

Esnoga Bet Emunah

[6970 Axis St. SE](http://www.betemunah.org/)
[Lacey, WA 98513](http://www.betemunah.org/)
United States of America
© 2018
<http://www.betemunah.org/>
E-Mail: gkilli@aol.com



Esnoga Bet El

102 Broken Arrow Dr.
Paris TN 38242
United States of America
© 2018
<http://torahfocus.com/>
E-Mail: waltoakley@charter.net

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

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|--|---|
| Three and 1/2 year Lectionary Readings | Third Year of the Triennial Reading Cycle |
| Iyar 13, 5778 – April 27/28, 2018 | Third Year of the Shmita Cycle |

Candle Lighting and Habdalah Times:

Please go to the below webpage and type your city, state/province, and country to find candle lighting and Habdalah times for the place of your dwelling.

See: <http://www.chabad.org/calendar/candlelighting.htm>

Roll of Honor:

This Commentary comes out weekly and on the festivals thanks to the great generosity of:

His Eminence Rabbi Dr. Hillel ben David and beloved wife HH Giberet Batsheva bat Sarah
His Eminence Rabbi Dr. Eliyahu ben Abraham and beloved wife HH Giberet Dr. Elisheba bat Sarah
His Honor Paqid Adon David ben Abraham
His Honor Paqid Adon Ezra ben Abraham and beloved wife HH Giberet Karmela bat Sarah,
His Honor Paqid Adon Tsuriel ben Abraham and beloved wife HH Giberet Gibora bat Sarah
Her Excellency Giberet Sarai bat Sarah & beloved family
His Excellency Adon Barth Lindemann & beloved family
His Excellency Adon John Batchelor & beloved wife
Her Excellency Giberet Leah bat Sarah & beloved mother
His Excellency Adon Yehoshua ben Abraham and beloved wife HE Giberet Rut bat Sarah
His Excellency Adon Michael ben Yosef and beloved wife HE Giberet Sheba bat Sarah
Her Excellency Giberet Prof. Dr. Emunah bat Sarah & beloved family
His Excellency Adon Robert Dick & beloved wife HE Giberet Cobena Dick
His Excellency Adon Aviner ben Abraham and beloved wife HE Giberet Chagit bat Sarah
His Excellency Adon Ovadya ben Abraham and beloved wife HE Giberet Mirit bat Sarah
His Excellency Adon Brad Gaskill and beloved wife Cynthia Gaskill
His Excellency Adon Shlomoh ben Abraham
His Excellency Adon Ya'aqob ben David
Her Excellency Giberet Eliana bat Sarah and beloved husband HE Adon James Miller

For their regular and sacrificial giving, providing the best oil for the lamps, we pray that GOD'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 with your E-Mail or the E-Mail addresses of your friends. Toda Rabba!

Please pray for this work that it may be successful touching many lives, well financed; and that it may be for much blessing to all concerned. Amen ve Amen!

We pray for H.E. Giberet Leah bat Sarah and her mother, for safety and blessings in a small trip they are undertaking, amen ve amen!

We pray for His Excellency Adon Ya'aqob ben David who has been ill for a few days. **Mi Sheberach** – He Who blessed our forefathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Moses and Aaron, David and Solomon, may He bless and heal His Excellency Adon Ya'aqob ben David. May the Holy One. Blessed is He, be filled with compassion for him to restore his health, to heal him, and strengthen him, and to revive him. And may He send him speedily a complete recovery from heaven, among the other sick people of Yisrael, a recovery of the body and a recovery of the spirit and mind, swiftly and soon, and we say amen ve amen!

We pray for the wife of Adon John Batchelor who is ill with cancer. **Mi Sheberach** – He Who blessed our holy and pure Matriarchs, Sarah, Ribkah, Rachel and Leah, bless Her Excellency Mrs. Batchelor and send her a complete and strengthening of body and soul. Please G-d heal her, please. Please G-d heal her, please. Please G-d heal her, please. Cure her, strengthen her, make her healthy and return her to her original strength, together with all the sick of Yisrael. And may it be recovery so willed, and we will say, Amen ve Amen!

We pray for Her Honor Ha Rabbanit Giberet Elisheba bat Sarah who is suffering from bouts of loss of equilibrium. **Mi Sheberach** – He Who blessed our holy and pure Matriarchs, Sarah, Ribkah, Rachel and Leah, bless Her Honor Ha Rabbanit Giberet Elisheba bat Sarah and send her a complete recovery and strengthening of body and soul. Please G-d heal her, please. Please G-d heal her, please. Please G-d heal her, please. Cure her, strengthen her, make her healthy and return her to her original strength, together with all the sick of Yisrael. And may it be so willed, and we will say, Amen ve Amen!

We also pray for a problem with a property of H.E. Giberet Leah whose neighbor is spreading Lashon Hara to anyone who approaches to buy, resulting in buyers going back on their intention to purchase the property. This is very important to H.E. Giberet Leah. Let us pray for HaShem's mighty and just intervention in this matter, and that this property be sold speedily soon, and let us say, amen ve amen!

We pray also for H.E. Giberet Rachel bat Batsheva who is afflicted with systemic mastocytosis. **Mi Sheberach** – He Who blessed our holy and pure Matriarchs, Sarah, Ribkah, Rachel and Leah, bless Her Excellency Giberet Rachel bat Batsheva and send her a complete recovery and strengthening of body and soul. Please G-d heal her, please. Please G-d heal her, please. Please G-d heal her, please. Cure her, strengthen her, make her healthy and return her to her original strength, together with all the sick of Yisrael. And may it be so willed, and we will say, Amen ve Amen!

**Wednesday Evening April 25, 2018
Evening: Counting of the Omer Day 25**

Evening: Counting of the Omer Day 25

Then read the following:

| Day of the Omer | Ministry | Date | Ephesians | Attributes |
|-----------------|----------|---------|-----------|-------------------------|
| 25 | Parnas 1 | Iyar 10 | 4:20-24 | Confidence ¹ |

Ephesians 4:20-24 Your lessons on Messiah have taught you better than this,² assuming you have paid attention to our teachings³ about him.⁴ Just as this instruction is the truth in (the Torah⁵ concerning) Yeshua.⁶ For you ought to put off⁷ the old man,⁸ (your previous way of living) which is destroyed by deceitful passions, and be renewed⁹ in the spirit of your mind.¹⁰ And you should put on

¹ Hakham Shaul, now deals with confidence. He discusses the confidence the Gentile converts need for their new walk.

² Eph. 4:20 ὑμεῖς δὲ οὐχ οὕτως ἐμάθετε τὸν Χριστόν, cannot be translated by a literal word for word method. The concept is that the Gentile has received lessons on or about Messiah. And, therefore they have been taught you that they cannot live as the pagan Gentiles do. His message may sound like, you must change your conduct to match the teachings Torah, the 613 commandments and the wisdom of the Hakhamim.

Barth translates v20... "But you have not become students of Messiah this way." Barth, M. (1974). *Ephesians, Introduction, Translation, and Commentary on Chapters 4 - 6*. (T. A. Bible, Ed.) New Haven, CN: The Anchor Yale Bible. p. 498

³ We see that activity of the Parnas 1 (1st Pastor) in these passages. The "teaching" is in fact teaching, instruction, and training in the Mesorah. An Academic setting is implied here. The Moreh is a "teacher" as we will see. However, we note that the Eshnoga has many "teachers" and instructors. In the present verses, we see the 1st Pastoral Officer (Paqid) in action.

⁴ Some translations translate the clause εἶπε, "in as much as." This indicates that the readers have heard of Yeshua. However, the "having heard" is not simply an acquaintance. This shows that the Ephesian congregation had learned about Messiah and this is Hakham Shaul's gentle reminder that they have learned the "mysteries of Messiah by Hakham Shaul's mouth. (see above 1:1-7; 3:1-6,7-13,14-19) Hoehner, H. W. (2002). *Ephesians, An Exegetical Commentary*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic. pp. 594-5

⁵ Cf. John 17:17

⁶ **Truth in** (concerning) **Yeshua**, refers to understanding the Mesorah. The phrase "in Messiah (Eph. 4:21 ἐν τῷ Ἰησοῦ) means in union with Messiah, or in union with his teachings. Therefore, the Ephesian converts are called to be in union with Messiah by observance of his teachings on Mesorah. The deeper So'od meaning here is that those who are "in Messiah/Yeshua" are under his control, i.e. sphere. Our use of "sphere" is in a matter of speaking the equivalent to the Hebrew "mazel" (constellation). The can be better understood when we realize that the phrase "sphere" refers to the angels who are the engine of the universe. We now see that all the angels as "spheres" are under the "sphere" of Messiah. This is deep the mystical meaning of Messiah, which needs further elucidation.

⁷ "Putting off" or "casting off" is a once and for all, definite concluding action. The three imperatives, "put off, renew and put on are dependent on the verb "taught/teaching" which we have translated "**you have paid attention to our teachings.**" Therefore, the "putting off," "renewal" and "putting on" are all contingent on paying attention – putting to practice the teachings the Ephesians received concerning Messiah. Dibelius see these "teachings," as "hearing" and "learning" possessing a "mystical sense." Barth, while quoting Dibelius does not accept his thesis. We find that the "teaching," hearing" and "learning" forwarded to the Ephesians is very "mystical" as a Remes/So'od in accordance with Rabbinic hermeneutics. Barth's comments are also noteworthy concerning the "academic" nature of the "teachings" Hakham Shaul gave to the Ephesians. He suggests that the teachings are both philosophical and "ethical." This perfectly matches the idea of a Mesorah that was handed down to him from Hakham Tsefet and Gamaliel. This is noted in Barth's comment on the fact that the "instruction" parallels the teacher, student relationship in Rabbinic schools of the day. However, note that this is not the "parallel." This a picture of the exact Hakham Talmid relationship modeled. Barth, M. (1974). *Ephesians, Introduction, Translation, and Commentary on Chapters 4 - 6*. (T. A. Bible, Ed.) New Haven, CN: The Anchor Yale Bible. pp. 505, 529-533

⁸ The "old man" is a man whose mind is filled with darkness and death. The "new man" is filled with the light of Messiah and peace/life. We can also see the discretionary way Hakham Shaul speaks of the Gentile life that they lived before conversion. There are a great number of ideas concerning the idea of the "old" and "new man." The simplest answer to the "old man" in Ephesians is the notion of "putting off" the former Gentile lifestyle and mindset. This is accomplished by being "renewed in the spirit of the mind." This language is metaphorical or poetic and non-literal. As noted above the "putting off" is a part of the teachings the Ephesians received by Hakham Shaul in the academic setting he brought when he was with them.

⁹ This action is a mental process of continual renewal. For the former gentile this is a continual progressive process.

the Nefesh Yehudi (new man),¹¹ having been created after God's likeness in righteousness/generosity and true holiness.

Thursday Evening April 26, 2018
Evening: Counting of the Omer Day 26

Evening Counting of the Omer Day 26
Then read the following:

| Day of the Omer | Ministry | Date | Ephesians | Attributes |
|-----------------|---------------------------------|---------|-----------|----------------------------------|
| 26 | Parnas ¹² 1/Parnas 2 | Iyar 11 | 4:25-27 | Confidence united with sincerity |

Ephesians 4:25-27 Therefore putting away falsehood,¹³ let each man speak¹⁴ honestly (in sincerity) with his neighbor,¹⁵ for we are one, and members of one congregation.¹⁶ Be angry,¹⁷ and do not sin.

¹⁰ The *ruach/pneuma* refers to the five levels of the *neshama*/soul. The Nefesh is base desire necessary for human survival and perpetuation. Even though this may often be referred to as the *yetser har* (evil inclination), it is a vital part of human existence. Hakham Shaul's "putting off" is a reference to controlling human impulses and desires. The destruction of "deceitful passions" carries sexual connotations and adulterous imagery. This is also non-literal. In other words, Hakham Shaul is using infidelity to show that man (Jew/Gentile) is forfeiting spiritual life for physical impulses. Another way of saying this is that man (Jew/Gentile) is forfeiting his relationship with G-d by yielding to his physical impulses. The *ruach/pneuma* is a higher aspect of the soul, which begins or initiates the elevation of spiritual, ethical conduct. The phrase spirit of the mind shows that the *ruach* (2nd level of the soul) is connected to the "mind." Therefore, the ethical conduct is invigorated by renewal through study and apprehending the aspects and teachings of the Torah. This renewal is the path upward from the animal soul. The passive sense of this phrase shows that the process is continual and ongoing.

¹¹ The metaphor of "putting off" and "putting on" contains the Jewish imagery of conversion.

¹² The term "Parnas" in Hebrew means Shepherd/Pastor but not necessarily as these titles are understood in Protestant or Catholic Christianity.

¹³ Hakham Shaul now deals with "**confidence united with sincerity**" in that he shows how the creature is created in the image of G-d. The creature now conducts life after the manner of G-d's manifestation in the world, i.e. the Torah. Consequently, we see the shift towards "din" justice. G-d conceals Himself in the ten lights. However, while we say that He is concealed He is also revealed. Or we should say, that He reveals what can be known of Him in the lights of Messiah. Therefore, Hakham Shaul will begin to reveal what can be known in these lower lights. Parnas 1 and 2 united bring balance to the congregation. We have an honest sense of compassion. When the 2nd Parnas is involved we have the honesty which must be expressed in relationships. Therefore, it is noteworthy that Hakham Shaul begins dealing with relationships revealed in the congregation of Messiah. The atmosphere created by the union of the 1st and 2nd Parnas is one where mutual space brings tranquility and peace. The 2nd Parnas presents the Torah in such as ways so as to match the capacity of the recipient. The 2nd Parnas finds expression in helping others. As we will note below the present pericope is directly related to the Bedtime Shema. We can also see the acceptance of our duty as outlined in the Modeh Ani related to the 2nd Parnas. The Hebrew title for the sphere that the 2nd Parnas occupies is called **Hod**. Modeh Ani is etymologically related to Hod showing that we must submit to the balance of the 2nd Parnas.

¹⁴ The three Parnasim (pastors) represent three levels of communication, *ethos*, *pathos* and *logos*. The most effective speaker is *ethos*, the 2nd Parnas. As a matter of fact, the present pericope (**4:25-27**) is a perfect description of the 2nd Parnas.

¹⁵ Hakham Shaul begins a triad of reference to the Mitzvoth (commandments). He begins with "prohibition" moving to the mitzvah and then to motivation. Here he deals with social order. When the structure of Ephesians is scrutinized closely, one will note that the opening passages begin with the origins of the soul per se. In the latter chapters of Ephesians we see conduct being emphasized. Our "heavenly origins" must ensue into earthly works. Hakham Shaul makes this evident to his readers in these final verses. Thielman notes the parallel between Zechariah 8:16 and the present verse. (Zech. 8:16) ***These are the things which you should do: speak the truth to one another; judge with truth and judgment for peace in your gates.*** Thielman, F. (2010). *Ephesians*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic. p. 311

¹⁶ Hakham Shaul's prohibition teaches the Gentile converts that they are now members of the same congregation. This is his way of stressing a different type of behavior.

Do not let the sun go down upon your anger,¹⁸ neither give place to the adversary (devil).¹⁹

Friday Evening April 27, 2018
Evening: Counting of the Omer Day 27

Evening Counting of the Omer Day 27
Then read the following:

| Day of the Omer | Ministry | Date | Ephesians | Attributes |
|-----------------|-------------------|---------|-----------|------------------------------|
| 27 | Parnas 1/Parnas 3 | Iyar 12 | 4:28 | Confidence united with truth |

Let him who **stole**²⁰ **steal no more, but rather let him labor,**²¹ **doing honest (beneficial) work with his own hands so that he may have something to share**²² **with anyone who is in need.**²³

¹⁷ The left side is always accustoming to *din*/justice. Therefore, there is always a thrust forward or upward. The 2nd Parnas is an energized 1st Parnas. Be angry - **ὀργίζω** – *orgizo* from **ὀργή** – *orge*. In *ὀργή* there is actualized the true or false insight of man which impels him to decisive deeds. **ὀργή** – *orge* can lean towards revenge and punishment. It receives this characteristic from the Chazan. Therefore, Hakham Shaul has to corral this officer and ministry. *ὀργή*, is always seen to be protecting something recognized to be right, becomes in the political life of the following period the characteristic and legitimate attitude of the ruler who has to avenge injustice. Because the 2nd Parnas, here described in the Greek word **ὀργή** – *orge* has a propensity for justice. Therefore, “anger” must not be allowed to progress into sin.

¹⁸ Here is a subtle reference to the evening/bedtime Shema. The second section of the Bedtime Shema is **Ribono Shel Olam Hareni Mochel Ve'solei'ach**. This part of the Shema calls us to pardon and forgive anyone who may have sinned against our person. By following this practice, we avoid allowing the “**sun to go down on our anger.**”

¹⁹ By reciting the Bedtime Shema, we find forgiveness, repentance and protection from the enemy at night. We entrust our soul to HaShem. The Bedtime Shema is deeply esoteric and confronts abstract exhibitions of the adversary. The expressed character of the 2nd Parnas deals with the adversary and adversity in ways that accept hardships as an opportunity to change and transform adversity into G-dly momentum. The 2nd Parnas calls for each of us to master his own soul and share that mastery with others in a harmonious space free of conflict and adversity.

²⁰ Philo uses **κλέπτω** – *klepto* to describe the “kidnapper” or one who enslaves other by means of purchasing those in need. His scheme brings other under his submission. He himself does not do honest work with his own hands. Therefore, as Hakham Shaul suggests, let him do honest work with his **OWN** hands and **SHARE** with the community rather than enslave others. Thielman, agrees with this idea suggesting that this is not the agrarian laborer being addressed. He suggests that the upper class is “stealing” from the laborer by demanding heavy labor for little or no money. This would keep the laborer in constant need. This practice would be equal to kidnapping and slavery. Thielman, F. (2010). *Ephesians*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic. p. 315

²¹ The connection of the thief to the community must be addressed. The thief can no longer steal for a living he must be put to work. However, the community must address his needs as well. The two qualities **confidence** and **truth/honesty** when applied to the community create an atmosphere where communal trust can transpire. This cannot happen when you have someone in the community that is a thief. This analogy of the thief and the congregation is very apropos when we see the two ministries of Parnas 1 and 3 united. The first Parnas represents energetic initiative and stamina. The thief lacks energetic initiative and his resolve for stamina is thievery. Thievery requires no stamina at all. The daily labor of construction requires true stamina. The third Pastor is the channel for all the energies of the previous officers. She can deal with characteristics that no other officers can. The first Pastor/Parnas addresses the attribute of laziness associated with the thief. The third pastor brings the thief in connection with the community. When this happens, the “thief” can no longer steal from his “brothers.” He must now work and labor as an integral part of the community. This is how the bondservant is addressed in the Jewish community. He is judged and brought before his kinsman for redemption. He is then taught the economy of the Jewish community. When he has learned firsthand through his kinsman/redeemer to correctly interact with the community, he can re-enter the community. The compassion and nature of the third pastor makes all of this possible.

