to David: “Go in peace, forasmuch as we have sworn both of us in the name of the LORD, saying: The LORD will be between me and you, and between my seed and your seed, forever.” And he arose and departed; and Jonathan went into the city.

**Mishnah Pirke Abot: Prologue**

**All Israelites have a portion in the world-to-come, as it is said: “And your people, all righteous/generous, will inherit the land forever, the branch of My plantings. The work of My hands, to glorify me” (Yeshayahu/Isaiah 60:21).**

**Abarbanel on Pirke Abot**

By: Abraham Chill

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*[Due to its great popularity, numerous commentaries have been written on Pirke Abot, some by outstanding Rabbinic personalities. Pre-eminent among them is* ***Nahalat Abot*** *(“The Inheritance of the Fathers”) by Rabbi Don Isaac Abarbanel (son of the Portuguese treasurer, Dom Judah, was born in the year 1437 at Lisbon, and died at Venice in 1508), statesman, philosopher, and author of many works including his celebrated commentary on the entire Holy Scriptures.*

*Abarbanel received a careful education and was a pupil of Joseph Ḥayyim, rabbi of Lisbon. Well versed in Talmudic literature and in the learning of his time, endowed with a clear and keen mind, and full of enthusiasm for Judaism, he devoted his early years to the study of Jewish religious philosophy, and when scarcely twenty years old wrote on the original form of the natural elements, on the most vital religious questions, on prophecy, etc. His political abilities also attracted attention while he was still young. He entered the service of King Alfonso V. of Portugal as treasurer, and soon won the confidence of his master. Notwithstanding his high position and the great wealth he had inherited from his father, his love for his afflicted brethren was unabated. When Arzilla, in Morocco, was taken by the Moors, and the Jewish captives were sold as slaves, he contributed largely to the funds needed to manumit them, and personally arranged for collections throughout Portugal. He also wrote to his learned and wealthy friend Jehiel, of Pisa, in behalf of the captives. After the death of Alfonso he was obliged to relinquish his office, having been accused by King John II of connivance with the duke of Bragança, who had been executed on the charge of conspiracy. Abarbanel, warned in time, saved himself by a hasty flight to Castile (1483). His large fortune was confiscated by royal decree. At Toledo, his new home, he occupied himself at first with Biblical studies, and in the course of six months produced an extensive commentary on the books of Joshua, Judges, and Samuel. But shortly afterward he entered the service of the house of Castile. Together with his friend, the influential Don Abraham Senior, of Segovia, he undertook to farm the revenues and to supply provisions for the royal army, contracts that he carried out to the entire satisfaction of Queen Isabella. During the Moorish war Abarbanel advanced considerable sums of money to the government. When the banishment of the Jews from Spain was decreed, he left nothing undone to induce the king to revoke the edict. In vain did he offer him 30,000 ducats ($68,400, nominal value). With his brethren in faith he left Spain and went to Naples, where, soon after, he entered the service of the king. For a short time he lived in peace undisturbed; but when the city was taken by the French, bereft of all his possessions, he followed the young king, Ferdinand, in 1495, to Messina; then went to Corfu; and in 1496 settled in Monopoli, and lastly (1503) in Venice, where his services were employed in negotiating a commercial treaty between Portugal and the Venetian republic (Zurita, "Historia del Rey Don Fernando el Católico," v. 342a).]*

*Abarbanel's importance, however, lies not only in his changeful and active career. Although his works can scarcely be said to be of an absolutely original character, they contain so much instructive material, and exerted so wide an influence, that they demand special attention. They may be divided into three classes, referring to (1) exegesis, such as his commentary upon the entire Bible with the exception of the Hagiographa; (2) philosophy, dealing with philosophy in general and particularly with that of the Jewish religion; (3) apologetics, in defence of the Jewish doctrine of the Messiah. Characteristic of Abarbanel's exegetic writings is his accurate estimation of the historical standpoint in the ancient annals of the Jewish people. All preceding Jewish exegetes had been too far removed from the tumult of the great world to possess a proper estimate of the historical epochs and episodes described in Scripture. Abarbanel, who had himself taken part in the politics of the great powers of the day, rightly perceived that mere consideration of the literary elements of Scripture was insufficient, and that the political and social life of the people must also be taken into account. He recognized also the value of prefacing the individual books of the Bible with a general introduction concerning the character of each book, its date of composition, and the author's intention; he may consequently be considered as a pioneer of the modern science of Bible propædeutics. These excellences of Abarbanel's commentaries were especially appreciated by the Christian scholars of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. No less than thirty Christian writers of this period—among them men of eminence, like the younger Buxtorf, Buddeus, Carpzov, and others—occupied themselves with the close study of Abarbanel's exegetical writings, which they condensed and translated, and thus introduced to the world of Christian scholarship. Possibly somewhat of this appreciation of Abarbanel by Christians was due to the latter's tolerance toward the Christian, exegetes—Jerome, Augustine, and Nicholas de Lyra —all of whom were closely studied by him and quoted without prejudice, receiving praise or disapprobation as the case demanded.]*