²² The true character of the thief is one who will not share what he has. On one level, we see that the thief takes from someone who has. On another level, the thief will not share. This was the greatest crime of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Blessings Before Torah Study

Blessed are You, Ha-Shem our GOD, King of the universe, Who has sanctified us through Your commandments, and commanded us to actively study Torah. Amen!

Please Ha-Shem, our GOD, sweeten the words of Your Torah in our mouths and in the mouths of all Your people Israel. May we and our offspring, and our offspring's offspring, and all the offspring of Your people, the House of Israel, may we all, together, know Your Name and study Your Torah for the sake of fulfilling Your **delight**. Blessed are You, Ha-Shem, Who teaches Torah to His people Israel. Amen!

Blessed are You, Ha-Shem our GOD, King of the universe, Who chose us from all the nations, and gave us the Torah. Blessed are You, Ha-Shem, Giver of the Torah. Amen!

Ha-Shem spoke to Moses, explaining a Commandment. "Speak to Aaron and his sons and teach them the following Commandment: This is how you should bless the Children of Israel. Say to the Children of Israel:

May Ha-Shem bless you and keep watch over you; - Amen!

May Ha-Shem make His Presence enlighten you, and may He be kind to you; - Amen!

May Ha-Shem bestow favour on you and grant you peace. – Amen!

This way, the priests will link My Name with the Israelites, and I will bless them."

These are the Laws for which the Torah did not mandate specific amounts: How much growing produce must be left in the corner of the field for the poor; how much of the first fruits must be offered at the Holy Temple; how much one must bring as an offering when one visits the Holy Temple three times a year; how much one must do when doing acts of kindness; and there is no maximum amount of Torah that a person must study.

These are the Laws whose benefits a person can often enjoy even in this world, even though the primary reward is in the Next World: They are: Honoring one's father and mother; doing acts of kindness; early attendance at the place of Torah study -- morning and night; showing hospitality to guests; visiting the sick; providing for the financial needs of a bride; escorting the dead; being very engrossed in prayer; bringing peace between two people, and between husband and wife; but the study of Torah is as great as all of them together. Amen!

²³ This statement shows that there must be structure to society. This perfectly matches that ministry of the 3rd Parnas who would have been involved in distributing necessary resources from the Congregation. If, as Hoehner suggests that the agrarian laborer struggled in times when there was no labor, the community would have been capable of supporting these cases. However, this would require giving by all the Congregation who had something to give. Hoehner, H. W. (2002). *Ephesians, An Exegetical Commentary*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic. pp. 624-5

Shabbat: "Mi Mana" – Sabbath: "Who can count...?"

| Shabbat | Torah Reading: | Weekday Torah Reading: |
|---|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| מי מנה | | Saturday Afternoon |
| "Mi Mana" | Reader 1 – B'Midbar 23:10-17 | Reader 1 – B'Midbar 25:10-12 |
| "Who can count" | Reader 2 – B'Midbar 23:18-24 | Reader 2 – B'Midbar 25:13-15 |
| "¿Quién puede contar...?" | Reader 3 – B'Midbar 23:25 – 24:2 | Reader 3 – B'Midbar 25:16-20 |
| B'Midbar (Num.) 23:10 – 25:9 | Reader 4 – B'Midbar 24:3-9 | |
| Is 49:23-25 + 50 4-10 | Reader 5 – B'Midbar 24:10-14 | Monday and Thursday Mornings |
| | Reader 6 – B'Midbar 24:15-25 | Reader 1 – B'Midbar 25:10-12 |
| Psalms: 104:13-26 | Reader 7 – B'Midbar 25:1-9 | Reader 2 – B'Midbar 25:13-15 |
| | Maftir – B'Midbar 25:7-9 | Reader 3 – B'Midbar 25:16-20 |
| Mk 11:1-14; Luke 19:28-44; + 13:1-9; Rm 11:17-32 | Is 49:23-25 + 50 4-10 | |

Summary of the Torah Seder

- Conclusion of Balaam's First Prophecy – Numbers 23:10
- New Arrangements – Numbers 23:11-17
- Balaam's Second Prophecy – Numbers 23:18-24
- Remonstrances and New Preparations – Numbers 23:25 – 24:2
- Balaam's Third Prophecy – Numbers 24:3-9
- Balak's Anger – Numbers 24:10-14
- A Vision of Israel's Future – Numbers 24:15-17
- Oracles Concerning the Gentiles – Numbers 24:18-24
- Departure of Balaam – Numbers 24:25
- The Sin of Baal Peor – Numbers 25:1-9

Reading Assignment:

The Torah Anthology: Yalkut Me'Am Lo'Ez - Vol 14: Numbers – II – Final Wonderings

By: Rabbi Yitzchaq Magriso

Published by: Moznaim Publishing Corp. (New York, 1983)

Vol. 14 – "Numbers – II – Final Wonderings," pp. 187-222.

Rashi & Targum Pseudo Jonathan for: B'midbar (Numbers) 23:10 - 25:9

| Rashi | Targum Pseudo Jonathan |
|--|---|
| 10. Who counted the dust of Jacob or the number of a fourth of [or, of the seed of] Israel? May my soul die the death of the upright and let my end be like his." | 10. And when Bileam the sinner beheld the house of Israel, a circumcised people, hidden in the dust of the desert, he said, Who can number the merits of these strong ones , or count the good works of one of the four camps of Israel? Bileam the wicked said: If the house of |

| Rashi | Targum Pseudo Jonathan |
|--|--|
| | Israel kill me with the sword, then, it is made known to me, I will have no portion in the world to come: nevertheless if I may but die the death of the true! O that my last end may be as the least among them! |
| 11. Balak said to Balaam, "What have you done to me? I took you to curse my enemies, but you have blessed them!" | 11. And Balak said to Bileam, What have you done to me? I brought you to curse my enemies, and, behold, blessing, you have blessed them. |
| 12. He answered, saying, "What the Lord puts into my mouth that I must take care to say." | 12. But he answered and said, That which the LORD has put in my mouth will I not be careful to speak? |
| 13. Balak said to him, "Come with me to another place from where you will see them; however, you will see only a part of them, not all of them and curse them for me from there. | 13. And Balak said to him, Come now with me where you may see him from another place. You will see only the camp that goes in his rear, but not all their camps; and curse him for me there. |
| 14. He took him to the field of the lookouts, to the peak of the mountain, and he built seven altars and offered up a bull and a ram on [each] altar. | 14. And he brought him to the field of the observatory on the top of the hill, and built seven altars, and offered a bullock and a ram on every altar. |
| 15. He said to Balak, "Stand here next to your burnt offering and I will be chanced on here | 15. And he said to Balak, Stand you here by your burnt offering and I will meet (Him) yonder. |
| 16. The Lord chanced upon Balaam and placed something into his mouth. He said, "Return to Balak and so you shall speak." | 16. And the Word from before the LORD met Bileam, and put a word in his mouth, and said, Return to Balak, and thus speak. |
| 17. When he came to him, he was standing next to his burnt offering, and the Moabite dignitaries were with him, and Balak said to him, "What did the Lord speak?" | 17. And he came to him, and, behold, he was standing by his burnt offering, and the princes of Moab with him. And Balak said to him, What has the LORD spoken? |
| 18. He took up his parable and said, "Arise, Balak, and hear; listen closely to me, son of Zippor. | 18. And he took up the parable of his prophecy, and said: Arise, Balak, and hear; listen to my words, Bar Zippor. |
| 19. God is not a man that He should lie, nor is He a mortal that He should relent. Would He say and not do, speak and not fulfill? | 19. The Word of the living God is not as the words of men for the LORD, the Ruler of all worlds, is the unchangeable (but) man speaks and denies. Neither are His works like the works of the children of flesh, who consult, and then repent them of what they had decreed. But when the LORD of all worlds has said, I will multiply this people as the stars of the heavens, and will give them to possess the land of the Kenaanites, is He not able to perform what He has spoken? And what He has said, can He not confirm it? |
| 20. I have received [an instruction] to bless, and He has blessed, and I cannot retract it. | 20. Behold, from the mouth of the Holy Word I have received the benediction, and their appointed benediction I cannot restrain from them. |
| 21. He does not look at evil in Jacob, and has seen no perversity in Israel; the Lord, his God, is with him, and he has the King's friendship. | 21. Bileam the wicked said, I see not among them of the house of Jakob such as worship idols: they who serve false idols are not established among the tribes of the sons of Israel. The Word of the LORD their God is their help, and the trumpets of the King Meshiha (Messiah) resound among them: |
| 22. God has brought them out of Egypt with the | 22. Unto Elohim, who redeemed and led them out of |

| Rashi | Targum Pseudo Jonathan |
|--|--|
| strength of His loftiness. | Mizraim free, belong power and exaltation, glorification and greatness. |
| 23. For there is no divination in Jacob and no soothsaying in Israel. In time it will be said to Jacob and Israel, 'What has God wrought?' | 23. They of the house of Jakob who use divination are not established, nor the enchanters, who enchant among the greatness (multitudes) of Israel. At this time it is said to the house of Jakob and Israel, How glorious are the miracles and wonder-works which God has wrought! |
| 24. Behold, a people that rises like a lioness (See Malbim) and raises itself like a lion. It does not lie down until it eats its prey and drinks the blood of the slain." | 24. This people reposes alone, and dwells strong as a lion, and rears himself as an old lion. They sleep not till with great slaughter they have slain their adversaries, and taken the spoils of the slain. |
| 25. Balak said to Balaam, "You shall neither curse them nor shall you not bless them." | 25. And Balak said to Bileam, Neither curse them nor bless them. |
| 26. Balaam answered and said to Balak, "Have I not spoken to you, saying, 'Everything the Lord speaks that I shall do.'" | 26. But Bileam answered and said to Balak, Did I not tell you at the beginning, Whatsoever the LORD speaks, that must I do? |
| 27. Balak said to Balaam, "Come now, I will take you to a different place. Perhaps it will please God, and you will curse them for me from there. | 27. And Balak said to Bileam, Come, and I will now take you to another place, if so be it may be pleasing before the LORD, that you may curse him for me from thence. |
| 28. So Balak took Balaam to the peak of Peor, overlooking the wastelands. | 28. And Balak led Bileam to the high place of the prospect which looks toward Beth Jeshimoth. |
| 29. Balaam said to Balak, "Build me seven altars here and prepare for me seven bulls and seven rams. | 29. And Bileam said to Balak, Erect here for me seven altars, and prepare me seven bullocks and seven rams. |
| 30. Balak did as Balaam told him, and offered up a bull and a ram on [each] altar. | 30. And Balak did as Bileam had said, and offered a bullock and a ram upon every altar. |
| 1. Balaam saw that it pleased the Lord to bless Israel; so he did not go in search of omens as he had done time and time again, but turned his face toward the desert. | 1. And Bileam, seeing that it was good before the LORD to bless Israel, went not, as once and again before, in quest of divinations, but set his face toward the wilderness, to recall to memory the work of the calf which they had there committed. |
| 2. Balaam raised his eyes and saw Israel dwelling according to its tribes, and the spirit of God rested upon him. | 2. And Bileam lifted up his eyes, but beheld Israel dwelling together by their tribes in their schools, and (saw) that their doors were arranged so as not to overlook the doors of their companions: and the Spirit of prophecy from before the LORD rested upon him. |
| 3. He took up his parable and said, "The word of Balaam the son of Beor and the word of the man with an open eye. | 3. But he took up the parable of his prophecy, and said: Bileam, son of Beor, speaks; the man speaks who is more honorable than his father, (because) the dark mysteries hidden from the prophets have been revealed to him; and who, because he was not circumcised, fell upon his face when the angel stood over against him: |
| 4. The word of the one who hears God's sayings, who sees the vision of the Almighty, fallen yet with open eyes. | 4. he has said who heard the Word from before the living God; who beheld the vision before God the Almighty, and, seeking that it might be discovered to him, fell upon his face, and the secret mysteries hidden |

| Rashi | Targum Pseudo Jonathan |
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| | from the prophets were revealed to him. |
| 5. How goodly are your tents , O Jacob, your dwelling places, O Israel! | 5. How beautiful your houses of instruction , in the tabernacle where Jakob your father ministered; and how beautiful this tabernacle of ordinance which is found among you, and the tents that surround it, O house of Israel! |
| 6. They extend like streams, like gardens by the river , like aloes which the Lord planted, like cedars by the water. | 6. As tides of waters, so are the house of Israel, dwelling like flocks made strong by the teaching of the Law ; and as gardens planted by the flowing streams, so are their disciples in the fellowships of their schools. The light of their faces shines as the brightness of the firmament which the LORD created on the second day of the creation of the world, and outspread for the glory of the Shekinah. They are exalted and lifted up above all the nations, like cedars of Lebanon planted by fountains of waters. |
| 7. Water will flow from his wells, and his seed shall have abundant water ; his king shall be raised over Agag, and his kingship exalted. | 7. From them their King will arise, and their Redeemer be of them and among them, and the seed of the children of Jakob will rule over many nations . The first who will reign over them will make war with the house of Amalek, and will be exalted above Agag their king; but because he had spared him his kingdom will be taken from him. |
| 8. God, Who has brought them out of Egypt with the strength of His loftiness He shall consume the nations which are his adversaries, bare their bones and dip His arrows [into their blood]. | 8. Unto Elohim, who brought them out free from Mizraim, belong might, and exaltation, and glory, and power. He will destroy the nations of their adversaries, and break down their strength and will send forth the plague-arrows of His vengeance among them, and destroy them. |
| 9. He crouches and lies like a lion and like a lioness; who will dare rouse him? Those who bless you shall be blessed, and those who curse you shall be cursed. | 9. They will repose and dwell as a lion, and as an old lion, that sleeping who will (dare to) awake? They who bless them are blessed, as Mosheh the prophet, the scribe of Israel; and they who curse them are accursed, as Bileam son of Beor. |
| 10. Balak's anger flared against Balaam, and he clapped his hands. Balak said to Balaam, "I called you to curse my enemies, but you have blessed them these three times. | 10. And Balak's wrath grew strong against Bileam, and, smiting his hands, Balak said to Bileam, I brought you to curse my enemies, and, behold, in blessing you have blessed them these three times. |
| 11. Now, hurry back to your place. I said I would honor you greatly, but the Lord has deprived you of honor." | 11. And now flee to your place. I had said that honoring I would honor you; but, behold, the LORD has kept back Bileam from honor. |
| 12. Balaam said to Balak, "But I even told the messengers you sent to me, saying, | 12. But Bileam said to Balak, Did I not tell your messengers whom you sent to me, saying, |
| 13. 'If Balak gives me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot transgress the word of the Lord to do either good or evil on my own; only what the Lord speaks can I speak.' | 13. If Balak would give me the fullness of his treasures of silver and gold, I have no power to transgress the decree of the Word of the LORD to do good or evil of my own will: what the LORD says will I not speak? |
| 14. And now, I am going to my people. Come, I will | 14. And now, behold, I return to go to my people. |

| Rashi | Targum Pseudo Jonathan |
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| advise you...what this people will to do your people at the end of days." | Come, I will give you counsel: Go, furnish tavern houses, and employ seductive women to sell food and drinks cheaply, and to bring this people together to eat and drink, and commit whoredom with them, that they may deny their God; then in a brief time will they be delivered into your hand, and many of them fall. Nevertheless, after this they will still have dominion over your people at the end of the days. |
| 15. He took up his parable and said, "The word of Balaam, son of Beor, the word of a man with an open eye. | 15. And he took up the parable of his prophecy, and said Bileam the son of Beor speaks; the man speaks who is more honorable than his father , because the mysteries hidden from prophets have been revealed to him; |
| 16. The word of the one who hears God's sayings and perceives the thoughts of the Most High; who sees the vision of the Almighty, fallen yet with open eyes. | 16. he speaks who heard the Word from before the LORD, and who knows the hour when the Most High God will be wroth with him; (he speaks) who saw the vision before the Almighty, seeking, prostrate on his face, that it should be revealed to him; the secret, concealed from the prophets, was disclosed unto him. |
| 17. I see it, but not now; I behold it, but not soon. A star has gone forth from Jacob, and a staff will arise from Israel which will crush the princes of Moab and uproot all the sons of Seth. | 17. I will see Him, but not now; I will behold Him, but it is not near. When the mighty King of Jakob's house will reign, and the Meshiha (Messiah), the Power-sceptre of Israel, be anointed, He will slay the princes of the Moabae, and bring to nothing all the children of Sheth, the armies of Gog who will do battle against Israel and all their carcasses will fall before Him. |
| 18. Edom shall be possessed, and Seir shall become the possession of his enemies, and Israel shall triumph. | 18. And the Edomae will be utterly driven out, even the sons of Gabela from before Israel their foes, and Israel will be strengthened with their riches and possess them. |
| 19. A ruler shall come out of Jacob , and destroy the remnant of the city." | 19. And a prince of the house of Jakob will arise and destroy and consume the remnant that have escaped from Constantina the guilty city, and will lay waste and ruin the rebellious city, even Kaiserin the strong city of the Gentiles. |
| 20. When he saw Amalek, he took up his parable and said, "Amalek was the first of the nations, and his fat shall be everlasting destruction." | 20. And he looked on the house of Amalek, and took up the parable of his prophecy, and said: The first/chief of the nations who made war with the house of Israel were those of the house of Amalek; and they at last, in the days of the King Mashiach (Messiah), with all the children of the east, will make war against Israel; but all of them together will have eternal destruction in their end. |
| 21. When he saw the Kenite, he took up his parable and said, "How firm is your dwelling place, and your nest is set in a cliff. | 21. And he looked upon Jethro, who had been made proselyte, and took up the parable of his prophecy, and said: How strong is your habitation, who has set your dwelling in the clefts of the rocks! |
| 22. For if Kain is laid waste, how far will Assyria take | 22. Yet so is it decreed that the children of the Shalmaia |