One can appreciate the true significance of Pirke Abot in the eyes of the sages of the Talmud from the famous and oft-quoted adage, “He who wishes to be saintly should apply himself to Pirke Αbοt” (Baba Kamma 30a). The Maharal of Prague posed two questions on this assessment (Yehudah Liwa – 16th century, Derekh Chayim): The traditional practice is to precede the study of Pirke Abot with a mishnah which reads: “*All Israel have a portion in the World to Come ...*” (Sanhedrin 99a). If Pirke Abot is so singularly significant why add a preface to it? Secondly, it is also customary to conclude the study of each chapter with the statement, “Rabbi Hananya ben Akashya said: The Holy One blessed be He, wanted to grant merit to Israel, therefore He multiplied for them Torah and Mitzvοt ..." (Mishnah Makkot 3:15; Abot 6:9). Here, again, what need is there for an epilogue?

Maharal answers: An object is considered valuable when it has substance (homer), cosmetic appeal (tzurah), and a utilitarian purpose (takhlit). All these three criteria are necessary to determine whether something is marketable. They are also necessary to determine the collective and individual character of the Jew. The Jew's image is enhanced when he begins his study period with, “All Israel has a portion in the World to Come” (homer). As long as a Jew identifies himself as a Jew, he has a passport to olam ha-ba; that is his hallmark of a precious substance.

He then proceeds to the actual study of the text, thus demonstrating our lifestyle of ethical values (tzurah). We conclude with God's gift of Torah and mitzvot (commandments) to the Jew (takhlit) to underscore that we function best when we are Torah oriented.

Pirke Abot as it stands today consists of six chapters, whereas in Talmudic times it had only five chapters. As we have noted ín the introduction, a chapter was read every Shabbat afternoon between Passover and Shabuot (Pentecost) and since there are six Sabbaths between these two festivals, a sixth chapter, correctly called Kinyan Torah ("The Acquisition of Torah"), was added and read on the Shabbat before Shabuot (Pentecost) which commemorates Matan Torah, the giving of the Torah. This chapter is also known as Baraita de-Rabbi Meir, and consists of baraitot, i.e., texts from the times of the tannaim which were not included in the Mishnah.

[*Note:* *Many Jewish Orthodox Congregations recite Pirke Abot weekly during the period between Passover and New Year and this minhag (custom) we have adopted at Bet Emunah*]

Perhaps the most difficult statement in all Pirke Abot is the prologue “All Israel has a portion in the World to Come ..." Nearly all the commentators are disturbed by the same difficulty: The prologue is a mishnah taken from Tractate Sanhedrin. What is it doing there? “All Israel...” is a sublime promise to the Jews, whereas Tractate Sanhedrin deals in the main with capital punishment, in particular, with the four methods of execution administered by the court. How do we correlate such a sublime promise with the cruel and brutal death warrants of criminals?

This enigma disturbed Rashi in his commentary on the mishnah. He went even further: It would seem that when the Talmud discusses the ways and means of capital punishment it would have been logical for the sages to have formulated their views on the World to Come in a negative fashion: “These are the ones [i.e., the various criminals discussed] who have no share in the World to Come ...” For the sages to indicate who are entitled to olam ha-ba seems to be out of place.

Rashi, therefore, suggests that the rabbis in Tractate Sanhedrin formulated their thought as they did in order to alleviate the fears and anxieties of the wayward criminal. He may think to himself that because he sinned once and was sentenced to death, there is no hope for the salvation of his soul. The sages, therefore, allayed his fears by teaching, “All Israel have a portion in the World to Come.”

The Gaon of Vilna (Elijah ben Shlomo Zalman, 18th century) answered the same question by way of an analogy. When a person has a tree which is producing poor quality fruit, he grafts on to it a shoot from a strong, healthy tree and lops off the infected branches of the old one. However, people seeing him doing this may condemn him for cutting off what appear to be healthy branches. The truth is, of course, that he does not want the roots of the tree to expend themselves on nourishing diseased branches, but to nurture the new shoots.

So is it, continues the Gaon of Vilna, with man. There are those who question the humaneness of capital punishment. “Are there no other punishments available besides the death sentence? Is not capital punishment barbaric?” It is for this reason that “All Israel have ...” follows the chapter dealing with capital punishment in Tractate Sanhedrin. The criminal may be compared to the pruned branches. God's primary interest is to salvage the soul, the roots of man, and through his demise the wicked/lawless man's soul will survive in the World to Come.

The Gaon continues: In winter we are accustomed to stay indoors due to inclement weather; in the spring, we emerge and enjoy nature, the flowers and the trees. It is then that a person is apt to become light-headed and frivolous, which may lead to transgression. “All Israel have a portion ...” is then part of our study program to teach us the lesson of the grafting of shoots on to a sickly tree, so that good fruit can grow.

The most disturbing aspect of the dictum is the question: Is every Jew really entitled to a place in the World to Come? Are there no wicked/lawless Jews who are not worthy of olam ha-ba? A line of reasoning taken by one commentator would have us accept the indisputable assertion that a Jew always remains a Jew and, although he may have sinned grievously, he still has a number of mitzvoth (commandments) to his credit, albeit unbeknown to him (Meir David HaKohen)

Another opinion: Every Jew, no matter how much he has drifted from the straight and narrow path, makes a contribution (helek, a portion) to the realization of the Messianic age because that anticipated event will be a collective experience. This is the thrust of “All Israel ...”