| Rashi | Targum Pseudo Jonathan |
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| you captive? " | must be despoiled, but not until Sancherib the king of Athur will come and make you captive. |
| 23. He took up his parable and said, Alas! Who can survive these things from God? | 23. And he took up the parable of his prophecy, and said, Woe to them who are alive at the time when the Word of the LORD will be revealed, to give the good reward to the righteous/generous, and to take vengeance on the wicked, to smite the nations and the kings, and bring these things upon them! |
| 24. Ships will come from the Kittites and afflict Assyria and afflict those on the other side, but he too will perish forever." | 24. And ships (lit., sails) armed for war will come forth with great armies from Lombarnia, and from the land of Italia, conjoined with the legions that will come forth from Constantina, and will afflict the Athuraee, and bring into captivity all the sons of Eber; nevertheless the end of these and of those is to fall by the hand of the King Mashiach (Messiah), and be brought to everlasting destruction: |
| 25. Balaam arose, went, and returned home, and Balak went on his way. | 25. And Bileam rose up and went to return to his place, and Balak also went upon his way, and appointed the daughters of the Midianites for the tavern booths at Beth Jeshimoth, by the snow mountain, where they sold sweet foods cheaper than their price, after the counsel of Bileam the wicked, at the dividing of the way. |
| 1. Israel settled in Shittim, and the people began to commit harlotry with the daughters of the Moabites. | 1. And Israel dwelt in the place which is called Shittim, on account of the (Shetutha) foolishness and depravity which were among them. And the people began to profane their holiness, and to strip their bodies to the image of Peor, and commit fornication with the daughters of the Moabites, who brought out the image of Peor, concealed under their bundles. |
| 2. They invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods, and the people ate and prostrated themselves to their gods. | 2. And they invited the people to the sacrifices of their idols; and the people ate in their feasts, and bowed themselves to their idols. |
| 3. Israel became attached to Baal Peor, and the anger of the Lord flared against Israel. | 3. And the people of the house of Israel joined themselves to Baal-Peor, like the nail in the wood, which is not separated but by breaking up the wood (or, with the splinters). And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel. |
| 4. The Lord said to Moses, "Take all the leaders of the people and hang them before the Lord, facing the sun, and then the flaring anger of the Lord will be removed from Israel. | 4. And the LORD said to Mosheh, Take all the chiefs of the people, and appoint them for judges, and let them give judgment to put to death the people who have gone astray after Peor, and hang them before the Word of the LORD upon the wood over against the morning sun, and at the departure of the sun take them down and bury them and turn away the strong anger of the LORD from Israel. |
| 5. Moses said to the judges of Israel, "Each of you shall | 5. And Mosheh said to the judges of Israel, Slay every |

| Rashi | Targum Pseudo Jonathan |
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| kill the men who became attached to Baal Peor. | one a man of his tribe of those who have joined themselves to the idol of Peor. |
| 6. Then an Israelite man came and brought the Midianite woman to his brethren, before the eyes of Moses and before the eyes of the entire congregation of the children of Israel, while they were weeping at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting. | 6. And behold, a man of the sons of Israel came, holding a Midianitess, and brought her to his brethren, in the sight of Mosheh and all the congregation of the children of Israel. He answered and said to Mosheh, What is it (that is wrong) to have company with her? If you say, It is forbidden, did you not yourself take a Midianitess, the daughter of Jethro? When Mosheh heard, he trembled and swooned. But they wept, and cried, Listen! And they stood at the door of the tabernacle of ordinance. |
| 7. Phinehas the son of Eleazar the son of Aaron the kohen saw this, arose from the congregation, and took a spear in his hand. | 7. And Phinehas bar Elazar-bar Aharon, the priest, saw, and, remembering the ordination, answered, and said: He who ought to kill, let him kill! Where are the lions of the tribe of Jehudah? When they saw, they were quiet. And he arose from among his Sanhedrin, and took a lance in his hand. |
| 8. He went after the Israelite man into the chamber and drove [it through] both of them; the Israelite man, and the woman through her stomach, and the plague ceased from the children of Israel. | 8. Twelve miracles were wrought for Phinehas at the time that he went in after the man of Israel with the Midianitha. The first sign was, (1) He would have parted them but could not; (2) Their mouth was closed, that they could not cry out; for had they cried out, they would have been rescued; (3) He drove the lance through both of them; (4) The lance remained fixed in the wound; (5) When he bare them aloft, the lintel was uplifted for him until he had gone forth; (6) He carried them through the whole camp, six miles, without fatigue; (7) He held them up by his right arm, in sight of their kindred, who had no power to hurt him; (8) The lance was made strong so as not to be broken with the load; (9) The iron transpierced them, but was not withdrawn; (10) An angel came and made bare their corpses in sight of the people; (11) They lingered alive till they had been carried through the entire camp, lest the priest in the tabernacle should be defiled by the dead; (12) Their blood thickened so as not to flow upon him; but when he had borne them through the camp, it brake forth, and they died. Answering, he said before the LORD of the world, Can it be that, on account of these, twenty and four thousands of Israel will die? Immediately the compassions of Heaven were moved, and the plague was stayed from the children of Israel. |
| 9. Those that died in the plague numbered twenty four thousand. | 9. And the number who died by the pestilence was twenty and four thousand. |
| | |

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-yoṣe 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'Midbar (Num.) 23:10 - 25:9

10 Who can count the dust of Jacob As the Targum [Onkelos] renders, "the children of the house of Jacob, [concerning whom it was stated, 'they shall be as many as the dust of the earth, or one] of the four camps" — [referring to] the four divisions. Another interpretation: The dust of Jacob—The number of mitzvot they fulfill with dust are innumerable: "You shall not plow with an ox and a donkey [together]" (Deut. 22:10); "You shall not sow your field with a mixture of seeds" (Lev. 19:19), the ashes of the red cow (19:19), the dust used for a woman suspected of infidelity, and others similar to these.—[Mid. Tanchuma Balak 12, Num. Rabbah 20:19]

or the number of the seed of [The word זרע denotes] their copulations; the seed which issues from sexual intercourse.—[Mid. Tanchuma Balak 12, Num. Rabbah 20:19]

May my soul die the death of the upright Among them.

13 curse them for me Heb. וְקַבְּלוּ לִי. This term is in the imperative: Curse them for me!

14 the field of the lookouts There was a high spot from where a lookout stands on guard in case an army approaches the city.

to the peak of the mountain Balaam was not as great a diviner as Balak. Balak foresaw that a breach was destined to break into Israel from there, and indeed, Moses died there. He thought that the curse could take effect upon them there, and [he thought,] "This is the breach that I see."—[Mid. Tanchuma Balak 13, Num. Rabbah 20:19]

15 I will be chanced on here By the Holy One, blessed is He.

I will be chanced on Heb. אוֹקְרָה in the passive form.

16 and placed something into his mouth What is meant by this placing? What would Scripture had lacked had it [simply] said, "Return to Balak and so shall you speak"? However, when he [Balaam] heard that he was not permitted to curse, he said, "Why should I return to Balak to upset him?" So the Holy One, blessed is He, put a bridle and a bit into his mouth, [so to speak,] as a man goads his beast with a bit to lead it wherever he wants. He [God] said to him, You shall return to Balak against your will.-[Mid. Tanchuma Balak 13, Num. Rabbah 20:20]

17 and the Moabite dignitaries were with him Above (verse 6) it says, " all the Moabite dignitaries." However, since they saw that there was no hope, some of them left, and only some of them remained.-[Mid. Tanchuma Balak 13, Num. Rabbah 20:20]

What did the Lord speak? This is an expression denoting derision, as if to say, You are not your own master.-[Mid. Tanchuma Balak 13, Num. Rabbah 20:20]

18 Arise, Balak Since he saw that he was mocking him, he intended to taunt him, "Stand on your feet; you have no right to sit, for I have been sent to you as an emissary of the Omnipresent!"-[Mid. Tanchuma Balak 13, Num. Rabbah 20:20]

son of Zippor Heb. בְּנוֹ צִפּוֹר. This [use of the 'vav' as a suffix to denote the construct form] is biblical style, as in, "beasts (חַיִּיתוֹ) of the forest" (Ps. 50: 10); "beasts (חַיִּיתוֹ) of the earth" (Gen. 1:24); "to a spring (לְמַעְיָנוֹ) of water" (Ps. 114:8).

19 God is not a man that He should lie He has already promised them to bring them to and give them possession of the land of the seven nations, and you expect to kill them in the desert?-[See Mid. Tanchuma Mass'ei 7, Num. Rabbah 23:8]

Would He say... Heb. הֲהוּא. This is in the form of a question. And the Targum [Onkelos] renders, "who later relent." They reconsider and change their minds.

20 I have received [instruction] to bless You ask me, What did God speak? [My answer is] I received from Him [instruction] to bless them. (to bless Heb. בָּרַךְ, used in the sense of לְבָרַךְ "to bless.")

and He has blessed, and I cannot retract it He has blessed them, and I will not retract His blessing.

and He has blessed Heb. וּבָרַךְ, like וּבָרַךְ. This is the rule of the letter 'reish' as in חַרְף אוֹיֵב (Ps. 74:18), like חַרְף and similarly, וּבָרַךְ (ibid. 10:3)—one who praises and blesses the thief, saying, "Do not be afraid because you will not be punished; you will be all right," angers the Holy One, blessed is He. But one cannot say that וּבָרַךְ is a noun, for if so, it would be punctuated with a short 'pathach' ['segol'] and the accent would be on the first syllable וּבָרַךְ. However, since it is a verb in the active form, it is punctuated with a short 'kamatz' ['tzeireh'], and the accent is on the last syllable.

21 He does not look at evil in Jacob According to the Targum [Onkelos it means: I have looked. There are no idol worshippers in Jacob]. Another interpretation: Its literal meaning can be expounded beautifully. The Holy One, blessed is He, does not look at evil in Jacob. When they transgress His word, He does not deal punctiliously with them to scrutinize their wicked deeds and their iniquity in violation of His law.-[Mid. Tanchuma Balak 14, Num. Rabbah 20:20]

perversity Heb. עָמַל connotes transgression, as in "conceives mischief (עָמַל) " (Ps. 7:15) [and as in] "For You look at mischief (עָמַל) and provocation" (ibid. 10:14), since a transgression is distressing for the Omnipresent [and עָמַל primarily means hardship and toil].

the Lord, his God, is with him Even if they anger Him and rebel against Him, He does not move from their midst.

and he has the king's friendship - וּתְרוּעַת, an expression denoting love and friendship, as in, "the friend of (רַעְיָהוּ) David" (II Sam. 15:37), and in "and has given her to his companion (לְמַרְעֵהוּ) " (Jud. 15:6). Similarly, Onkelos renders, "the Presence of their King is among them."

22 God has brought them out of Egypt You said, "Behold the people coming out of Egypt" (22:11). They did not come out by themselves, but God brought them out.-[Mid. Tanchuma Balak 14, Num. Rabbah 20:20]

with the strength of His loftiness Heb. כְּתוֹעֲפֵת רָאִים, in accordance with the power of His loftiness (רוּם) and height. Similarly, "and... abundant silver (תוֹעֲפוֹת) " (Job 22:25); they are terms denoting strength. I maintain that it [תוֹעֲפוֹת] is a term cognate with [a similar word in the phrase] "and let the birds fly (וְעוֹפֵף) " (Gen. 1:20) [which denotes] something flying to lofty heights, expressing great power. Thus, כְּתוֹעֲפֵת רָאִים means flying high. Another interpretation: כְּתוֹעֲפֵת רָאִים means the power of 're'emim' and our Rabbis say (Git. 68b) that this refers to demons.

23 For there is no divination in Jacob They are worthy of blessing since there are no diviners or soothsayers among them.

In time it will be said to Jacob and Israel There will come another time like this, when the love [God has] for them will be revealed to all, for they will be seated before Him and learn Torah from His mouth. Their place will be further in [closer to the Divine Presence] than the ministering angels. They will ask them, "What has God wrought?" This is the meaning of what is stated, "your eyes shall behold your Teacher" (Isa. 30:20). Another interpretation: [The phrase] לֵיָעֵקֵב יֵאָמַר is not in the future tense ["it shall be said to Jacob"] but in the present tense. [Thus, the meaning is:] They have no need for a diviner or sorcerer, for any time it is necessary to tell Jacob and Israel what God has wrought and what decrees He enacted on high, they do not need diviners or soothsayers, but the decrees of the Omnipresent are transmitted to them through their prophets, or the Urim and Tummim inform them [Mid. Tanchuma Balak 14, Num. Rabbah 20:20]. Onkelos, however, does not render [it in] this manner.[Onkelos renders: For the diviners do not wish that good should be bestowed upon Jacob, nor do soothsayers desire the greatness of Israel. At this time, it will be told to Jacob what God has wrought.]

24 Behold, a people that rises like a lioness When they awaken from their sleep in the morning they show the vigor of a lioness and a lion in grasping mitzvot, to don a 'tallith ' [prayer shawl], recite the shema and put on 'tefillin' [phylacteries].-[Mid. Tanchuma Balak 14, Num. Rabbah 20:20]

It does not lie down [i.e., a Jew does not lie down] on his bed at night until he consumes and destroys any harmful thing that comes to tear him. How so? He recites the shema on his bed and entrusts his spirit to the hand of the Omnipresent. Should an army or a troop come to harm them, the Holy One, blessed is He, protects them, fights their battles and strikes them [their attackers] down dead.[Mid. Tanchuma Balak 14, Num. Rabbah 20:20] Another interpretation: "Behold a people that rises like a lioness..." as the Targum [Onkelos] renders [it: namely, it will not settle in its land until it destroys (the enemy) and takes possession of the land of the nations].

and drinks the blood of the slain He prophesied that Moses would not die until he would strike down the Midianite kings dead, and he [Balaam] would be slain with them, as it says, "Balaam the son of Beor the soothsayer did the children of Israel slay with the sword with those that were slain by them" (Josh. 13:22). -[Mid. Tanchuma Balak 14, Num. Rabbah 20:20]

25 You shall neither curse them nor shall you not bless them The first בְּלֹא [literally, also, in the clause, "You shall

neither..." adds something to the second ׀ַ[in the clause "nor shall you curse"] and the second ׀ַ adds something to the first ׀ַ[as if he said, Neither bless them nor curse them; neither curse them nor bless them]. Similarly, "It shall be neither mine (׀ַ לִי) nor yours (׀ַ לְךָ)" (I Kings 3:26) and similarly, "both the youth (׀ַ בְּנוֹרַי) and the maiden (׀ַ בְּתוּלָהּ)" (Deut. 32:25).

27 so that you will curse them for me Heb. וְיִקְבְּלוּ. This is not in the imperative like "curse them" (וְיִקְבְּלוּ, in verse 13), but the future tense: it will please God and you will curse them for me from there, maldiras in old French, you will curse.

28 to the peak of Peor Balak was a great soothsayer, and he foresaw that they were destined to be smitten through Peor, but he did not know in what way. He said, "Perhaps the curse will take effect on them from there." It is much the same with all the stargazers; they see things, but they do not know what they are seeing.-[Mid. Aggadah]

Chapter 24

1 Balaam saw that it pleased He said, "I no longer have to test the Holy One, blessed is He, for He will not want to curse them."

so he did not go... as he had done time and time again As he had done twice -[Mid. Aggadah]

in search of omens To divine that perhaps God would chance to meet him as he wished. He said, "Whether He wishes to curse them or not, I will mention their sins so that on the mention of their sins the curse can take effect."-[Mid. Aggadah]

but turned his face toward the desert As the Targum paraphrases ["He directed his face toward the desert, where the Israelites had made the golden calf," or "He directed his face toward the golden calf, which the Israelites had made in the desert." See Ramban, Midrash Aggadah, Mechokekei Yehudah (Minchath Yehudah, fn. 1)].

2 Balaam raised his eyes He sought to cast an evil eye upon them, so here you have his three attributes: an evil eye, a haughty spirit, and greed mentioned above (22:13, 18). -[Avoth 5:19, Mid. Tanchuma Balak 6, Num. Rabbah 20:10]

dwelling according to its tribes He saw each tribe dwelling by itself, not intermingling [with other tribes], and he saw that the openings of their tents did not face each other, so that they should not peer into each other's tents.-[B.B. 60a, Mid. Aggadah]

and the spirit of God rested upon him It entered his mind not to curse them.

3 the son of Beor Heb. בְּנוֹ בְּעוֹר, lit., his son was Beor. [However, the word בְּנוֹ is used here] as in "to a spring [לְמַעְיָנוּ] of water" (Ps. 114:8) [see Rashi 23:18]. The Midrash Aggadah expounds: Both were greater than their fathers; Balak, his son was Zippor, for his [Balak's] father was his son, as it were, with regard to royalty. And Balaam was greater than his father in prophecy; he was a maneh [a coin equaling one hundred zuz] the son of a peras [a coin equaling fifty zuz, half the value of a maneh].-[Mid. Tanchuma Balak 13, Sanh. 105a]

with an open eye Heb. שֵׁתָּם הֶעֱיָן. His eye had been gouged out and its socket appeared open. This term [שֵׁתָּם] is mishnaic; "enough time to bore a hole (שֵׁתָּם) [in a cask], seal it, and dry it" (A.Z. 69a). Our Rabbis said, Because he said, "the number of the seed of Israel" (23:10), implying that the Holy One, blessed is He, sits and counts the

seed that issues from the Israelite sexual unions, waiting for the drop from which a righteous/generous man will be born, he thought, "The One Who is holy, and Whose ministers are holy should direct his attention to matters such as these?" On account of this, Balaam's eye was blinded (Mid. Aggadah). Some say that the phrase means "of the open eye," [meaning of clear sight], as Onkelos renders. As for its saying, "with an open eye" rather than "with open eyes," this teaches us that he was blind in one eye.-[Sanh. 105a]

4 fallen yet with open eyes The plain meaning is as understood by the Targum [Onkelos], that He appeared to him only at night, while he was lying down. The Midrashic explanation is that when He appeared to him, he had no strength to stand on his feet, so he fell on his face, for since he was uncircumcised, it was a disgrace to appear before Him while he was standing upright in His presence.-[Mid. Aggadah]

5 How goodly are your tents For he saw that the entrances were not facing each other.-[B.B. 60a]

your dwelling places Your encampments, as the Targum [Onkelos] renders. Another explanation: "How goodly are your tents"—How goodly are the tent of Shiloh and the eternal Temple when they are inhabited, for offerings are brought up in them to atone for you."

your dwelling places Heb. מְשֻׁבָּנוֹתַי, even when they are desolate, for they are held as a pledge (מְשֻׁבָּנוֹן) for you, and their desolate state atones for your souls, as it says, "The Lord has spent His fury" (Lam. 4:11). How did He spend it? "He has kindled a fire in Zion" (ibid.) -[See Mid. Tanchuma Pekudei 4]

6 They extend like streams They extend and are drawn out for a distance. Our Rabbis said: From this wicked man's blessings we can determine how he intended to curse them when he decided to turn his face toward the desert. For when the Omnipresent reversed [the words of] his mouth, he blessed them in a way corresponding to the curses he intended to say..., as is stated in [the chapter of] Cheilek (Sanh. 105b).

like aloes Heb. בְּאֵהָלִים, as the Targum [Onkelos] renders, [aromatic plants], as in the expression as, "myrrh and aloes (וְאֵהָלִית) " (Song 4:14).

which the Lord planted in the Garden of Eden. Another interpretation: Like the firmament which is stretched out like a tent (אֹהֶל) as it says, "and he spread them out like a tent (בְּאֹהֶל) to dwell in" (Is. 40:22) (Targum Jonathan and Yerushalmi). (This interpretation is incorrect because, if so, it would have been vowelized בְּאֵהָלִים, with a cholam. - This is obviously a copyist's comment, because Rashi proceeds to defend this interpretation. Editor's note)

which the Lord planted We find the expression 'planting' in relation to tents, as it says, "And he will pitch (וַיִּטֵּן) his palatial tents" (Dan. 11:45).

7 from his wells Heb. מִדְּלְוֵי, from his wells; the meaning is as the Targum [Onkelos interprets it, namely, "the king anointed from his sons shall be great."]

and his seed shall have abundant water This expression denotes prosperity, like seed [which flourishes when] planted close to water.

His king shall be raised over Agag Their first king [Saul] will capture Agag, king of Amalek.-[Mid. Aggadah]

and his kingship exalted [The kingship of Jacob] will become greater and greater, for following him [Saul] will come David and Solomon.-[Mid. Aggadah]

8 God, Who has brought them out of Egypt Who caused them all this greatness? God, Who brought them out of Egypt with His power and loftiness. He will consume the nations who are his adversaries.

their bones of these adversaries.

bare Heb. יִגְרֵם. Menachem (Machbereth p. 59) interprets this word as 'breaking up.' Similarly, "They [the wolves] did not gnaw the (גְּרָמוֹ) [bones] in the morning" (Zeph. 3:3), and similarly, "its shards you shall break (תִּגְרְמֵי) " (Ezek. 23:34). I, however, maintain that it means 'bone,' [and the meaning is:] He strips the surrounding flesh with his teeth and the marrow from within, leaving the bone in its bare state.

and dip His arrows - יִמְחֶה יְמֵי. Onkelos interprets it as referring to the half of the adversaries—[that is,] their part, as in, בְּעֵלֵי חֲצִיָּם (Gen. 49:23) [which the Targum renders as] "those who should take half." So [according to the Targum] the יִמְחֶה is [used here] as in the expression, "she split (וּמְחָצָה) and struck through his temple" (Jud. 5:26), [hence, here it means,] they divided [among themselves] their [the adversaries'] land. It is also possible to interpret it in the literal sense, which is "arrows." The arrows of the Holy One, blessed is He, will be dipped (יִמְחֶה) into the blood of the adversaries—He will dip and stain [the arrows] with blood, as in, "in order that your foot may wade (תִּמְחֶה) through blood" (Ps. 68:24). This is not a departure from the general meaning of 'wounding,' as in, "I have wounded (מְחָצָתִי) " (Deut. 32:39), for anything stained with blood appears as if it is wounded and stricken.

9 He crouches and lies like a lion As the Targum [Onkelos] renders, they will settle in their land with might and power.

10 he clapped He struck one [hand] against the other.-[Onkelos, Menachem, Mid. Aggadah]

13 transgress the word of the Lord Here it does not say, "my God," as it says the first time [22:18], because he realized that he was loathsome to the Holy One, blessed is He, and had been banished [by Him].-[Mid. Aggadah]

14 I am going to my people "From now I am like the rest of my people," for the Holy One, blessed is He, had departed from him.

Come, I will advise you what action you should take. What is that counsel? "The God of these [people] hates immorality [thus, entice them to sin with your women...] as it is related in [the chapter of] Cheilek (Sanh. 106a). The proof that Balaam offered this counsel to cause them to stumble through immorality is that it says, "They were the ones who were involved with the children of Israel on Balaam's advice" (31:16).

what this people will do to your people This is an elliptical verse, [and it means,] I will advise you how to make them stumble, and tell you how they will punish Moab at the end of days. "And crush the princes of Moab" (verse 17); the Targum [Onkelos] elaborates on the abbreviated Hebrew.

16 and perceives the thoughts of the Most High to determine the precise moment that He becomes angry. -[Ber. 7a]

17 I see it I see that prominence and greatness of Jacob, but it is not at present, only at a later time.

A star has gone forth As the Targum [Onkelos] renders, an expression similar to "He has bent (רָדַךְ) his bow" (Lam. 2:4), for a star shoots out like an arrow; in old French, destent, as if to say, his good fortune shall rise [prosper].

and a staff will arise A king who rules dominantly.

which will crush the princes of Moab This refers to David, of whom it says, "he laid them on the ground and measured two cord-lengths to put to death..." (II Sam. 8:2). -[Mid. Aggadah]

and uproot Heb. דִּקְרָקַר is a term denoting 'digging' as in, "I dug (דִּקְרָתִי) " (II Kings 19:24); "to the hole of the pit from which you were dug out (בְּדִקְרָתָם) " (Is. 51:1); "may the ravens of the valley pick it out (יִקְרְוֶהָ) " (Prov. 30:17); in French, forer.

all the sons of Seth All the nations, for they are all descended from Seth, the son of Adam [lit., the first man].

18 and Seir shall become the possession of his enemies For his enemy, Israel.

19 A ruler shall come out of Jacob There will be another ruler from Jacob.

and destroy the remnant of the city Of the most prominent [city] of Edom, that is, Rome. He says this regarding the King Messiah, of whom it says, "and may he reign from sea to sea," (Ps. 72:8), " and the house of Esau shall have no survivors" (Obad. 1:18). -[Mid. Aggadah]

20 He saw Amalek He perceived the retribution destined to befall Amalek.

Amalek was the first of the nations He came before all of them to make war with Israel, and so Targum renders. And his fate shall be to perish by their hand, as it says, "You shall obliterate the remembrance of Amalek" (Deut. 25:19).

21 He saw the Kenite and said Since the Kenites were encamped near Amalek, as it is said, "Saul said to the Kenite..." (I Sam. 15:6), he mentions him after Amalek. He perceived the greatness of the sons of Jethro [known also as Keni], of whom it is said, "Tirathites (תִּרְעָתִים) , Shimathites (שִׁמְעָתִים) , Sochathites (סוֹכָתִים) " (I Chron. 2:55), [expounded on in Sifrei (Beha'alothecha 42) as follows: תִּרְעָתִים, so called because they heard the shofar blast (תְּרוּעָה) on Mount Sinai, because they would cry out (מִתְרַעֲמִים) and be answered, because they dwelled at the entrance to the gates (תְּרַעֲוִי) of Jerusalem; שִׁמְעָתִים, so called because they obeyed (שָׁמְעוּ) their father's command (to abstain from drinking wine and to live in tents, as in Jer. 35:8, 9); סוֹכָתִים, so called because they did not anoint themselves (לֹא טָבְּוּ) with oil and because they dwelt in booths (סֻכּוֹת)].

How firm is your dwelling place [Balaam asks Jethro, who is Keni,] "I wonder how you merited this? Were you not with me in the counsel [we gave Pharaoh] "Come, let us deal wisely with them"? (Exod. 1:10) Yet now you have settled yourself in the firmness and strength of Israel.-[Sanh. 106a]

22 For if Kain is laid waste Fortunate are you that you are settled in this stronghold, for you will never be banished from the world. Even if you are destined to be exiled with the ten tribes, and be eliminated from the place where you had settled, what of it?

how far will Assyria take you captive? How far will he exile you? Perhaps as far as Halah or Habor? That is not considered being banished from the world, but being moved from one place to another, and you shall return with the other exiles.

23 He took up his parable... Since he mentioned the captivity by Assyria, he says-

Alas! Who can survive these things from God? Who can save himself from the One who designates these things, so that the One who decrees [namely, God] should not put these things [into effect] against him? [And what are

these terrible things?] That Sennacherib will arise and confuse all the nations, and furthermore, "ships will come from the Kittites"—the Kittites, who are the Romans, shall go forth in huge warships against Assyria.

24 and afflict those on the other side And they shall afflict those on the other side of the river [Euphrates].

but he too will perish forever Similarly does Daniel explain [concerning the Roman empire], "until the beast was slain and its body destroyed" (Dan. 7:11).

ships Heb. וְיָצִי, huge ships, as it is written, "וְיָצִי אֲדִיר" (Is. 33:21) which the Targum [Jonathan] renders as "a great ship."-[Yoma 77b]

Chapter 25

1 in Shittim That is its name.-[Sanh. 106a]

to commit harlotry with the daughters of Moab As a result of Balaam's advice, as is stated in [the chapter entitled] "Cheilek' (Sanh. 106a).

2 and prostrated themselves to their gods When his urge overcame him, and he said to her, "Submit to me," she took out an image of Peor from her bosom and said to him, "Bow down before this."-[Sifrei Balak 1]

3 Peor - [פּוֹרְעוֹר was so named] because before it they bared [פּוֹרְעוֹרִין] their anus before it and relieved themselves. This was the manner of its worship. -[Sifrei Balak 1]

and the anger of the Lord flared against Israel He sent a plague upon them.

4 Take all the leaders of the people to judge those who worshipped Peor.- [Sanh. 35a]

and hang them The [idol] worshippers.

and hang them Heb. הוֹקַע. This refers to [death by] hanging, as we find with the sons of Saul [where a similar expression is used,] "and we shall hang them (הוֹקַעְנוּם) for the Lord" (II Sam. 21:6), and there hanging is specifically mentioned. Idolatry is [punishable] by stoning, and all those stoned are also hanged [as is stated in Sanh. 45b according to Rabbi Eliezer].

facing the sun for all to see. The Midrash Aggadah (Mid. Tanchuma Balak 19) says: The sun identified the sinners, for the cloud folded back from the area above him and the sun shone on him.-

5 Each of you shall kill the men Each one of the Israelite judges executed two, and there were eighty-eight thousand Israelite judges, as is stated in Sanhedrin [18a].

6 Then an Israelite man came The tribe of Simeon gathered around Zimri, who was their prince, and they said to him, "We have been sentenced to death, yet you sit there [and remain silent] etc.," as it is related in [the chapter of] Elu hen hanisrafin' (Sanh. 82a).

the Midianite woman Cozbi the daughter of Zur (see verse 15).

before the eyes of Moses They said to him, "Moses, is this one forbidden or is she permitted? If you say it is

forbidden, who permitted for you the daughter of Jethro...?" as is stated there (Sanh. 82a).

while they were weeping The law [that anyone cohabiting with a non-Jewish woman is to be executed by zealots] eluded him. [Therefore,] they all burst out weeping. At the incident of the golden calf Moses [successfully] confronted six hundred thousand as it says, "He ground it until it was powder..." (Exod. 32:20), yet here he appeared so helpless? However, [this happened] so that Phinehas should come and take what was due to him.- [Mid. Tanchuma Balak 20]

7 Phinehas...saw He saw the deed and reminded himself of the law. He said to Moses, "I learned from you, 'If someone cohabits with an Aramean [heathen] woman, zealots have a right to strike him [dead].'" He replied to him, "Let the one who reads the letter be the agent to carry it out." Immediately, "he took a spear in his hand..."- [Sanh. 82a]

8 into the chamber Into the tent.

through her stomach Heb. קִבְּרָהּ, as in, "the jaw and the maw (וְהַקִּבְּרָה)" (Deut. 18:3). He aimed for the male organ of Zimri and her female organs and everyone saw that he had not killed them for nothing. Many miracles happened to him..., as it is related there (Sanh. 82b).

Ketubim: Psalm 104:13-26

| Rashi | Targum |
|--|---|
| 1. My soul, bless the Lord. My God, You are very great, You are attired with majesty and beauty. | 1. Bless, O my soul, the name of the LORD. O LORD my God, You are greatly exalted; You have put on praise and splendor. |
| 2. [You] enwrap Yourself with light like a garment; [You] extend the heavens like a curtain. | 2. Who wraps Himself in light like a sheet, who stretches out the heavens like a curtain. |
| 3. Who roofs His upper chambers with water; Who makes clouds His chariot, which goes on the wings of the wind. | 3. Who covers His chambers with water like a building with beams; who placed His chariot, as it were, upon swift clouds; who goes on the wings of an eagle. |
| 4. He makes winds His messengers, burning fire His ministers. | 4. Who made his messengers as swift as wind; his servants, as strong as burning fire. |
| 5. He founded the earth on its foundations that it not falter to eternity. | 5. Who lays the foundation of the earth upon its base, so that it will not shake for ages upon ages. |
| 6. You covered the deep as [with] a garment; the waters stand on the mountains. | 6. You have covered over the abyss as with a garment; and the waters split on the mountains, and endure. |
| 7. From Your rebuke they fled; from the sound of Your thunder they hastened away. | 7. At Your rebuke, they will flee, flowing down; at the sound of Your shout, they will be frightened, pouring themselves out. |
| 8. They ascended mountains, they descended into valleys to this place, which You had founded for them. | 8. They will go up from the abyss to the mountains, and descend to the valleys, to this place that You founded for them. |
| 9. You set a boundary that they should not cross, that they should not return to cover the earth. | 9. You have placed a boundary for the waves of the sea that they will not cross, lest they return to cover the earth. |
| 10. He sends the springs into the streams; they go between the mountains. | 10. Who releases springs into rivers; they flow between the mountains. |

| Rashi | Targum |
|---|--|
| 11. They water every beast of the field; the wild donkeys quench their thirst. | 11. They water all the wild animals; the asses will break their thirst. |
| 12. Beside them the fowl of the heavens dwell; from between the branches they let out their voices. | 12. The birds of heaven will settle on them; they will give out a sound of singing from among the branches. |
| 13. He waters the mountains from His upper chambers; from the fruit of Your works the earth is sated. | 13. Who waters the mountains from his upper treasury; the earth will be satisfied with the fruit of your deeds. |
| 14. He causes grass to sprout for the animals and vegetation for the work of man, to bring forth bread from the earth. | 14. Who makes grass grow for beasts, and herbs for the cultivation of the son of man, that bread may come forth from the earth; |
| 15. And wine, which cheers man's heart, to make the face shine from oil, and bread, which sustains man's heart. | 15. And wine that gladdens the heart of the son of man, to make the face shine by oil; and bread will support the heart of the son of man. |
| 16. The Lord's trees are sated, the cedars of Lebanon, which He planted. | 16. The trees that the LORD created are satisfied, the cedars of Lebanon that He planted: |
| 17. Where birds nest; as for the stork-the high junipers are its home. | 17. Where the birds make nests; the stork's dwelling is in the cypresses. |
| 18. The lofty mountains for the ibexes; the rocks a shelter for the hyraxes. | 18. The high mountains are for the wild goats; the rocks are security for the conies. |
| 19. He made the moon for the appointed seasons; the sun knows its setting. | 19. He made the moon to calculate times by; the sun knows the time of his setting. |
| 20. You make darkness and it is night, in which every beast of the forest moves about. | 20. You will make darkness and it will be night; in it all the beasts of the forest creep about. |
| 21. The young lions roar for prey and to beg their food from God. | 21. The offspring of lions roar to find food, and to seek their sustenance from God. |
| 22. When the sun rises they gather in and couch in their dens. | 22. The sun will shine, they gather together; and they lay down in their dwelling place. |
| 23. Man goes out to his work, to his labor until evening. | 23. A son of man will go forth to his work and to his cultivation, until the sunset of evening. |
| 24. How great are Your works, O Lord! You have made them all with wisdom; the earth is full of Your possessions! | 24. How many are Your works, O LORD! You have made all of them in wisdom; the earth is full of your possessions. |
| 25. This sea-great and wide; there are creeping things and innumerable beasts, both small and large. | 25. This sea is great and broad in extent; creeping things are there without number, both tiny creatures and large. |
| 26. There the ships go; You formed this leviathan with which to sport. | 26. There the ships go about, and this Leviathan You created for the sport of the righteous at the supper of His dwelling place. |

Rashi on Psalm 104:13-26

15 And wine which cheers man's heart, that too He brings forth from the earth, and oil to cause the face to radiate.

and bread which sustains man's heart.

16 The Lord's trees in the Garden of Eden.

17 birds nest Israel will dwell there. **קִנְיָו** is an expression of a bird's nest (קן צפור) .

18 The lofty mountains He created for the ibexes.

shelter Every expression of מַחֲסֵה is an expression of a shadow and a hiding place, where a person covers himself from flood and rain.

19 He made the moon for the appointed seasons To count with it the times and the festivals.

the sun knows its setting But the moon does not know its setting, because sometimes it comes through a long way and sometimes it comes through a short way.

20 You make darkness and it is night Every day You darken and block out the sun and it becomes night, when all the beasts of the forest move about.

22 When the sun rises they gather in into the secret places and hide there from the sons of men; then every man goes forth to his work.

24 Your possessions Heb. קנין, the acquisition that you have acquired, like (Gen. 14:19): "Owner (קנה) of heaven and earth." All is acquired by You.

25 and wide Heb. ורחב ידים. Wide of place, large in French, broad.

26 with which to sport three hours during the day. So did our Sages say in tractate Avodah Zarah (3b), and so it is written explicitly in the Book of Job (40:29): "Will you play with him like a bird?"

Meditation from the Psalms

Psalms 104:13-26

By: H.Em. Rabbi Dr. Hillel ben David

For continuity I am going to redo the opening remarks from the first part of our psalm.

This psalm is a continuation of the preceding one and echoes its refrain, Bless HaShem, O my soul! Here, David recounts the wonders of the six days of Creation and describes the splendor of the primeval light, the heaven and earth, the grass, the fish of the sea, the beasts of the field, and, finally, the crowning glory of Creation - man himself.²⁴

The Midrash²⁵ says: In the Torah, Moses related many events without elaboration. They remained obscure until David came and explained them, as he did here by expanding upon the theme of Creation and illuminating its mysteries.

Radak observes that every artist is motivated to produce works of art because he seeks personal acclaim and glory. However, when G-d fashioned the world, His sole concern was man's welfare. Mere flesh and blood cannot grasp the profound motives of G-d, much less appreciate them. Only the soul can comprehend the altruism and selfless love of its Creator. Thus, the Psalmist calls upon his own spirit, Bless HaShem, O my soul! For none but the

²⁴ Ibn Ezra

²⁵ Shemot Rabbah 15:22

soul could compose this blessing.