Another commentator tackles a different aspect of the question (Meir Lehman): “All Israel ...” implies that only Jews will benefit in olam ha-ba. How can this be so? It is contrary to the rabbinic maxim which clearly states that there are righteous/generous gentiles who will enjoy a portion of the World to Come (Sanhedrin 105a). Therefore, “All Israel ...” comes to spell it out that although every God-fearing human being will be given a portion in olam ha-ba, the Jew will find it much easier to present himself by virtue of the fact that he is committed to Torah and mitzvot.

Another explanation for the seeming injustice of including the wicked/lawless among those rewarded with olam ha-ba is given by Rabbi Moshe Alsheikh. According to all the Kabbalists, there are three stages that the soul must pass through after death. First, it enters the world of souls (olam ha-nefashot). It then makes its way to olam ha-ba where it remains in limbo. Finally it reaches the stage of tehiyat ha-metím (resurrection of the dead) when the body will be revived. When our text says olam ha-ba it is referring to the penultimate stage before the resurrection. Hence, in the opinion of Midrash Shemuel, while the wicked/lawless will pass through the early stages they will be denied the last stage — they will not be resurrected.

Another interpretation is proposed by Rabbi Moshe Alsheikh. He muses that in view of the sages' assertion that when the Torah was delivered to the Children of Israel at Mt. Sinai every Jewish soul from then on and until the end of the world was present, it is natural that for that alone every Jew – even the sinner – is entitled to a portion of the Olam Ha-Ba.

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**Other Comments To The Introductory Passage**

One can not undertake a job with enthusiasm unless he is aware of the benefits it will bring. This Mishnah reminds us that the goal of keeping the Torah and obeying the commandments is to bring a person into the World-To-Come. (Me’am Lo’ez).

When reading the multitude of admonitions in Pirke Abot, one might lose hope for the World-To-Come, since it may feel impossible to fulfil all of these teachings. This Mishnah inspires us to remain hopeful, for every Jew has a portion in the World-To-Come. (Kehati)

When the Mishnah says that all Israel has a portion in the World to Come, it means that every Jew has a share in the Torah and in Divine Service, each according to his level and capabilities. (Rav Yisrael, the Maggid of Koznitz)

The Mishnah literally says a share "towards" the World-To-Come. The World-To-Come is not a pre-existing place in which one’s share awaits him, commensurate with his good deeds. Rather, it is something that we create for ourselves by the way we live in the world. We gain the World-To-Come through working towards it, by performing good deeds. (Ruach Chaim)

A call to unity is reflected in the first two words of the Mishnah. The word "kol" ("all") consists of two letters, "kaph" and "lamed," which stand for Kohanim (Priests) and Levi’im (Levites) and are followed by the next word, Yisrael. These words form the three constituent sections of the Jewish People. When Jews are joined together by unity and brotherhood, they conjointly enjoy a share in the World-To-Come. The concept of the oneness of the Jewish people is a very appropriate introduction into Jewish ethics. (Rabbi Shlomo Toperoff)

"Inherit the land." The land is the "land of the living" (Psalms 142:6), an allegory for the spiritual rewards of the World-To-Come. (Rambam)

"In which to take pride". Since every Jew’s soul is an actual part of G-d, each Jew praises G-d by his/her very existence. When one becomes aware of his/her G-dly core, one appreciates: (a) the necessity of refining oneself so that this essential quality can be expressed; and (b) that each individual, regardless of his/her present level of development, has the potential to achieve such refinement. (The Lubavitcher Rebbe, z’tl)

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**What say the Nazarean Hakhamim?**

Hakham Shaul’s response to this Mishnah in Romans 11:1-36 is as follows:

1. **I ask, then, has God rejected His people? God forbid!** For I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin.

2. **God has not rejected His people whom he foreknew**. Do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he appeals to God against Israel?

3. "Lord, they have killed your prophets, they have demolished your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life." (1 Kings 19:10)

4. But what is God's reply to him? "I have kept for myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal." (1 Kings 19:18)

5. So too at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace.

6. But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace.

7. What then? Israel failed to obtain what it was seeking. The elect obtained it, but the rest were blinded,

8. As it is written, "God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes that would not see and ears that would not hear, down to this very day." (Deut 29:4; Isaiah 29:10)

9. And David says, "Let their table before them become a snare; and when they are in peace, let it become a trap. (Psalm 69:23)

10. Let their eyes be darkened, that they see not; and make their loins continually to totter." (Psalm 69:24

11. **So I ask, did they stumble in order that they might fall? God forbid!** Rather through their trespass salvation has come to the Gentiles, so as to make Israel jealous.

12. Now if their trespass means riches for the world, and if their failure means riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their full inclusion mean!

13. Now I am speaking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an envoy to the Gentiles, I magnify my office

14. in order somehow to make my fellow Jews jealous, and thus save some of them.