This psalm is the שיר של יום, Song of the Day, for Rosh Chodesh, the first day of the new month. The Tur²⁶ explains that the Psalmist alludes to the new month in verse 19, He made the moon for festivals.²⁷ The Zohar²⁸ says that the souls of the righteous people in Paradise recite this psalm every Rosh Chodesh.²⁹

Water and land³⁰ are the predominate themes of this week's psalm portion. In v.13-16, our psalmist speaks of the geshem,³¹ the rain, without ever mentioning the rain by name.³² The absence of the word geshem serves to emphasize its presence. Water plays a crucial role in our Torah portion as water forms a focus for Bilaam's blessing. The waters of Meribah are also a critical element in our Torah portion. Finally, the Bnei Israel's complain over the lack of water also surfaces in our Torah portion. Thus, we realize that water and land form a common theme between our Torah portion and Psalm portion.

Life in the Land of Israel has always depended on rain. Agriculture is one of Israel's main resources and its success largely depends on the rain season. If rain falls, life flourishes and the country enjoys rich soil and abundant crop. If, however rain is withheld, the country goes into a state of drought and famine. This is why the Hebrew word "Geshem" also refers to materiality (as in "Gashmiyut"), i.e. material success in Israel is largely dependent upon rainfall. In fact, according to Kabbalah rain signifies the downpour of material blessings from the spiritual realm to this physical world. Prayer is the appropriate means of requesting material success since all (material) blessings come from HaShem.

During Succoth, this week, we celebrate water through the Simchat Beit HaShoeva (Celebration of the Water Drawing Ceremony) and we continue recognizing the value of water through tefilat geshem, the beginning of our prayers for rain. The Mishna tells us that on Succoth the world is judged for rain:

Rosh HaShana 16a MISHNAH. AT FOUR SEASONS [DIVINE] JUDGMENT IS PASSED ON THE WORLD:³³ AT PASSOVER IN RESPECT OF PRODUCE; AT PENTECOST IN RESPECT OF FRUIT; AT NEW YEAR ALL CREATURES PASS BEFORE HIM [GOD] LIKE CHILDREN OF MARON,³⁴ AS IT SAYS, 'HE THAT FASHIONETH THE HEART OF THEM ALL, THAT CONSIDERETH ALL THEIR DOINGS';³⁵ AND ON TABERNACLES JUDGMENT IS PASSED IN RESPECT OF RAIN.

The prayer for **dew** is said in the Mussaf Amidah on the first day of Pesach;³⁶ the prayer for **rain** is said in the

²⁶ Orach Chaim 423

²⁷ see footnote there

²⁸ Midrash HaNe'elam, Parshat Vaera

²⁹ See Taamei HaMinhagim; these opening remarks are excerpted, and edited, from: *The ArtScroll Tanach Series, Tehillim*, A new translation with a commentary anthologized from Talmudic, Midrashic, and rabbinic sources. Commentary by Rabbi Avrohom Chaim Feuer, Translation by Rabbi Avrohom Chaim Feuer in collaboration with Rabbi Nosson Scherman.

³⁰ Land is our verbal tally between the Torah and the Psalm this week: Country / Earth - ארץ, Strong's number 0776. In v.14 we have another tally when HaShem brings forth bread from the land: Brought Forth / Bring Forth - יצא, Strong's number 03318.

³¹ "Geshem" is the Hebrew word for rain.

³² A similar phenomenon is found in verses 6-9 describing the founding of the sea in a very detailed manner, but the word "sea" is not mentioned even once. I have no explanation for this two-fold silence. (A similar phenomenon is found in last week's portion as well: God is described there as king, but the word "king" is not mentioned.)

³³ In accordance with its actions during the preceding year. By the 'world' here is probably meant only the people of Israel.

³⁴ The general sense of this obscure expression is 'one by one', 'in single file'. Its precise meaning is discussed in the Gemara infra p. 18a q.v.

³⁵ Tehillim (Psalms) 33:15

³⁶ Passover

Mussaf Amidah on Shemini Atzeret,³⁷ which is also the last day of Succoth, and also the day on which the stores of dew in heaven were opened.³⁸ There is one difference between our prayer for dew and our prayer for rain: We start praying for rain at the end of the holiday of Shemini Atzeret, but for dew at the beginning of the holiday of Pesach. Sephardic practice is a little different. We hesitate to interrupt the Amidah *for any purpose*, so rain and dew are recited just before the silent Mussaf Amidah. This pattern is norm in Israel for all but Hasidic congregations. Sephardic practice also varies from Ashkenazi by replacing “the rain to fall and the wind to blow” with “You cause the dew to fall” to thank HaShem for dew in summer months.

An interesting controversy in the Mishna³⁹ both elucidates and confuses things. It goes back to the question of why we insert “*You cause the dew to fall*” at the *beginning* of Pesach, but “the rain to fall and the wind to blow” at the *end* of Succoth. R. Eliezer argued that we should start praying for rain at the start of Succoth, not at the end. R. Joshua retorted that rain would be curse, not a blessing, during Succoth when everyone is supposed to be living out of doors. Eliezer responded that he was not urging that it rain but only praising HaShem for rain. Joshua then got the last word by arguing that, if the words are only a matter of praise, we should say them all the time and not just during the rainy season. We follow Joshua’s view, which explains why we say “rain” at the end of Succoth.

The day before yesterday, in the Mussaf prayer of Shemini Atzeret we began saying “He causes the wind to blow and the rain to descend”.

An allusion to the rain is found in verse 13:

Tehillim (Psalms) 104:13 *He waters the mountains from His upper chambers. The earth is satisfied with the fruit of Your works.*

Once again in verse 16, we find an allusion to the role of rain: “The trees of the Lord **are satisfied**”. The satisfaction of the trees is like that of the earth, the earth is satisfied from the fruit of HaShem’s works, that is, from the rain.

In truth, however, the rain is the subject of a significant part of our psalm portion. Clearly there is a differentiation and subsequent meeting between the land and the water in this portion. Causing the rain to fall is another and even more important way that HaShem brings land and water together, and the objective of this controlled meeting is also to allow for the maintenance of life on earth.

What is the source of the rain? The answer to this question is found at the beginning of the section:

Tehillim (Psalms) 104:13 *He waters the mountains from His upper chambers.*

We already encountered HaShem’s upper chambers in the first section of our psalm, in verse v.3:

Tehillim (Psalms) 104:3 *Who roofs His chambers with water...*

The source of the rain is, then, “the water which was above the firmament”, the water that serves as a roof to HaShem’s upper chambers in heaven.⁴⁰

³⁷ שמיני עצרת – “Eighth [day of] Assembly”. Tishri 22+23 (in the diaspora) is when we celebrate Shemini Atzeret.

³⁸ *Pirke de-R. Eliezer* 32; cited in Dew, Prayer for, in *Encyclopedia Judaica*.

³⁹ Ta’anith 1:1

⁴⁰ This may explain why in the second clause of v. 13 the rain is referred to as “the fruit of Your works”. HaShem’s work is that which is described in the first clause: “Who roofs His chambers with water,” and the water which reaches the earth is the fruit of that roof made by HaShem.

What is the difference between the two ways through which HaShem restores the water to the land, creating springs and causing the rain to fall from His upper chambers? Weiss answers in his article as follows:⁴¹

HaShem is not only He who “sends the springs into the streams” after having set a boundary for the water. He who “roofs His chambers with water” also “waters the mountains from His upper chambers” (v.13). There is watering from “His upper chambers” – from above; and there is watering from “the springs” – from below. The two are not the same, neither with respect to the doer, nor with respect to the deed. The watering “from His upper chambers” is performed by HaShem (“He waters”), just as according to our psalm in general, He is the doer in all the acts of nature. The watering from “the springs,” on the other hand, is performed by the water (“they water”). This teaches you that not only does the water not cause destruction (“that they would not return to cover the earth”), but rather it gives life (“they water every beast of the field”).

The two waterings also differ with respect to the deed. The watering of “the springs” provides the animals with direct benefit (“the wild asses quench their thirst”). The watering “from His upper chambers” benefits the animals only indirectly. In direct fashion, “the earth is satisfied”⁴² and “the trees of HaShem are satisfied”⁴³ from it. The water which was above the firmament is first received by the mountains, which are near to it. The earth is “satisfied” because the rain water that watered the mountains also reaches it, and afterwards “the trees of the Lord are satisfied” as well.⁴⁴

We can add a third difference between the two waterings: The watering of the springs is limited to those channels of life through which the spring waters stream; it does not touch upon man’s world or his agricultural endeavors, but only to the wild and natural maintenance of the animal and plant kingdoms. The watering of the rains from HaShem’s upper chambers spreads across the entire earth, and impacts first and foremost upon man, his agriculture and his cattle,⁴⁵ but also upon the plants and animals that are not part of man’s cultured world.⁴⁶

Water Symbolizes **Torah** as Chazal⁴⁷ understands from:

Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 55:1 *Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye for water, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.*

The Talmud explains this as spiritual thirst, all who seek it should drink of Torah’s refreshing teachings:

Baba Kama 82a *‘That the law be read [publicly] on Mondays and Thursdays.’ But was this ordained by Ezra? Was this not ordained even before him? For it was taught: ‘And they went three days in the wilderness and found no water,’⁴⁸ upon which those who expound verses metaphorically⁴⁹ said: water means nothing but Torah, as it says: Ho, everyone that thirsteth come ye for water.⁵⁰ It thus means that as they went three days without Torah they*

⁴¹ Lecture 48: “You have made them all in wisdom” Psalm 104 according to Meir Weiss (part III), pg 232.

⁴² v.13

⁴³ v.16

⁴⁴ v.16

⁴⁵ vv. 13-14

⁴⁶ vv. 16-18

⁴⁷ (Hebrew: ל"ר) is an acronym for the Hebrew “Chakhameinu Zikhronam Liv'rakha” (חכמינו זכרונם לברכה), “Our Sages, may their memory be blessed”), is a general term that refers to all Jewish sages of the Mishna, Tosefta and Talmud eras, essentially from the times of the final 300 years of the Second Temple of Jerusalem until the 6th century CE.

⁴⁸ Shemot (Exodus) 15:22.

⁴⁹ Doreshe Reshumoth; v. Sanh. (Sonc. ed.) p. 712. n. 12.

⁵⁰ Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 55:1

immediately became exhausted. The prophets among them thereupon rose and enacted that they should publicly read the law on Sabbath, make a break on Sunday, read again on Monday, make a break again on Tuesday and Wednesday, read again on Thursday and then make a break on Friday so that they should not be kept for three days without Torah.⁵¹ — Originally it was ordained that one man should read three verses or that three men should together read three verses, corresponding to priests, Levites and Israelites.⁵² Then Ezra came and ordained that three men should be called up to read, and that ten verses should be read, corresponding to ten batlanim.⁵³

The Midrash associates rain with Torah:

Midrash Rabbah - Genesis VI:5 AND GOD SET THEM IN THE FIRMAMENT OF THE HEAVEN.⁵⁴ R. Jonathan said: Three things were given as a gift to the world, viz., the Torah, the luminaries, and rain. Whence do we know it of the Torah? And He gave unto Moses... the two tables of testimony.⁵⁵ The luminaries? AND GOD GAVE (E.V. 'SET') THEM, etc. Rain? Then I will give you rains.⁵⁶

The Midrash⁵⁷ then teaches us several comparisons of water as it relates to Torah.

Midrash Rabbah - The Song of Songs I:19 He shall bathe himself in water,⁵⁸ so the Torah cleanses the body, as it says, Thy word is purifying¹ to the uttermost.⁵⁹ Just as water covers the nakedness of the sea, as it says, As the waters cover the sea,⁶⁰ so the Torah covers the nakedness of Israel, as it says, Love covereth all transgressions.⁶¹ Just as rain water comes down in drops and forms rivers, so with the Torah; a man learns two halachot today and two tomorrow, until he becomes like a flowing stream. Just as water has no taste unless one is thirsty, so the Torah has no taste unless one labors at it. Just as water leaves a high place and flows to a low one, so the Torah leaves one whose spirit is proud and cleaves to one whose spirit is lowly. Just as water does not keep well in a vessel of silver or gold but in the commonest of vessels, so the Torah resides only in one who makes himself like a vessel of earthenware. Just as with water a great man is not ashamed to say to a lowly man, 'Give me a drink of water,' so with the words of the Torah, a great scholar must not be ashamed to say to a lesser one, 'Teach me one chapter, or one statement, or one verse, or even one letter.' Just as with water, if one does not know how to swim in it, he will be drowned, so with the words of the Torah, if one does not know how to thread his way in them and to instruct in accordance with them, he will ultimately come to grief.

Thus, we understand why Chazal relates water metaphorically as Torah.

In Israel, Shemini Atzeret is celebrated in connection with Simchat Torah. Outside the land, the second day of Shemini Atzeret is also Simchat Torah. Simchat Torah represents the end, and beginning, of the annual cycle of Scripture readings. With the triennial cycle, we celebrate the end, and the beginning, of the cycle every seven years.

⁵¹ [Why then was it necessary for Ezra to enact this?]

⁵² In which groups the people were classed.

⁵³ The ten persons released from all obligations and thus having leisure to attend to public duties and to form the necessary quorum for synagogue services; cf. Meg. 1, 3; v. also Meg. 21b.

⁵⁴ Bereshit (Genesis) 1:17.

⁵⁵ Shemot (Exodus) 31:18.

⁵⁶ Vayikra (Leviticus) 26:4.

⁵⁷ Since our psalm is interpreted at the Drash level it makes sense that we look to understand water at this level.

⁵⁸ Vayikra (Leviticus) 17:15.

⁵⁹ Tehillim (Psalms) 119:140.

⁶⁰ Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 11:9.

⁶¹ Mishlei (Proverbs) 10:12.

I find it instructive that the prayer for rain comes on a day when there is much rejoicing over the Scriptures. This connection between rain and reading the Scriptures is ancient, for rain serves as a continual reminder of the purpose for the regular reading of HaShem's Word.

Since water remained the most important variable in the land of Israel, the Tanach reveals that HaShem used the climate to encourage his people to trust and obey him. For obedience HaShem sent rain; for disobedience HaShem sent drought.⁶² Talk about motivation.

The holidays of Shemini Atzeret and Simchat Torah offer complimentary realities. The need for rain illustrates the need for truth, both essential for life. Just as the prayer for rain is cyclical, like the reading of the Torah, it also illustrates a necessary and never-ending dependence on HaShem who gives it.

This leads us to mitzva number 612: The Hakhel - הַקְּהָל. The Hakhel (Gathering) has as its goal the production of awe of HaShem. The achievement of this purpose involves Torah and the uniting of the Jewish people, the Mashiach, and HaShem. The mitzva (commandment) of Hakhel is found in:

Devarim (Deuteronomy) 31:9-13 *And Moses wrote this law, and delivered it unto the priests the sons of Levi, which bare the ark of the covenant of HaShem, and unto all the elders of Israel. 10 And Moses commanded them, saying, At the end of every seven years, in the solemnity of the year of release, in the feast of tabernacles, 11 When all Israel is come to appear before HaShem thy God in the place which he shall choose, thou shalt read this law before all Israel in their hearing. 12 Hakhel Gather the people together, men, and women, and children, and thy stranger that is within thy gates, that they may hear, and that they may learn, and fear HaShem your God, and observe to do all the words of this law: 13 And that their children, which have not known any thing, may hear, and learn to fear HaShem your God, as long as ye live in the land whither ye go over Jordan to possess it.*

Rav Mordechai Yosef, in the classic sefer *Mei HaShiloach*, points out that the mitzva of Hakhel occurred only once every seven years, on the first Succoth of the nascent Shmita⁶³ cycle. Hakhel, which immediately follows the Shmita year, is but the first of the following six years.

The Shmita year prepares for the mitzva of Hakhel in the eighth year, when men, women and children gather in the Beit HaMikdash during the Holiday of Succoth. Shmita serves as a preparation for Hakhel very much like Friday prepares for Shabbat. The Mishna details the procedure for the reading:

Sotah 41a MISHNAH. WHAT WAS THE PROCEDURE IN CONNECTION WITH THE PORTION READ BY THE KING? AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE FIRST DAY OF THE FESTIVAL [OF TABERNACLES] IN THE EIGHTH, I.E., THE END OF THE SEVENTH, THEY ERECT A WOODEN DAIS IN THE TEMPLE COURT, UPON WHICH HE SITS; AS IT IS SAID, AT THE END OF EVERY SEVEN YEARS, IN THE SET TIME etc. THE SYNAGOGUE-ATTENDANT TAKES A TORAH-SCROLL AND HANDS IT TO THE SYNAGOGUE PRESIDENT, AND THE SYNAGOGUE-PRESIDENT HANDS IT TO THE [HIGH PRIEST'S] DEPUTY. HE HANDS IT TO THE HIGH PRIEST WHO HANDS IT TO THE KING. THE KING STANDS AND RECEIVES IT, BUT READS SITTING.

It is interesting to note that the Jerusalem Talmud in bringing the same Mishnah has a different version. Instead of stating that the ceremony of the Hakhel should be on the second day of the festival of Succoth, it writes that the Hakhel was on **"the day after the end of Succoth"**.⁶⁴

The purpose of Hakhel, in the words of the scriptures, is: "In order that you may hear and in order that you may

⁶² Devarim (Deuteronomy) 28

⁶³ Shmita = Sabbatical cycle

⁶⁴ Yerushalmi, Sotah 7:7

learn to fear the Lord your God". This, too, is cited as the purpose of Matan Torah⁶⁵, where the entire nation congregated to hear the words of HaShem.

Hakhel, is the penultimate mitzva of the taryag mitzvot (number 612),⁶⁶ as counted by the Sefer HaChinuch.⁶⁷ The Sefer HaChinuch also writes, concerning any person who neglects this mitzva (for example a Jew who fails to attend or a King who fails to read the Torah) "...their punishment is very great, for this command is a fundamental pillar of the religion..."

The Talmud also speaks of the Hakhel mitzva:

Chagigah 3a *"Assemble the entire nation: men, women, and children' - men, to learn; women, to hear; and children, to give reward to those who brought them [to the assembly]."*

The Mishna⁶⁸ establishes that the Torah reading at Hakhel was conducted specifically in Hebrew, by the King, while seated in the courtyard of the women. As we shall see, Hakhel was a reenactment of the Sinai experience. We know that at Sinai, HaShem spoke, simultaneously, in all seventy languages and that the whole world heard HaShem speak. This suggests that Hakhel may have produced a similar experience whereby all those who attend will hear and understand.

In general, Talmudic and Midrashic sources⁶⁹ see the magnitude of the expression of the Divine presence as increasing in proportion to the number of Jews gathered. This suggests that as we have a greater attendance of people, we get a greater manifestation of the Divine Presence. Note the following growth in the number of Jews who can attend the Temple services:

1. We have all the males commanded to attend on the three pilgrimage festivals.
2. We would expect greater attendance at the pilgrimage festivals during a Shmita year when no one could work the land.
3. We would expect an even greater attendance at the pilgrimage festivals during a Yovel year when no one could work the land for a second year.
4. We see every man, woman, and child commanded to attend Hakhel. (We also saw every man, woman, and child attending at Sinai.)

This suggests a form of crescendo which grows throughout the year and throughout the years, whereby the number of Jews increases, which causes a corresponding increase in the Divine presence. We would, therefore, reach the apex at the Hakhel of a Yovel year in the days of Mashiach.

The Hakhel was the culmination of seven years of mitzvot which were used as preparation for this final event. To

⁶⁵ see, e.g., Shemot 20:18

⁶⁶ The mitzva of writing a sefer Torah is a pivotal mitzva. It concludes the 613 mitzvot and, in a sense, it encompasses all the other mitzvot, because when we write a sefer Torah we are reminded of all the mitzvot contained in it. At the same time, being placed towards the end of the Torah, it is near the account of the creation of the world. The Midrash tells us, that the whole world was created for the sake of the Torah⁶⁶. By writing a sefer Torah we demonstrate that we understand the purpose for which we have been created: to keep the Torah and its commandments.

⁶⁷ The Sefer ha-Chinuch (Hebrew: ספר החינוך, "Book of Education"), often simply "the Chinuch" is a work which systematically discusses the 613 commandments of the Torah. It was published anonymously in 13th century Spain. The work's enumeration of the commandments (Hebrew: mitzvot; sing. mitzvah) is based upon Maimonides' system of counting as per his Sefer Hamitzvot; each is listed according to its appearance in the weekly Torah portion and the work is structured correspondingly.

⁶⁸ in Masechet Sotah 32a

⁶⁹ Bereshit Rabbah 48:7, Devarim Rabbah 7:2, Tanchuma Vaera 4, Midrash Tehillim 22:19, Otzar Ha-midrashim p. 222, Mishna Avot 3:6, Talmud Bavli Tractate Berachot 6a, et al.

begin to understand how these mitzvot fit into the Hakhel it is necessary to understand that there were three principle parts to the Hakhel:

1. The Torah was to be read by the King. The focus is on the head.
2. The Torah was to be heard by every man, woman, and child of the Jews and of those Gerim (proselytes and Noachides) in the land. The focus is on unity.
3. The Torah was to be read in the courtyard of the women, in the Beit HaMikdash, the Temple. The focus was on the nearness to HaShem.

With these three parts in mind, let's examine the other mitzvot which preceded Hakhel and see how they contributed to these three things.

In Creation: The mitzva of Hakhel can best be understood by examining the ideal which HaShem created in Gan Eden (the Garden of Eden). Adam HaRishon was a single human composed of male and female parts. In his loins were the souls of every human being who would ever live.

Adam HaRishon was created on Tishri 1, Rosh HaShanah. In a sense, the Sinai experience is a recreation of the Gan Eden experience. There are many similarities. Additionally, Gan Eden has always been, and continues to be located on the Temple mount in the place of the Beit HaMikdash.

Adam HaRishon⁷⁰ became Adam and Chava. After HaShem separated Chava, Adam and Chava were commanded to unify themselves whilst walking with HaShem in the PaRDeS, the orchard, of Torah.

Shabbat: The Shabbat Shacharit (morning) prayers focus on unity of HaShem and our unification in Him. These prayers culminate in the reading of the weekly Torah seder. This Torah seder continually points to the Hakhel at the end of the Shmita cycle.

Every seventh day we celebrate Shabbat and are taught to use the "free time" to hear the reading of the weekly portion and to enrich our knowledge of Torah.

Purim: The Purim Story in Esther documents the attempt by Haman to destroy every Jew. It also documents the free acceptance of the Torah given at Sinai and the unification of the Jewish people in the performance of teshuva and mitzvot. The three main observances of Purim, all comply with the theme of unity:

1. Gathering in synagogues for the reading of Megillat Esther (Torah),
2. Giving charity to the poor, and
3. Exchanging gifts of goodies with relatives, friends, and neighbors.

Pesach: The Maharal of Prague teaches that the Pesach offering represents oneness, unity. The Paschal lamb or sheep is a herding animal, an animal which associates with its flock. This one-year old (signifying unity) animal may only be eaten by one who assigns himself to a group, and only in a single house or location. Even the structure of the meat must be retained, as the meat must be eaten roasted (roasting shrinks and unifies the meat, as opposed to stewing which breaks the meat apart), and a bone must not be broken in the meat, to retain bone structure. Thus, the seder unifies Israel with the Torah when they recount the Haggada.

Sefirat HaOmer: Sefirat HaOmer, the counting of the Omer, is what a Jew does as he counts the day till the receiving the Torah at Sinai. His counting reflects the inner growth of his soul as he actively seeks to join with the Jewish people and with HaShem. For the Omer, we count "seven complete weeks"⁷¹ and afterwards celebrate the

⁷⁰ Adam HaRishon = The first Adam.

⁷¹ Vayikra 23:15

fiftieth day as a sacred festival.

Shavuot: Matan Torah at Shavuot, a unified Israel accepts HaShem as God and receives His Torah. In Shemot (Exodus) 19:2, the Torah uses the singular form of the verb “camped”, rather than the expected plural form. Since our people had risen to the level where they were thus “like one man, with one heart”, the singular form here becomes, for the first time, appropriate.

From Sinai onwards, every thought, word, or action in fulfillment of the Torah is both a connection with HaShem and a link with all other Jews. Every time we fulfill a mitzva we are therefore bonding with the Creator and also expressing the inner and eternal unity of the Jewish people.

The Rambam⁷² refers to Hakhel as “Yom Hakhel” [The Day of Hakhel]. Rav Hutner⁷³ points out that if we take away the vowels of ‘Yom Hakhel’ it is precisely the same letters as ‘Yom HaKahal’ [the Day of the Congregation] which the Torah repeatedly uses⁷⁴ to refer to the standing at Mt. Sinai.

At the root of the term “Hakhel” that the Torah employs to describe this mitzva is the word “kahal”. The word kahal is one of several words the Torah uses when discussing various groupings of the Jewish people. The Malbim⁷⁵ and Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch⁷⁶ have inculcated within us the view, that there are no synonyms in Hebrew. It is, therefore, axiomatic, that if the Torah chooses to base the description of this mitzva on the word kahal, that ***the mitzva be specifically to recreate a kahal.***

In Devarim (Deuteronomy) 4:10, Moshe Rabbeinu relates that HaShem had commanded him to gather the nation for the giving of the Torah. In Devarim 9:10, Moshe calls the day of the giving of the Torah: “Yom HaKahal.” Obviously, the event of Hakhel is meant to be a re-enactment of the giving of the Torah. This clearly connects the Hakhel to Shavuot. Yet, there is much more to connect these two dates.

Rav Hutner says that the essence of the ceremony of Hakhel is supposed to be the reenactment of the standing at Mt. Sinai. It is the reenactment of the giving of the Torah. The Accepting of the Torah is THE seminal event in Jewish History. We are to reenact the giving of the Torah every seven years in order to impress upon the people the importance of what Torah means to the Jewish People. We want the people to feel as though they have experienced another “giving of the Torah”.

An even more ambitious attempt to relate the content of the Hakhel reading to the standing at Mt. Sinai theme is undertaken by Menachem Kasdan, in an article on this topic in the journal Geshet,⁷⁷ where he detects a parallel between this reading and the process of conversion. In the Hilchot Isurei Bi'a section of Mishna Torah,⁷⁸ Maimonides outlines the procedure for dealing with a prospective convert. He writes that the Jewish court first

⁷² In Hilchot Chagigah 3:7.

⁷³ Rabbi Yitzchok (Isaac) Hutner (Hebrew: יצחק הוטנר; 1906–1980) was an American Orthodox rabbi and rosh yeshiva.

⁷⁴ Devarim (Deuteronomy) 9:10, 10:4, 18:16

⁷⁵ Meir Leibush ben Yehiel Michel Wisser (March 7, 1809 – September 18, 1879), better known as the Malbim (Hebrew: מלבי"ם), was a rabbi, master of Hebrew grammar, and Bible commentator. The name "Malbim" was derived from the Hebrew initials of his name. He used this acronym as his surname in all his published works, and became known by it in common usage.

⁷⁶ Samson Raphael Hirsch (June 20, 1808 – December 31, 1888) was a German Orthodox rabbi best known as the intellectual founder of the Torah im Derech Eretz school of contemporary Orthodox Judaism. Occasionally termed neo-Orthodoxy, his philosophy, together with that of Azriel Hildesheimer, has had a considerable influence on the development of Orthodox Judaism.

⁷⁷ Yeshiva University, 1969

⁷⁸ chapter 14

attempts dissuading the Gentile, describing to him the persecution historically suffered by the Jewish people, and the hostility and discrimination with which it is often been treated by other nations. If the prospective convert persists, he is informed of the basic tenets of the Jewish faith, particularly the oneness of HaShem and the absolute rejection of pagan beliefs. From there the court proceeds to present the Gentile a sampling of Jewish law, particularly agricultural obligations, such as the required tithes and gifts to the poor. Finally, he is to read the section to which we referred earlier, in which Moshe promises blessing should the people obey the Torah, and calamity should they neglect their religious duties.⁷⁹

A careful look at the sections read at Hakhel, as outlined by Maimonides,⁸⁰ reveals a general correspondence between these sections and the court's response to a prospective proselyte. The Hakhel reading begins with the opening chapters of the Book of Devarim, which tell of some of Bne Israel's experiences during their travels in the wilderness. Strong emphasis is placed in these chapters on the hostility displayed towards them by the nations they encountered, Amalek, Edom, the Emorites, and the empire of Bashan. These chapters thus perhaps correspond to the court's warning to the prospective convert of the animosity historically suffered by the Jewish people. The next sections read at Hakhel are the first two chapters of the Shema service, which, of course, deal with the fundamental Jewish belief of HaShem's oneness and the disastrous consequences of idolatry. From there the king skips to the section of "Aser Te'aser," which begins with the laws of tithing and kind treatment to the underprivileged. The king continues with the next several chapters, which introduces numerous mitzvot from across the spectrum of Halacha and concludes with the section of the blessings and curses that Moshe promises will befall the people as a result of their obedience or betrayal, respectively.

Quite possibly, then, the Hakhel reading reflects this ceremony's role as a formal reentry into the covenant with the Almighty. As Maimonides writes a chapter earlier in Hilchot Isurei Bi'a, the conversion process is modeled after the process underwent by Bne Israel at the time of the Exodus from Egypt and at Sinai. A proselyte enters the covenant through a procedure similar to the process required when that covenant was established initially. At Hakhel, we reenact the standing at Mt. Sinai in order to "convert", to reaffirm and renew our commitment to the covenant with HaShem. The king's reading of selected portions of the Book of Devarim therefore correspond to the Jewish court's warnings and instructions to a prospective convert.⁸¹

Rabbi Mordechai Zaks, in his discussion of this topic,⁸² suggests that the Shmita year generates a sense of national unity that is indispensable for experiencing the revelation at Har Sinai. In one of the most famous passages in his Torah commentary, Rashi⁸³ cites the Midrash's comment that Bne Israel encamped at Sinai "as one person, with one heart". Bne Israel's collective acceptance of the Torah and the establishment of a national covenant with the Almighty require a unity of mind and purpose. During the Shmita year, all agricultural activity is forbidden, and landowners must temporarily forfeit ownership over their fields. In effect, then, during the Shmita year, there is no economic competition or even any economic classes. Everyone shares precisely the same assets and fate, withdrawing from agricultural work and spending a year engaged in more spiritual endeavors. The social harmony and elimination of commercial rivalry is a necessary prerequisite to the standing at Mt. Sinai experience which the Hakhel ceremony is intended to replicate.

Maimonides⁸⁴ also understands Hakhel as a re-acceptance of the Covenant at Sinai. Hakhel is also linked to Succoth (the Feast of Tabernacles), the most universal of our holidays which concludes the Rosh Hashanah festival period. Hakhel involves not only the Bne Israel but the entire Bnai Noach world as well, the strangers as well as

⁷⁹ These requirements are derived from what happened before Sinai in the wilderness, and how Naomi converted Ruth.

⁸⁰ Hilchot Chagigah 3:3

⁸¹ <http://www.maimonidesheritage.org//ContentFolder/4/Vayelekh.pdf>

⁸² in the journal Torah She-be-al Peh, vol. 2, p. 73

⁸³ Shemot 19:2

⁸⁴ Laws of Hagiga, chapter III, 1-7, Maimonides

the uncircumcised.

This is most reminiscent of the biblical vision of the End of Days, as recorded by the prophet Isaiah:

Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 2:2-4 *“And it shall come to pass in the End of Days, that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established as the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow to it. And many peoples shall go and say, ‘Come you, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the House of the G-d of Jacob, and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths. For out of Zion shall go forth the Torah, and the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem, and He shall judge between the nations, and shall decide for many peoples, and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks, nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore”.*

| Hakhel | Har Sinai |
|--|--|
| “GATHER THE PEOPLE... in order that they may hear and in order that they MAY LEARN, and they WILL FEAR the Lord your God all the days you live on the land...” | “The day on which you stood... at Chorev, when God told me, ‘GATHER THE PEOPLE and I shall make them hear My words, that THEY SHALL LEARN TO FEAR Me all their days which they live on the land, AND THEY SHALL TEACH THEIR CHILDREN.” |

In addition, the Sinaitic experience is also referred to as “the day of Hakhel”.⁸⁵

Ashlamatah: Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 49:23-25 + 50 4-10

| Rashi | Targum |
|---|--|
| 22. So said the Lord God, "Behold I will raise My hand to the nations, and to the peoples will I raise My standard, and they shall bring your sons in their armpits, and your daughters shall be borne on their shoulder[s]. | 22. Thus says the LORD God: "Behold, I will disclose My <i>might among the Gentiles</i> , and raise My signal <i>over the kingdoms</i> ; and your sons will come in litters and your daughters shall be carried on <i>couches</i> . |
| 23. And kings shall be your nursing fathers and their princesses your wet nurses; they shall prostrate themselves to you with their face on the ground, and they shall lick the dust of your feet , and you shall know that I am the Lord, for those who wait for Me shall not be ashamed. | 23. Kings will be your foster fathers, and their queens will minister to you. Upon their faces, upon the ground they will spread out to beseech from you, and lick the dust of your feet . Then you will know that I am the LORD; the righteous/generous who wait for My salvation will not be put to shame." |
| 24. Shall prey be taken from a mighty warrior, or shall the captives of the righteous escape?" | 24. <i>Is it possible that booty</i> can be taken from the mighty, or <i>that which virtuous men capture</i> be rescued? |
| 25. For so said the Lord, "Even the captives of a mighty warrior can be taken and the prey of a tyrant shall escape, and with your contender will I contend, and your sons I will save. | 25. Surely, thus says the LORD: "Even <i>that which mighty men capture</i> I will restore, and <i>that which strong men take away</i> I will rescue, for I will <i>avenge your retribution</i> and save your sons. |
| 26. And those who taunt you-I will feed their flesh, and as with sweet wine they shall become drunk [from] their blood; and all flesh shall know that I am the Lord Who saves you, and your Redeemer, the Mighty One | 26. I will make the flesh of those who are your oppressors food for every bird of the heavens, and just as they are drunk from sweet wine, so will beasts of the field be drunk from their |

⁸⁵ Devarim (Deuteronomy) 9:10 and 8:14

| Rashi | Targum |
|---|--|
| of Jacob. | blood. Then all <i>the sons of flesh</i> will know that I am the LORD your Savior, and your Redeemer, the Strong One of Jacob." |
| 4. The Lord God gave me a tongue for teaching, to know to establish times for the faint [for His] word; He awakens me every morning, He awakens My ear, to hear according to the teachings. | 4. The LORD God has given me the tongue of those who teach, to make [me] know [how] to teach with wisdom the righteous/generous who faint for the words of His Law. Therefore morning by morning he rises early to send his prophets so perhaps the sinners' ears might be opened and they might listen to teaching. |
| 5. The Lord God opened my ear, and I did not rebel; I did not turn away backwards. | 5. The LORD God has sent me to prophesy, and I was not rebellious, I turned not backward. |
| 6. I gave my back to smiters and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair; I did not hide my face from embarrassments and spitting. | 6. I gave my back to smiters, and my cheeks to them that pluck out the beard; I hid not my face from shame and spitting. |
| 7. But the Lord God helps me, therefore, I was not embarrassed; therefore, I made my face like flint, and I knew that I would not be ashamed. | 7. For the LORD God helps me; therefore I have not been confounded; therefore I have set my face strong like rock, and I know that I will not be put to shame; |
| 8. He Who vindicates me is near, whoever wishes to quarrel with me-let us stand together; whoever is my contender shall approach me. | 8. my <i>innocence</i> is near. Who will go to judgment with me? Let us stand up together. Who is my <i>enemy</i> ? Let him come near to me. |
| 9. Behold, the Lord God shall help he that will condemn me, behold all of them shall wear out like a garment, a moth shall consume them. | 9. Behold, the LORD God helps me; who will declare me a <i>sinner</i> ? Behold, all of them are like the garment that wears out, that the moth eats. |
| 10. Who among you is God-fearing, who hearkens to the voice of His servant, who went in darkness and who has no light, let him trust in the name of the Lord and lean on his God. | 10. Who among you of those who fear the LORD obeys the voice of His servants the prophets, who perform the Law in distress as a man who walks in the darkness and has no light, trusts in the name of the LORD and relies upon the salvation of his God? |
| | r |

Verbal Tallies

By: HEM Rabbi Dr. Hillel ben David
& HH Giberet Dr. Elisheba bat Sarah

Bamidbar (Numbers) 23:10 – 25:9
Tehillim (Psalms) 104:13-18
Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 49:23-25 + 50 4-10
Mk 11:1-11, Lk 19:28-40, Lk 19:41-44, Rm 11:17-24

The verbal tallies between the Torah and the Psalm are:

LORD - יהוה, Strong's number 03068.

The verbal tallies between the Torah and the Ashlamata are:

Dust - עפר, Strong's number 06083.
Jacob - יעקב, Strong's number 03290.
LORD - יהוה, Strong's number 03068.

Bamidbar (Numbers) 23:10 Who can count the **dust <06083>** of **Jacob <03290>**, and the number of the fourth part of Israel? Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his! 11 And Balak said unto Balaam, What hast thou done unto me? I took thee to curse mine enemies, and, behold, thou hast blessed them altogether. 12 And he answered and said, Must I not take heed to speak that which the **LORD <03068>** hath put in my mouth?