15. For if their rejection means the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead?

16. **If the dough offered as first-fruits is holy, so is the whole lump, and if the root is holy, so are the branches.**

17. But if some of the branches were broken off, and you (Gentiles), although a wild olive shoot, were grafted in among the other [Jews] and now share in the nourishing root of the olive tree,

18. **do not be arrogant toward the [Jewish] branches.** If you are, remember **it is not you who support the (Jewish) root, but the (Jewish) root that supports you (Gentiles).**

19. Then you will say, "Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in."

20. That is true. They were broken off because of their disobedience, but you stand fast through faithful obedience. **So do not become proud, but fear.**

21. **For if God did not spare the (Jewish) natural branches, neither will he spare you (Gentiles)**.

22. Note then the kindness and the severity of God: severity toward those who have fallen, but God's kindness to you, provided you continue in his kindness. Otherwise you too will be cut off.

23. **And even they, if they do not continue in their disobedience, will be grafted in, for God has the power to graft them in again**.

24. **For if you were cut from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and grafted, contrary to nature, into a cultivated (Jewish) olive tree, how much more will these, the natural (Jewish) branches, be grafted back into their own olive tree**.

25. Lest you be wise in your own conceits, I want you to understand this mystery, brothers: **a partial** **blindness has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in**.

26. **And in this way ALL ISRAEL WILL BE SAVED (enter the Olam Ha-Ba)**, as it is written, "The Deliverer will come from Zion, he will banish ungodliness from Jacob" (Isaiah 59:20);

27. "and this will be my covenant with them when I take away their sins" (Isaiah 59:21).

28. As regards the tradition, they are enemies of God for your sake. But as regards election, they are beloved for the sake of their forefathers. (Deut. 7:8)

29. **For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable**. (Numbers 23:19)

30. For just as you were at one time disobedient to God but now have received mercy because of their disobedience,

31. so they too have now been disobedient in order that by the mercy shown to you they also may now receive mercy.

32. For God has consigned all to disobedience, that He may have mercy on all.

33. Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!

34. "For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counsellor?" (Isaiah 40:13; Jer 23:18)

35. "Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?" (Job 41:11)

36. For from Him (G-d) and through Him (G-d) and to Him (G-d) are all things. To Him (G-d) be glory forever. Amen ve Amen!

**Jude 6-7**

**Delitzsch Hebrew Rendition:**

**6וְהַמַּלְאָכִים אֲשֶׁר לֹא־שָׁמְרוּ אֶת־מִשְׂרָתָם כִּי אִם־עָזְבוּ אֶת־מְעוֹנָם שְׁמָרָם בְּמוֹסְרוֹת עוֹלָם בַּאֲפֵלָה לְמִשְׁפַּט הַיּוֹם הַגָּדוֹל׃**

**7כַּאֲשֶׁר נִהְיוּ לְמָשָׁל סְדוֹם וַעֲמֹרָה וּבְנֹתֵיהֶן אֲשֶׁר הִזְנוּ כְּמוֹהֶם וַתֵּלַכְנָה אַחֲרֵי בָּשָׂר זָר כִּי־נִמְסְרוּ לְמוּסַר אֵשׁ עוֹלָם׃**

**Murdoch’s Rendition from the Aramaic:**

6. And the angels that kept not their primacy, but left their station, he has reserved in chains unknown, under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day.

7. As Sodom and Gomorrah, and the surrounding cities, which in like manner followed whoredom and went after strange flesh, are placed beneath everlasting fire, being, doomed to judgment.

**Etheridge’s Rendition from the Aramaic:**

6. And the angels who kept not their primacy, but left their habitation, unto the judgment of the great day in chains unknown, under darkness, He has kept.

7. As Sadum and Omuro, and the cities which were around them, which in manner of them committed fornication, and went after other flesh, are lying under everlasting fire, condemned unto judgment.

**Hakham’s Rendition**

6. Messengers also, those who did not keep their own principality, but did leave their station, to a judgment of the great day, in bonds everlasting, under darkness He has kept,

7. As Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities around them, in like manner to these, having given themselves to immorality, and gone after other flesh (homosexuality), have been set before--an example, of fire everlasting, unto disciplined suffering.

***Comments:***

*Last Shabbat HaGadol we read on Jude 4-5:*

*4. For came in stealthily certain men who of old have been marked out for this judgment, evil [persons] changing the mercy of our G-d into licentiousness and the only LORD G-d and the Master Yeshua the Messiah denying.*

*5. But I will put you in remembrance, [though] you once knew this, that the LORD a people out of [the] land of Egypt having saved, again those who did not faithfully obey He destroyed.*

*Now verses 6 and 7 continue the same train of thought with two further examples.*

*Now the Greek word at the beginning of verse 6 is:* ***αγγελους*** *and corresponds to the Hebrew* ***מַּלְאָכִים***

*(MAL’AKHIM) [a plural form of the singular MALAKH] means both angelic or human messengers/beings. Christian Bibles read “And the angels” and excluding human ministers/messengers. However both the Greek and the Hebrew are ambiguous and can signify either angelic creatures or human ministers.*

*In my opinion, these are not extra-terrestrial angelic beings, but actual ministers in the congregation of G-d, who lusting for the things this world has to offer, or forced by persecution actually left their ministry, and the congregation bereft of his necessary ministration. This ties with the statement of v.4 – “For came in stealthily certain men.” Any Paqid or Hakham who deserts his entrusted responsibility and ministry to a particular congregation is here called:* ***“Messengers also, those who did not keep their own principality, but did leave their proper dwelling.”***

*From here we learn, that these are ministers who are member of a royal household, for their area of authority and service is called:* ***“their own principality.”*** *This is similar to a king “abdicating” his responsibilities to his subjects – a most grievous crime indeed! Similarly a Hakham or Paqid who abdicates his responsibilities to a congregation has rejected the Messiah and membership of the Royal Household of Israel. And Yehudah continues saying that such:* ***“did leave their station dwelling, to a judgment of a great day, in bonds everlasting, under darkness He [G-d] has kept.”***

*Christians since Justin (Apol. II.5) who interpret these to be angels have indicated that the sin of these angels was sexual lust, and pose Genesis 6:1,2 as the Torah text being alluded to, however, there exists no such tradition in Judaism. Now Targum Pseudo Jonathan renders these verses as follows:*

*“And it was when the sons of men began to multiply upon the face of the earth, and fair daughters were born to them;* ***and the sons of the great*** *saw that the daughters of men were beautiful, and painted, and curled, walking with revelation of the flesh, and with imaginations of wickedness; that they took them wives of all who pleased them. And the Lord said by His Word, All the generations of the wicked which are to arise shall not be purged after the order of the judgments of the generation of the deluge, which shall be destroyed and exterminated from the midst of the world. Have I not imparted My Holy Spirit to them, (or, placed My Holy Spirit in them,) that they may work good works? And, behold, their works are wicked. Behold, I will give them a prolongment of a hundred and twenty years, that they may work repentance, and not perish.”*

*It is therefore obvious that the* ***בְנֵי-הָאֱלֹהִים*** *“sons of G-d” in Genesis 6:2, are not angels but human “judges” (i.e. Hakhamim) – see Psalm 82:1, 6, 8 and Yochanan (John) 10:34-35.*

*Bigg[[1]](#footnote-1)sees the text of Deut. 32:8 as the Torah text behind Jude 6. To this we have no disagreement provided that this text does not refer to angelic beings but rather to the vocation of each member of the nation of Yisrael to become a Hakham. Bigg goes on to say that this is the text where we can derive that each Gentile nation has a presiding angel. And in this, we disagree. Not on the fact that each Gentile nation has an angel responsible for them, but rather using this verse to support that Jude 6 speaks about angelic beings rather than ministers in a congregation.*

*Another Christian tradition this time started by Origen (Ezech. Hom. IX.2) also believes that these are angelic beings, but proposes that their sin was “pride, arrogance, and disobedience.” Again we disagree that the text of Jude 6 speaks of angelic beings, but rather of congregational ministers (the ten men of the congregation – i.e. the 3 Hakhamim and 7 Chaberim/Paqidim), and we do agree with Origen that the cause of abdicating from their ministry and responsibilities to the congregation is due to a combination of “pride, arrogance, and disobedience” (the sin of HaSatan). To whom can we liken these ministers? Perhaps an apt comparison is to those horrible husbands who desert their wives without making sure they are left financially secure, or to those fathers who abandon their children and/or pay no maintenance for them.*

*In my opinion the text being alluded to in this verse 6 is none other than Malachi 3:23 – “Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD (Heb:* ***יוֹם יְהוָה, הַגָּדוֹל, וְהַנּוֹרָא***  *- Yom Adonai HaGadol VeHaNora) – “the great and terrible day of the LORD”) which we read on last Shabbat HaGadol. The Greek in verse 6 has: κρισιν μεγαλης ημερας and Delitzsch renders it in Hebrew as* ***לְמִשְׁפַּט הַיּוֹם הַגָּדוֹל*** *– “judgment of the great day.” It is therefore obvious what text from the Hebrew Scriptures underlies this verse.*

*The next example is Yehuda v. 7 is that of the Cities of the Plain: Sodom,* *Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboim (cf. 29:23, Hosea 11:8). Here, “and gone after other flesh” is a reference to Homosexuality. This sin is connected with the name Sodom as in (Sodomy – sexual acts between two human males), a sin which, was horribly common in heathen Greece, Rome, and Islamic countries, and once more has been revived in these last days in which we live.*

*The next verse – Yehudah 1:8 states: “Likewise, indeed, also these dreaming ones even defile flesh, and despise rulership, and speak evil of dignities.” This means that the examples of Yehudah verses 6 & 7 are not angels but ministers of G-d. Let us list the 3 examples given*

* *Verse 5 – “a people out of [the] land of Egypt having saved, again those who did not faithfully obey He destroyed.”*
* *Verse 6 – “Messengers [human congregational minsters] also, those who did not keep their own principality, but did leave their station, to a judgment of a great day, in bonds everlasting, under darkness He [G-d] has kept.”*
* *Verse 7 – “having given themselves to immorality, and gone after other flesh (homosexuality), have been set before--an example, of fire everlasting, unto disciplined suffering.”*