Tehillim (Psalms) 104:16 The trees of the **LORD <03068>** are full of sap; the cedars of Lebanon, which he hath planted;

Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 49:23 And kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and their queens thy nursing mothers: they shall bow down to thee with their face toward the earth, and lick up the **dust <06083>** of thy feet; and thou shalt know that I am the LORD: for they shall not be ashamed that wait for me.

Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 49:26 And I will feed them that oppress thee with their own flesh; and they shall be drunken <with their own blood, as with sweet wine: and all flesh shall know that I the **LORD <03068>** am thy Saviour and thy Redeemer, the mighty One <046> of **Jacob <03290>**.

**Abarbanel On
Pirqa Abot
Pereq 1, Mishnah 3**

Antigonus, a man of Sokho, received [the tradition] from Shimon ha-Zaddik. He used to say: Do not be like servants who serve their master in order to receive a reward; be like servants who serve their master without expecting to receive a reward and let the fear of Heaven be upon you.

Each of the next three sages quoted in our text - Antigonus, Yosi ben Yoezer, and Yosi hen Yohanan - addresses himself to one of the three basic categories taught by Shimon ha-Zaddik. The latter taught that the Torah, service and loving-kindness are the three pillars on which the world rests. That is a lofty and sublime ideal. But, Antigonus asks, what specifically constitutes service; Yosi ben Yoezer explains what is the basic meaning of Torah; and Yosi ben Yohanan elaborates on the details of loving-kindness.

To start with, Abarbanel questions the wisdom and authenticity of Antigonus's pronouncement that one should not serve God for the sake of receiving a reward. Since when is a person denied the right to expect to be rewarded for doing a good deed? Is it not part of human nature to seek recognition for a meritorious act? Did not God Himself promise the Children of Israel. "Honor your father and you mother ... that you may fare well. in the land ... " (Deuteronomy 5: 16)? In fact, not only did the Torah assure the Jew of a reward for performing the mitzvot, the rabbis went even further and suggested (Makkot 23b) that God wanted to reward the Jew with His choicest blessings and therefore gave him an abundance of mitzvot to perform. Hence, on what basis does Antigonus urge that no reward should be expected for the fulfillment of the mitzvot and that if one does expect a reward, one's service of God is flawed?

After Abarbanel challenges Antigonus, he turns his attention to Rambam, whose thesis he rejects. In his rationale of the relationship between the Jew and God's will, Rambam is adamant that man must unequivocally submit to the mitzvot solely because of their intrinsic significance. In other words, a Jew must be good, charitable, honest and sympathetic because only in that way can he serve God. No other motive may enter his considerations for obeying the mitzvot. According to Rambam, if one does entertain any thought of gain by the performance of a mitzvah, the performance assumes the character of a business transaction and that, of course, is unacceptable. The purpose of performing the *mitzvot* is the *mitzvot* themselves, just as the purpose of ethical behavior is ethical behavior itself. Do we not proclaim every day of the year, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might"? However, Rambam clarifies this dilemma by differentiating between reward (**pras**) and remuneration (**sakhar**). The former should be understood as a gift a father gives to his son when the latter does something to gratify him. It is not incumbent upon the parent to give this gift; it is purely voluntary and an act of grace. **Sakhar**, however, is identified with legal necessity and earned merits. Thus, according to Rambam, Antigonus meant to teach us that in doing God's will one should not anticipate even a reward, i.e., God's gracious benevolence.

Abarbanel claims that Rambam's differentiation is unacceptable because he offered no sources to support it. To the contrary, Abarbanel quotes several passages in which the word **pras** clearly means "**wages**", i.e., reward which is earned.

Abarbanel presses on: Why did Antigonus, even according to Rambam, limit himself to **pras**? Why did he not include **sakhar**? In other words, why not generalize in a broad and sweeping manner that all thoughts of any kind of compensation are illegitimate? To add to the problem, Abarbanel points out that the reward awaiting the righteous is often called **sakhar** in the sources.

Furthermore, Antigonus compares the performance of a *mitzvah* to the duties of a servant. However, most servants are not happy with their status in servitude. Is that what God wants, that the Jew serve Him with despair, shame and sadness? Surely, the sage's advice should have been formulated: "Serve God out of love."

With reference to Rambam's philosophy itself, Abarbanel argues that it is not in line with Torah and that it originates in the thought of non-Jewish philosophers, such as Aristotle. They taught that one must do good for the sake of good and from this Jewish philosophers derived that one must serve God for the sake of serving God and claimed that that was the meaning of **avodah li-shmah**, i.e., **service for its own sake**. This line of reasoning, however, identifies the *mitzvot* with ethical behavior. It is appropriate for the philosophers since they reject the doctrine of divine providence and reward and punishment. We Jews, however, believe that God does judge the individual acts of individual man and rewards the observance of *mitzvot*. The happiness intended for our souls in the World to Come and for ourselves in this world is not the happiness which is derived from the act itself, since, as is well known, the performance of mitzvot, such as tzitzit, tefillin and mezuzah has no intrinsic superiority of itself and the performance itself cannot be its own reward after the soul leaves the body. Similarly, the acts themselves can have no relationship with the reward promised in this world, because what relationship can there be between the rain which is promised and **tzitzit**, **tefillin**, **mezuzah** and the other *mitzvot*? Similarly, the acts which the Torah forbids are not disgusting of themselves; they are only forbidden because God forbade them. There is, therefore, nothing wrong with observing the *mitzvot* in order to gain God's favor and receive the reward promised for them. In fact, the Talmud teaches (Pesachim 8a) that if a person vows to give a sum of money for charity providing his sick son will recover - such a person is considered righteous. Then, again, we are told (Sifra 20) that one should not say, "I will not eat pork because I detest it," but, rather, "I appreciate this forbidden food, but I cannot partake of it because *God* has denied me that pleasure." God must come into the picture. Without Him, I am a humanist. Rambam, therefore, is dangerously invoking the thinking of the humanists.

All this being so, Abarbanel claims that it is necessary to interpret Antigonus' dictum in a novel fashion and

approaches the difficulties of this Mishnah from different angles which, in fact, may even be **considered** somewhat contradictory.

The first interpretation: We have already noted that the term **pras** is identified with a **worldly reward**, while **sakhar** is associated with a **heavenly reward**. For example: "There is no reward (**sakhar**) for a mitzvah in this world" (Kiddushin 39b). Accordingly, Antigonus is teaching us that we should not seek a **pras** for our adherence to *mitzvot* because **pras** reflects a precise, pre-determined arrangement **for recompense which is to be paid immediately after the job is done**. God does not work that way because if and when *He* decides to bestow His award, only then will it happen. Finite man is in no position to foretell this event. Any recompense paid in this world is to be compared to payment of a dividend on the real reward which is paid in the World to Come.

However, **sakhar** is something that man can hope to attain because it is inconclusive and indeterminate. We know there will be a reward for us in Heaven, although we do not know precisely what it will be. In that light, also, we can understand why Antigonus exhorts us not to be like the servants who seek and demand a **pras** from their masters. In general, servants and slaves have no other aspirations in life and are satisfied if they are provided with food and shelter. The free, mature person aspires for greater things.

But, did the rabbis not teach us that the reward of performing a *mitzvah* is the *mitzvah* itself? This shows that there is a reward in this world for obedience to a *mitzvah*. Abarbanel rationalizes that our service to God is not something that benefits or enhances the stature of God. When He demands of the Jew to do service to Him, it is for the benefit and advantage of man himself. The delight and satisfaction that man gains from doing a *mitzvah* is his own, not God's. This is what was meant by the rabbis (Makkot 23b), that "God *wanted* to award the Jew with His choicest blessings and therefore accorded him an abundance of mitzvot,"

The second approach: Abarbanel argues that there is simply no place in the life of a Jew for a search of any reward for the observance of a *mitzvah*, be it **pras** or **sakhar**, in this world or in the World to Come. What the Jew must realize is that even if he will never receive any gain, he must still offer his thanks and gratitude to God for all that He has bestowed upon him. The Jew must ask himself where he would be today if God had not brought the Children of Israel out of the land of Egypt, sustained them in the wilderness for 40 years in defiance of the laws of nature, and had not presented him with the Torah and helped him survive against overwhelming odds and overpowering enemies. **Forget about a reward for the future; concentrate on acknowledging God's beneficence in the past.**

This is why Antigonus, according to Abarbanel, equated the dedication of the Jew to the *mitzvah* with the relationship between servant and master. In Jewish law one can only be sold into slavery when life becomes intolerable and replete with crisis. The master relieves the slave of all these tensions and pressures and gives him some measure of self-dignity. Should the slave not be grateful to the master for taking him out of the depths of despair? Should a slave, under these circumstances, make his top priority the meager compensation that he will receive in the future? So, it is with the Jew and his relationship to the *mitzvot*. **There should be no thought of a future reward - only gratitude for God's grace and beneficence in the past.**

Abarbanel goes on: When Antigonus cautions the Jew that the fear of Heaven should be upon him he meant that he should emulate the fear of the heavenly bodies in their relationship to God. The heavenly bodies - sun, moon, planets and stars - all operate with the precision that God designed and planned for them. They realize that even the slightest deviation from their ordained orbits would cause a radical change in the creative process and would bring down the wrath of God upon them. **Similarly, the Jew, too, must do God's bidding with precision, dedication and total commitment. Otherwise, he endangers his existence and invites disaster.**

Miscellaneous Interpretations

Rabbenu Yonah differentiates between the man who is requested not to serve God for the purpose of receiving a reward and the man to whom the thought of receiving a reward should never even occur. He then logically interprets the next statement, "Let the fear of Heaven be upon you" to mean that one must be lovingly attracted to God in a manner touching upon fear.

Rashbatz asks, "What is wrong in anticipating a reward? Isn't that an inducement to do good?" His answer: If one looks forward to a reward for his good deeds, then the reward becomes of primary importance and the performance of the *mitzvah* is not purely motivated. Would an ordinary human servant do his chores without compensation? On the other hand, if one is not motivated by reward, the labor becomes a labor of love. This is exactly what we recite twice each day, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart with all your might and with all your soul."

Rashbatz then questions his own premise by quoting the Talmud (Pesachim 8a) where we are taught that if a father says, "Let this money go to charity so that my sick child may live," he is considered a fully righteous person. The paradox is obvious! From this last rabbinic statement we have every right to conclude that for serving God (through charity) one may expect to be rewarded.

Rashbatz harmonizes this inconsistency by taking the easy way out and maintaining that Antigonus who advocates doing good without a reward was speaking of the most highly dedicated persons; the rabbinic maxim concerning charity and a sick child was referring to the average person.

Our commentator discovers another paradox in the words of Antigonus: If what is basically needed is the love and glorification of God, why does he somewhat deflate our ecstatic sentiments by insisting that the *fear* of Heaven must be upon us. Fear and love are incompatible.

He solves this problem: When love is fused and welded to fear in the service of God, it is considered avodah shelemah - complete and fulfilled service. Under those circumstances no mitzvah is burdensome; nothing is redundant. The fear of offending God is closely identified with loving Him.

It is in that light that we can understand the verse (Genesis 22: 12), "For now I know that you fear God." This was God speaking to Abraham after He tested him with the *Akedah* - the Binding of Isaac. Abraham was not afraid of a punishment for some transgression. There can be no harsher penalty than for a father to be required to offer his son as a sacrifice. With Abraham it was fear of God, not fear of Purgatory, that characterized his relationship to the Almighty. With him, the fear of God brought him close to *avodah*.

Yosef Karo interprets Antigonus' dictum, "And let the fear of Heaven be upon you," in an innovative manner to mean the opposite of what is commonly understood. The usual interpretation is that man should always entertain the thought of fear of God. Karo proposes that if you perform the *mitzvot* without seeking a reward, God will fear for you just as a father fears for his son's welfare and does not permit any ill to befall him.

Midrash Shemuel is not intimidated by the strong arguments of Abarbanel in his analysis of our *mishnah*. Abarbanel asked, "Why should one refrain from performing *mitzvot* with the sole purpose in mind that *he* will receive a reward for it?" He marshalled an array of instances in the Bible where reward is definitely promised, the most telling of which is the verse (Deuteronomy 5:26) "Who would grant that this their heart might remain in them, to *fear* Me, and to keep all my commandments at all times, in order *that it might be well with them and with their children forever.*" Here God Himself promises to reward those that walk in His way. This is contrary to

what Antigonus taught.

But, contends Midrash Shemuel, there is no merit to Abarbanel's argument.

Although the rabbis did state that one who gives charity in order to be rewarded by God is a **zaddik (righteous/generous)**, he is not a **hasid (pious)**. The rabbis of the Talmud, themselves, agree that the central motif of the Pirque Abot is how to acquire **hasidut**. It was they who were persuaded (Baba Kamma 30a) that, "He who wishes to be a **hasid - a pious man** - should apply himself to the teaching of Pirque Abot," **piety being a higher level than righteousness/generosity**. Hence, the support that Abarbanel anticipated from the Talmudic discussion concerning a donor with a selfish motive is no support at all.

Midrash Shemuel continues: Even if we were to concede that there was merit to Abarbanel's discovery that there is a contradiction between the teaching of Antigonus and that of the rabbis in Tractate Pesahim, it can easily be explained and clarified. What Abarbanel overlooked was the terminology used by Antigonus in the Mishnah which is fundamental to understanding its message. Two terms are used to describe the relationship between the master and the reward expected, "Do not be like **Abadim** (servants) who **MeShamshim** [serve] ... " Antigonus begins with **abadim** and follows with **meshamshim** - both applying to man.

There is a pronounced difference between these two concepts - **abodah** and **shimush**. **Abodah** means hard, demeaning labor. This is to be understood from the verse (Exodus 1:14), "They [i.e., the Egyptians) made them [i.e., the Jews'] lives bitter with hard labor (**Abodah**) in mortar and bricks." **Abodah** has as its root the word **ebed**, a slave. **Shimush**, however, means light service with dignity. This reasoning is augmented by *the* rabbinic maxim (Berakhot 1b), "It is preferable to stand by and attend the scholar than to be engrossed in his lectures."

Midrash Shemuel then makes his major thrust: If man was to be objective, he would have to concede that in view of the fact that he has been the beneficiary of unparalleled miracles performed for him every moment of his life, he should consider himself a lowly slave to God and obligated to perform **every mitzvah**. His aptitude should know no bounds. But, muses Midrash Shemuel, no one has reached that pinnacle of spiritual attainment. We neither can be, nor wish to be, *the ebed*. Therefore, we are told by Antigonus to serve God in the form of **shimush** - unencumbered and unburdened service. God is willing to accept this type of devotion. There is one provision, however. The least man can do is not to expect a reward.

Another observation that Midrash Shemuel makes: **God does everything according to His own plan and man was never intended to fathom and plumb God's intentions. What He does and when He does it remains with Him. Now, if a person were to perform a mitzvah and anticipate some blessing in return, it would be devastating for him if instead of a beneficent act on the part of God, he would be afflicted with some calamity. A man cannot be disappointed if he is righteous without an ulterior motive.**

NAZAREAN TALMUD

SIDRA OF B'MIDBAR (NUMBERS) 23:10 – 25:9

"MI MANA" "WHO CAN COUNT"

BY: H. EM RABBI DR. ELIYAHU BEN ABRAHAM &
H. EM. HAKHAM DR. YOSEF BEN HAGGAI

HAKHAM SHAUL'S SCHOOL OF TOSEFTA
LUQAS (LK)

HAKHAM TSEFET'S SCHOOL OF PESHAT
MORDECHAI (MK)

¶ And after he had said these things, he made Aliyah (go up), up to Yerushalayim (Heb. Jerusalem). And it happened that when he drew near to Bet Pagah and Bet Chanan, to the hill called Har Zeytim (Mount of Olives), he sent two of the talmidim, saying, 'Go into the village in front of you, in which as you enter you will find a donkey's colt (chamor), tied, on which no person has ever sat, and untie it and bring it. And if anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' you will say this: 'The Master has need of it.' " So those who were sent went and found it just as he had told them. And as they were untying the donkey's colt (chamor), its owners said to them, 'Why are you untying the donkey's colt (chamor)?' So they said, 'The Master has need of it.' And they brought it to Yeshua, and throwing their cloaks on the donkey's colt (chamor), they put Yeshua on it. And as he was going along, they were spreading out their Talits as a canopy on the road. Now as he was drawing near by this time to the descent from the Har Zeytim (Mount of Olives), the whole congregation of the talmidim began rejoicing to praise God with a loud voice for all the miracles that they had seen, saying, "Blessed is the king, the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!" And some of the P'rushim from the congregation said to him, "Teacher, rebuke your talmidim!" And he answered and said, "I tell you that if these keep silent, the stones would cry out!"

¶ And when he approached and saw the city, he wept over it, saying, "If you had known on this day—even you—the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. For days will come upon you and your enemies will put up an embankment against you, and will surround you and press you hard from all directions. And they will raze you to the ground, you and your children within you, and will not leave a stone upon a stone within you, because you did not recognize the time

¶ And when they drew near to Yerushalayim (Heb. Jerusalem), to Bet Pagah and Bet Chanan, toward Har Zeytim (Mount of Olives) then (Yeshua) sent out⁸⁷ two of his Talmidim, and said to them, Go into the village before you. And immediately going into it, you will find at once a donkey's colt (chamor)⁸⁸ tied, on which no man (Royal Ish) has sat upon. Untie it, bring lead it back to me. And if anyone says, (asks) you, Why do you do this? Say (to) its master, Yeshua needs it. And he will send it here to me immediately. And they departed and found the Chamor tied at the door outside, by the circular road; and they untied it. And some of those standing there said to them, what you are doing, untying the Chamor? And they answered them just as Yeshua had commanded, and they let them go. And they led the Chamor to Yeshua. And they laid their garments on it, and he Yeshua sat on it. And many spread their Talits as a canopy along the way and others spread leafy branches (Heb. Lulabim) cutting them from the fields. And those going before, and those following, were crying out, saying, "Please, O LORD, save now! Please, O LORD, make prosperous now! "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD; we have blessed you from the house of the LORD." (Psa. 118:25-26). Blessed be the kingdom (government) of our father David! Hoshia'h Na (Heb. save now) from the highest (heaven). And Yeshua entered Yerushalayim, into the Temple, and looked around at everything, but since the hour was late already, he went out to Bet Chanan with the twelve Talmidim.

⁸⁷ Note the immediate verbal connection to the Torah Seder.