*And the behaviours of these three examples belong to the men described in:*

* *Verse 4 -* ***“For came in stealthily certain men who of old have been marked out for this judgment, evil [persons] changing the mercy of our G-d into licentiousness and the only LORD G-d and the Master Yeshua the Messiah denying.”***

*The 10 ministers of the congregation should therefore be free of all: (1) Unfaithful Disobedience; (2) abandoning, abdication or resigning from the ministry and their obligation and commitment to the congregation to which they were assigned; and (3) Homosexuality and Bestiality. Breaching any of these three have severe penalties attached to them as we have read in vv. 4-7.*

**Some Questions to Ponder:**

1. Why are Jews “saved” communally but Righteous/Generous Gentiles “individually”? Or put in other words, Why will Jews enter the Olam Ha-Ba as a people/community/nation and not as individuals, but Righteous/Generous Gentiles enter the Olam Ha-Ba as “individuals” (one by one) and then brought into the community of Israel?
2. Why then is it impossible for a Jew to survive without the indispensable oxygen of the “local” Jewish community, and the whole nation of Yisrael?
3. Hakham Shaul states in Romans 11:25 that: “a **partial** blindness has come upon Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.” Since the blindness is “partial,” what part is Israel exactly blinded to and what part is Israel exactly not blinded from?
4. By “becoming wise in their own conceits” and rejecting the need to observe the commandments of G-d as interpreted by the Jewish Sages, and as observed by the Master of Nazareth himself, to what do these Gentiles have become blind, and what is the consequence of this blindness?
5. Hakham Shaul states in Romans 11:26 “And in this way ALL ISRAEL WILL BE SAVED (enter the Olam Ha-Ba), as it is written, "The Deliverer will come from Zion, he will banish ungodliness from Jacob" (Isaiah 59:20).” Is this statement contrary to our Mishnaic Prologue to Pirke Abot: “ALL ISRAELITES HAVE A PORTION IN THE WORLD-TO-COME, as it is said: “And your people, all righteous/generous, will inherit the land forever, the branch of My plantings. The work of My hands, to glorify me (Yeshayahu/Isaiah 60:21)”?
6. What happens when the Jews do not make proper use of their voices by praying and studying Torah regularly?
7. What kind of animal did Esav prepare for his father, and how do we know this to be so?
8. What happens to a Jew when he marries a forbidden woman to him?
9. What questions were asked of Rashi regarding Genesis 27:28?
10. What questions were asked of Rashi regarding Genesis 27:29?
11. What questions were asked of Rashi regarding Genesis 27:33?
12. What questions were asked of Rashi regarding Genesis 27:38?
13. What questions were asked of Rashi regarding Genesis 27:39?
14. What questions were asked of Rashi regarding Genesis 27:42?
15. What questions were asked of Rashi regarding Genesis 28:3?
16. What questions were asked of Rashi regarding Genesis 28:4?
17. What questions were asked of Rashi regarding Genesis 28:9?
18. How is the Ashlamatah of Micah 5:6-14 + 6:8 related to our Torah Seder?
19. How is Jude 6-7 related to our Torah Seder?
20. In your opinion, taking into consideration the contents of our Torah Seder, Psalm, Ashalamatah, Special Ashlamatah, and Jude 6-7, what is the prophetic message for this week?

**Yom Hashoah – Holocaust Day**

**Nisan 27 - Apr. 21, 2009**

**What are the origins of Muslim anti-Semitism?**

**By Yaron Harel**

When he met Pope John Paul II in 2001, Syrian president Bashar Assad surprised the pontiff when he said of the Jews, "They try to kill all the principles of divine faiths with the same mentality of betraying Jesus Christ and torturing him, and in the same way that they tried to commit treachery against the Prophet Muhammad."

In order to understand the background to these accusations, one must go back to the year 1986 when then-Syrian defense minister Mustafa Tlass, who was considered an intellectual giant in the fields of the humanities and the arts, published his book "The Matzoh of Zion." The conclusion of the popular book was that the Jews had indeed murdered a Christian monk in 1840 as part of a ritual murder, in one of the most important blood libels in Jewish history, known as the "Damascus Affair."

The phenomenon of a blood libel against the Jews was until then an anomaly in the lands of Islam. The Muslim majority lived under the Ottoman rule in Syria alongside two minorities, the Christians and the Jews. The two minorities were considered "protected citizens" (dhimmi) and were treated in tolerant fashion. They were allowed to practice their religious precepts in return for paying a tax, and recognizing that they had a lower legal and social status. But in 1831-32, the ruler of Egypt, Muhammad Ali, conquered Syria from the Ottoman sultan, holding the territory until the end of 1840. The period of Egyptian rule in Syria was perceived by the country's Christians as a golden era, since they saw their rights increased. It's a period of great importance to any understanding of the change that occurred in the attitude of Muslims toward the Christians.

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The rights that the Egyptian rulers granted to non-Muslims - including appointments to government councils, acceptance to the regional administrative system, the building and renovation of places of worship, permission to ride horses in the cities and to wear clothes of colors that previously had been permitted for Muslims only - hurt the feelings of Muslim subjects, arousing in them grudges toward the non-Muslim population. Muhammad Ali was considered to rule at the sufferance of the European powers, led by France, in return for which he granted excess rights to non-Muslim minorities, particularly the Christians. In addition, the local Christians were perceived as collaborators with the European powers that were hoping to gain control of the Ottoman Empire. As a result, the Muslims started developing a hatred for the Christians, who were now perceived as political rivals.

Tensions and struggles between the Jews and Christians had existed from time immemorial, for both religious and historic reasons, and were exacerbated by competition over economic and commercial positions. In order to be successful in the economic, administrative and public spheres, every minority required the backing and support of the Muslim majority. Hence, each side tried to incite the Muslims against the rival ethnic groups. The Muslims' hatred of, and hostility toward, local Christians, and their relative sympathy toward the Jews, led the Christians in Damascus to complain about the cruel treatment they received by the qadis (Muslim judges). The fear that they would become victims of Muslim violence when the Ottoman regime returned to Syrian rule also pushed the Christians to seek new ways to incite the Muslims against the Jews. To this end, they enlisted priests from such Catholic orders as the Franciscans and the Capuchins. The priests brought with them to the Middle East not only the culture of Catholic Europe but also the medieval myth according to which the Jews required human blood for the Passover rites.

On February 5, 1840, a Capuchin monk named Father Tomaso, together with his servant, Ibrahim Amara, disappeared. A short while later, rumors started circulating that they had last been seen in the Jewish quarter of Damascus and that they had been murdered by Jews so that their blood could be used for Passover rites. The heads of the community, led by Rabbi Yaakov Antebi, were arrested and tortured in order to force an admission of guilt from them. The French consul, who wished to fulfill his duty as defendant of the Catholics, effectively headed the investigation. A number of Jews broke down and supposedly confessed, others died during torture while Hakham Moshe Abulafia, chose to convert to Islam in order to escape his torturers. Later he emerged as the state's witness and incriminated the Jews, claiming that they had ordered him to mix Christian blood in their matzot and that he had been forced to take part in the monk's murder at the order of Rabbi Antebi.

Through threats, tortures and false evidence, such as finding the missing monk's bones in a sewer in the Jewish quarter, those who charged the Jews succeeded in winning over public opinion. In a legal procedure, the Jews were found guilty and sentenced to death. The affair was reported in the newspapers and word of it reached Europe, where an accusatory finger was pointed also at the Jews in western Europe. This aroused the Jews of western Europe to engage in widespread public and political activity, aimed at influencing the various governments to put pressure on Muhammad Ali to grant their accused co-religionists the chance for a fair trial, at which they would have the opportunity to prove their innocence. With this in mind, a Jewish delegation headed by Moses Montefiore and Adolphe Cremieux left for Egypt to meet with the khedive.

And indeed, the widespread diplomatic activity led to the issuing of an order granting them a pardon. In early September 1840, immediately after the order reached Damascus, the prisoners were freed, without officially being exonerated. The Jewish communities in the Diaspora and in Damascus itself celebrated the release of the tortured detainees but their joy was premature. The release did not have the force of a legal acquittal and public opinion continued to consider the released Jews murderers who had been freed with the help of bribes paid by their brethren in Europe. As a result, anti-Jewish ferment continued in Damascus and throughout Syria for many more years, against the backdrop of accusations of vile crimes for ritual purposes. A stone monument was erected in the Capuchin monastery in Damascus with the inscription in Arabic and Italian: "Here are interred the bones of the monk Tomaso who was murdered by the Jews on February 5, 1840."

The French consul in Aleppo also said later: "The Jews of Aleppo are part of a cruel sect whose principles are secret and to which barbaric superstitions and bloodletting are attributed. This is the same sect that is accused of using human blood for kneading matzot instead of sacrificing a lamb for Passover as written in the holy books of Moses."

**Another libel almost every Pesach**

During the years 1841-1860 there were at least 13 blood libels in Syria that became known to the general public, 10 of them in Damascus and three in Aleppo. Sometimes the Christians would use the threat of a blood libel as a means to blackmail the Jews, so that the accusations of ritual murder could be heard almost every year before Passover. The Christian incitement inspired Muslims to invent their own blood libels. They, too, began attributing to the Jews responsibility for the disappearance of a boy or girl from their home, whether out of a desire to take revenge or to squeeze money out of them. Following the events in Damascus in July 1860, when the Muslims massacred thousands of Christians, the Christian community there was greatly weakened and consequently the phenomenon of blood libels began subsiding. As the final decade of the 19th century began, however, the bleak days of 1840 returned.

In the year 1890, the holiday of Easter fell during Passover. On April 7, the second of the intermediate days of Pesach, a 6-year-old Christian boy disappeared. The Jews were accused of murdering him, and of using his blood for ritual purposes. As a result, riots broke out in the city.

The child's body was found two weeks later in a well. An autopsy revealed several findings that supposedly confirmed that the Jews had murdered him for ritual purposes. It was alleged that there was no blood inside the body, for example, and there was a cut on one of his arms. Eventually, however, it was established that the boy had drowned and not been murdered and that no Jews had been involved. This was not sufficient, however, to calm either Christians or Muslims, many of whom remained convinced that the Jews were responsible, and that they had again escaped punishment thanks to the power and influence of their co-religionists in Europe.

In the last decade of the 19th century, the Christian community in Damascus regained its strength, both economically, and from the point of view of its public status. This process continued until the eve of World War I, and was accompanied to a certain extent by forcing Jews out of key economic positions they held. The Jews were a central object of incitement in the Christian press, which had its headquarters in Beirut. The weekly Al-Bashir, for example, published an article aimed at proving the claim that the Jews used Christian blood for Passover rituals. This weekly, the organ of the Jesuits in Lebanon, contained reactionary and anti-Semitic French Catholic teachings, and contradicted the neutral approach adopted by the official French consular representatives.

Toward the end of the 19th century, two anti-Semitic pamphlets were distributed in the region. One, published in Arabic in Cairo, was written by a Lebanese Christian journalist who had settled there; the other, by a French priest, was printed in Paris under the title "Murdered by Jews: A History of Ritual Murder." The incitement from French Catholic quarters increased the ferment among the Christian population and led to attacks on Jews, who found themselves beaten in the streets of Damascus. A few days after Passover, two Capuchin priests in Damascus incited the Christian masses to riot against the Jews. Jewish shops were looted, many Jews were beaten and a young girl from the community was abducted by one of the priests and locked up for interrogation.

Some of the frequent blood libels of the period were short-lived and drew minimal attention, but others led to outbursts of violence. In the end, blood libels spread to many other cities in the Middle East.

The Damascus Affair played an important role in modern Jewish history. It served as a trigger for strengthening renewed Jewish national awareness and for the re-establishment of ties between the various Jewish communities in the West and East. Jewish national solidarity pushed forward the process that eventually created the modern Jewish national ethos. But the Damascus Affair also led to the creation of the anti-Semitic myth that the Jews controlled the world. This myth, which found widespread expression in such anti-Semitic literature as "The Protocols of the Elders of Zion," has taken hold anew in the past few decades, and examples can be seen at book fairs and in the media of the Arab world. Various drama series on Arabic-language television and articles in the written press once again raise the issue of Jewish responsibility for ritual murders, something that was inconceivable in the Muslim world before the intensive European infiltration of the Middle East.

*Dr. Yaron Harel is a senior lecturer in Jewish history at Bar-Ilan University. His book: "Intrigue and Revolution in the Jewish Communities of Damascus, Aleppo and Baghdad, 1744-1914" was published in Hebrew last year, and it is expected that it will be published in English by the Littmann Library in 2011.*

**Next Shabbat:**

**Shabbat Rosh Chodesh Iyar**

**Sabbath of the New Moon for the Month of Iyar**

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Shabbat** | **Torah Reading:** | **Weekday Torah Reading:** |
| וּבְרָאשֵׁי חָדְשֵׁיכֶם |  |  |
| **“Shabbat Rosh Chodesh”** | Reader 1 – B’midbar 27:15-17 | Reader 1 – B’Resheet 28:10-12 |
| **“Sabbath of the New Moon”** | Reader 2 – B’midbar 27:18-20 | Reader 2 – B’Resheet 28:13-15 |
| **“Sábado del Novilunio”** | Reader 3 – B’midbar 27:21-23 | Reader 3 – B’Resheet 28:16-19 |
| B’Midbar (Num.) 27:15 – 28:25 | Reader 4 – B’midbar 28:1-9 |  |
| Ashlamatah: Isaiah 66:1-24 | Reader 5 – B’midbar 28:10-14 |  |
|  | Reader 6 – B’midbar 28:15-18 | Reader 1 – B’Resheet 28:10-12 |
|  | Reader 7 – B’midbar 28:19-25 | Reader 2 – B’Resheet 28:13-15 |
| N.C.: Col. 2:16-23 | Maftir : B’midbar 28:23-25 | Reader 3 – B’Resheet 28:16-19 |
| Pirke Abot: II:6 | Isaiah 66:1-24 |  |

**Counting of the Omer**

Evening Friday April 17 – Today is the 9th day of the counting of the Omer

Evening Saturday April 18 – Today is the 10th day of the counting of the Omer

Evening Sunday April 19 – Today is the 11th day of the counting of the Omer

Evening Monday April 20th – Today is the 12th day of the counting of the Omer

Evening Tuesday April 21st – Today is the 13th day of the counting of the Omer

Evening Wednesday April 22nd – Today is the 14th day of the counting of the Omer

Evening Thursday April 23rd – Today is the 15th day of the counting of the Omer

Evening Friday April 24th – Today is the 16th day of the counting of the Omer

Evening Saturday April 25th – Today is the 17th day of the counting of the Omer

Shalom Shabbat!

Hakham Dr. Yosef ben Haggai

1. Bigg, C. (1987), A Critical And Exegetical Commentary on The Epistles Of St. Peter and St. Jude, Edinburgh, U.K.: T & T Clark Limited, p. 328. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)