⁸⁸ For a more in-depth understanding of the Chamor see His Eminence Rabbi Dr Hillel's document "[Chamor.](#)"

of your visitation.”⁸⁶

Now at the same time some had come to tell him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices. And he answered and said to them, “Do you think that these Galileans were sinners worse than all the Galileans, because they suffered these things? No, I tell you, but unless you **repent** you will all perish as well! Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them—do you think that they were sinners worse than all the people who live in Yerushalayim? No, I tell you, but unless you **repent**, you will all perish as well!”

And he gave this analogy: “A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came looking for fruit on it and did not find any. So he said to the gardener, ‘Behold, for **three years** I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree and did not find any. Cut it down! Why should it even exhaust the soil?’ But he answered and said to him, ‘Sir, please leave it for this year also, until I dig around it and put manure on it. And if indeed it produces fruit in the coming year, so much the better, but if not, you can cut it down then.’ ”

And on the morrow, they were going out from Bet Chanan, and he Yeshua was hungry. And seeing a fig tree from a distance having leaves, he went toward it, if perhaps he would find anything on it. And coming on (to) it, he found nothing except leaves, for it was not yet the season of figs. And Yeshua responding, said to it, Let no one eat of your fruit any more to the (in this) age (or, for this generation). And his talmidim heard.

SCHOOL OF HAKHAM SHAUL'S REMES
ROMANS 11:17-32

¶But if some of the **(non-fruit bearing)** branches were pruned away, you being from an uncultivated olive tree⁸⁹ were grafted in among them (the fruit-bearing branches) also join fellowship in the fatness of the olive root. Therefore, do not be arrogant toward the branches; but if you are arrogant,⁹⁰ remember that it is not you who supports the root, but the root supports you. You will say then,

⁸⁶ Note the thematic tally with the Ashlamata for the 3rd week of Nahamu.

⁸⁹ ἀγριέλαιος *agrielaïos* – **Meaning:** the meaning of this word intimates the selection of branches from another "Olive Tree." Here it must be noted that Hakham Shaul is NOT speaking of a foreign species of plant. (Cf. M. Kilyaim 1:7) Here his intention must be that he is speaking to Israelites who are also olive trees (possessing the Nefesh Yehudi) but had become wild. The verse as it reads in Greek is impossible. We never graft an "uncultivated" branch into a "cultivated" tree. Therefore, we must turn to the Oral Torah and see that the "wild olive" are branches from a grove that has been left uncultivated. In this case the owner of the grove may choose to select branches from the "uncultivated" trees as a means of making the trees of his cultivated grove more productive. No other species would benefit from being grafted into the olive tree.

Mishnah Kalyim 1:7. “One kind of tree may not be grafted on to another kind, nor one kind of vegetable on to another kind, nor a tree on to a vegetable, nor a vegetable on to a tree. R. Judah permits [the grafting of] a vegetable on to a tree.”

While we do not have a direct verbal connection to Vayikra (Leviticus) 19:23-25 we do have similar ideas conjoined in our pericope. The Greek word for Hebrew - *orlah* is περιύστημι *periüstēmi* meaning to “stand around.” However, the truest understanding in the present pericope means to “keep away.” We would then say that we leave the fruit of its branches uncultivated. We might also note that the tree itself need not be left alone. It is the “branches” that must not be “cultivated.”

⁹⁰ John 4:22 "You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews."

"some of the non-fruit-bearing Branches were pruned away so that I might be grafted in?"⁹¹ You are correct they were pruned away because of their fruitlessness,⁹² but you were made to **stand** by your faithful obedience.⁹³ Do not be **conceited**,⁹⁴ but fear, for if God did not spare the original branches, He will not spare you, either. Behold then the loving-kindness and strictness⁹⁵ of God; to those who fell, strictness, but to you, God's loving-kindness, if you continue in His loving-kindness; otherwise you also will be cut off.⁹⁶ And they if they cease to continue in their disobedience, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. For if you were cut off from what is by nature an uncultivated olive tree, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these who are the original branches be grafted into their own olive tree?

¶ So that you will not see yourself as having attained wisdom (Hokhmah),⁹⁷ **brothers**,⁹⁸ I want you to understand this mystery;⁹⁹ some¹⁰⁰ of Yisrael lack the ability to understand the mystery of the **Gentiles**¹⁰¹ (with the Nefesh Yehudi), and how their full (chosen) number will come in.

⁹¹ ἐγκεντρίζω - *egkentrizō* is cross-linguistically related to the Hebrew word כָּטַע - *qeteb*, meaning to "cut off." See ἐκκόπτω also below. Interestingly the idea of being "grafted in" also means to be "cut off." What Hakham Shaul is saying here is that to be "grafted into" the B'ne Yisrael, one must be "cut off" from his previous life as a Gentile.

⁹² Unfaithfulness to produce fruit

⁹³ The ability to "stand" is because the Gentile (with the nefesh Yehudi) is made to stand by a Hakham. Thus, we say that he stands in faithful obedience to G-d and his Torah Teacher.

⁹⁴ "High" – minded. Verbal connection to D'barim 11:30

⁹⁵ Here ἀποτομία means to be dealt with harshly in the sense of strict Din (justice).

⁹⁶ ἐκκόπτω relates to the Hebrew word "karet" to be "cut off."

ἐκκόπτω fut. ἐκκόψω; 1aor. ἐξέκοψα; 2aor. pass. ἐξεκόπην; 2fut. pass. ἐκκοπήσομαι; literally, of a tree *cut down* (MT 3.10); of a branch *cut off*; used metaphorically in [Rom 11:22](#), [Rom 11:24](#); of a hand *cut off* (MT 5.30); figuratively, of removing the opportunity for something *eliminate, do away with, remove* (2C 11.12) Friberg, Timothy, Barbara Friberg, and Neva F Miller. *Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament*. Victoria, B.C.: Trafford, 2005. (see entry ἐκκόπτω)

⁹⁷ Hakham Shaul can be connection the idea of "mystery" (μυστήριον – *mustērion*), with wisdom (φρόνιμος – *phronimos*). While φρόνιμος can and does mean "wisdom" the use of φρόνιμος makes us conclude that Hakham Shaul's audience is still very elementary in their spiritual education. However, it would seem evident that they believe that they are spiritually superior to the B'ne Yisrael. Hakham Shaul shows that "all Yisrael" (πᾶς Ἰσραήλ) will have their part in the Olam HaBa, but this is not necessarily true of Gentiles. Hakham Shaul's φρόνιμος "wisdom" here is not a "prophetic" wisdom per se. His wisdom is from his Hakham and the Tanakh. As he watches the Torah Sederim unfold, he gradually sees the outcome of events that will introduce the Y'mot HaMashiach.

⁹⁸ Verbal connection to D'barim 13:6 (brothers)

⁹⁹ The "secret" – "Mystery" refers to the So'od understanding of Messiah. However, this "secret" – "Mystery" is the decision of G-d concerning Messiah, the Jewish people and the Gentiles and how the "Kingdom/Governance" of G-d would play out in history. Μυστήριον – *mustērion*, from a derivative of μύω *muō* (to shut the mouth). This is a perfect description of So'od. So'od is not "revealed" by words. The "revelation" is in what is not said. **Abot 1:7** Simeon his son says, "All my life I grew up among the sages, and I found nothing better for a person [the body] than silence. Which Shimon is this? Herford argues that the usual reading of this text would cause us to believe that the Shimon is the son of Gamaliel. However, Herford sees problems. His suggestion is that the Shimon mentioned here is the Son of Hillel, Shimon ben Hillel, rather than Shimon ben Gamaliel. Herford, R. T. (1945). *The Ethics of the Talmud, Sayings of the Fathers, Pirke Aboth, Text, Complete Translation and Commentaries*. New York: Schochen Books.

¹⁰⁰ ἀπὸ μέρους – *apo meros* a portion as we have translated "some" to denote that it does not mean that all Yisrael have "hardened hearts." Πῶρωςις, "obtuseness of mental discernment, dulled perception:" Thayer, Joseph, and James Strong. *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Coded with Strong's Concordance Numbers*. Edinburgh: Hendrickson Publishers, 1995. p. 559

¹⁰¹ Verbal connection to D'barim 12:29 and Isa 54:3 Nations or Gentiles

All Israelites¹⁰² have a share in the world to **come**, as it is said, "Your people also will be all righteous/generous, they will inherit the land forever; **the branch of my planting**, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified" (m. San 10:1 - Is. 60:21).

And these are the ones who have no portion in the world to come:

- (1) He who says, **the resurrection of the dead is a teaching, which does not derive from the Torah**,
- (2) and the Torah does not come from Heaven; and
- (3) An Epicurean. R. Aqiba says, "Also: He who reads in heretical books,

The Redeemer will come to Tzion, and to those in Ya'aqob (Jacob) who **repent from transgression." This is the LORD's declaration. "As for Me, this is My covenant with them," says the LORD: "My Spirit who is on you, and My words that I have put in your mouth, will not depart from your mouth, or from the mouth of your children, or from the mouth of your children's children, from now on and forever," says the LORD. (Isa 59:20-21) They are opposed to the Mesorah, enemies of God, which is to your advantage, but regarding the election, they are the beloved because of the **patriarchs**, since God's gracious gifts and calling are irrevocable. You once disobeyed God, but now have an opportunity to experience God's loving-kindness, because of their disobedience, because of the loving-kindness shown to you they also may now be shown loving-kindness. For God has enclosed all in disobedience, so that He may have mercy on all.**

Nazarean Codicil to be read in conjunction with the following Torah Seder

| | | |
|------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|
| *Num 23.10-25.9 | Ps 104.13-26 | Isa 49.23-25, 50.4-10 |
| Mordecai 11:1-14 | Luqas 19:28-44; 13.1-9 | Romans 11.17-32 |

COMMENTARY TO HAKHAM TSEFET'S SCHOOL OF PESHAT

INTRODUCTION

In the past, we have discussed those difficulties that Hakham Tsefet would have in creating his Mesorah of Yeshua in our Torah Focus class.¹⁰³ Hakham Tsefet would have to marry his text with all the Torah readings for the week through some sort of verbal or thematic connection. However, he would not only need to marry all the textual connections, he would have to tell the story of Yeshua and present us with Yeshua's Mesorah at the same time. We have also discussed this difficulty some time ago in our lesson on "writing the Nazarean Codicil."¹⁰⁴ We will not

¹⁰² Πᾶς Ἰσραὴλ all Israel. This phrase exists in the same basic form in 148 places in the Tanakh. Here the phrase does not refer to only the "remnant." This phrase as Fitzmyer has it is diachronic relating to every generation of the Jewish people. Thus we could read the phrase to mean that "all Yisrael(ites)," "the chosen" and "the others" in every generation will have their part in the Olam HaBa. Fitzmyer, Joseph A. *Romans: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008. p. 623

(4) Hebraizing: πᾶς Ἰσραὴλ R 11:26 'the whole of Israel' - Blass, F., Debrunner, A., & Funk, R. W. (1961). *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and other early Christian literature*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. p. 143

See also T. Benj. 10:11 If you therefore, my children, walk in holiness according to the commandments of the LORD, you will again dwell securely with me, and all Israel will be gathered to the LORD.

¹⁰³ See [Meet the Rabbis Class #11](#)

¹⁰⁴ See <http://torahfocus.com/2010/11/05/tnl-live-video-writing-and-interpreting-the-nazarene-codicil/> and <http://torahfocus.com/2010/11/04/tnl-writing-the-nazarene-codicil-cont-2/>

rehearse all of these thoughts here. We will only take the time to note Hakham Tsefet's genius in the marriage of all these components.

BETH PAGAH

Beth Pagah (בית־פגה) is vital to story of our pericope. Yeshua and his talmidim come to the outskirts of Yerushalayim. The town Beth Pagah (בית־פגה) means House of the unripe fig. Here the genius of Hakham Tsefet connects with the idea of what is ripe and what is not ripe. Beth Pagah and Beth Teana (Bethany) are both related to places like "Zophim" and "Pisgah".¹⁰⁵

B'Midbar 13:20. What is the soil like is it fat or lean? Are there any trees in it or not? You will be courageous and take from the fruit of the land." It was the season when the first grapes begin to ripen.

Targum Pseudo Yonaton B'Midbar 13:20. and what the reputation of the land, whether its productions are rich or poor, and the trees of it fruitful or not. And do valiantly and bring back some of the fruit of the land. And the day on which they went was the nineteenth of the month of Sivan, (about) the days of the first grapes.

PESHAT HERMENEUTICS

Rule #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.

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

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

The above Hermeneutic rules allow us to look beyond the surface of Hakham Tsefet's text to try to determine what he was thinking. Here we can draw the analogy between the faithful and the unfaithful of our Torah Seder. The faithful talmidim demonstrate. Hakham Tsefet contrasts two groups through the word "unripe" in Pagah (פגה).

Songs 2:13 The fig tree has **early ripened figs**¹⁰⁶, And the vines in blossom have given forth their fragrance. Arise, my darling, my beautiful one, And come along!

Because both the Torah Seder and Hakham Tsefet are pointing out that we are either in the time of Counting the Omer or the seven weeks of Nahamu (depending on when the triennial cycle started) we should understand that the Ten (Seven) men of the congregation are in a state of growth, development and maturing. The contrast set for by Hakham Tsefet is between those who implicitly trust in their teacher (Hakham) and those who are rebellious and disqualify themselves from service in the Esnoga. Of the twelve men who went to "spy out the land" only two of them came back with a report that was faithful to the words of their master Moshe and G-d. Why does G-d allow the men of our Torah Seder to go "spy out the land"?

Interestingly Hakham Tsefet picks out two talmidim who are "**immediately**" faithful to the Master's commands. They follow these orders so implicitly that they repeat his exact words when questioned why they are taking the Chamor. We also draw attention to the precise verbal connection of "**send out**" (שלח and ἀποστείλει).¹⁰⁷ Therefore, Hakham Tsefet wants us to look at the contrast between the "**sent ones**" of the Torah Seder and the "**sending**" of his pericope.

¹⁰⁵ B'midbar 23:14 And he took him into the field of Zophim, to the top of Pisgah, and built seven altars, and offered up a bullock and a ram on every altar.

¹⁰⁶ פגגה (TWOT 803a) Meaning: *an early fig* (or unripened).

¹⁰⁷ See B'midbar 24:12

IMMEDIATELY

The Markan text frequently gives way to the Greek expression, εὐθύς – *euthus*¹⁰⁸ usually translated “**immediately**” or “straightway.” This phrase is used forty-three times in this account of the Master’s Mesorah. Εὐθύς – *euthus* is a multifaceted word. It carries the connotation of being straight. However, we must not lose sight of the fact that it also carries a sense of immediacy and urgency. In brief, εὐθύς – *euthus* bears the weight of **moral urgency**. **This moral urgency is demonstrative of those who obey and then hear.** Acceptance of the Torah and Oral Torah is not conditional. When we hear we MUST obey with immediate moral acceptance and urgency.

Each time Hakham Tsefet uses the word “**immediately**” he makes use of the Greek expression εὐθύς – *euthus* which, connotes a reflection on the opening words of the Prophetic refrain make “straight” His “ways” as found in Mark 1:3. In fact, Mark 1:3 cites Yeshayahu 40:3.

Mk 1:3 THE VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS, 'MAKE READY THE WAY OF THE LORD, MAKE HIS PATHS **STRAIGHT** (εὐθείας - *euthusia*).'"

Isa 40:3 φωνὴ βοῶντος ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ ἐτοιμάσατε τὴν ὁδὸν κυρίου εὐθείας ποιεῖτε τὰς τρίβους τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν

Therefore, each use of εὐθύς – *euthus* in the Markan text connotes reflection of its prophetic use as a moral imperative of urgency¹⁰⁹. Hakham Tsefet’s use of εὐθύς – *euthus* in the opening chapters of the Markan text demonstrates events happening in accordance with the Divine will of G-d.

In a manner of speaking, we can see that each use of the Greek expression εὐθύς – *euthus* demonstrates a measure of tikun (restoration). Mark 1:12 “**immediately**” (straightway) drives Yeshua into the wilderness to be tested by the adversary for forty days¹¹⁰. Herein is the tikun (restoration) for the testings of the B’ne Yisrael in the wilderness for forty years.

Mark 1:18 reads, And “**immediately**” they left their nets and followed after him. Yeshua’s talmidim, become “fishers of live men” lost in the Babylonian exile, also making tikun (reparation) for their sin of idolatry. In the pericope of Mark 1:18, we see the word “immediately” as it applies to the spirit (*shadé* – demon) of uncleanness departing from the vessel it inhabited. The immediate exorcism of the unclean spirit makes tikun (reparation) for the spirit of idolatry, which had permeated the Galil in antiquity. Consequently, we see that εὐθύς – *euthus* **immediately** – straightway is a moral imperative of urgency and tikun.

Note the Analytical lexicon of the Greek New Testament entry for εὐθύς – *euthus* reads...

εὐθύς, εἶα, ὕ, gen. ἕως *straight*; (1) literally, of a roadway *straight* (AC 9.11); metaphorically, of moral and spiritual preparation for Jesus’ appearing as Messiah εὐθείας τρίβους ποιεῖν **literally** *make straight paths*, i.e. *change behavior* (MT 3.3); substantially (LU 3.5); figuratively, of moral integrity *upright, right, correct* (AC 8.21); (2) idiomatically εὐθεῖα ὁδός literally *straight road*, i.e. *correct behavior, right way* (2P 2.15); (3) neuter singular

¹⁰⁸ εὐθύς, εἶα, ὕ, gen. ἕως *straight*; (1) literally, of a roadway *straight* (AC 9.11); metaphorically, of moral and spiritual preparation for Jesus’ appearing as Messiah εὐθείας τρίβους ποιεῖν **literally** *make straight paths*, i.e. *change behavior* (MT 3.3); substantially (LU 3.5); figuratively, of moral integrity *upright, right, correct* (AC 8.21); (2) idiomatically εὐθεῖα ὁδός literally *straight road*, i.e. *correct behavior, right way* (2P 2.15); (3) neuter singular εὐθύ (and masculine singular εὐθύς) as an adverb *immediately, right away, at once* (MT 3.16); inferentially, of the immediately following event in a sequence *next* (MK 1.21); *right after that, then* (MK 1.30). Friberg, T., Friberg, B., & Miller, N. F. (2000). *Vol. 4: Analytical lexicon of the Greek New Testament*. Baker’s Greek New Testament library. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books. p.178

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Maharal of Prague, Rabbi Yehuda Loewe, explains that the number 40 always means cataclysmic change and new creation.

εὐθύ (and masculine singular εὐθύς) as an adverb *immediately, right away, at once* (MT 3.16); inferentially, of the immediately following event in a sequence *next* (MK 1.21); *right after that, then* (MK 1.30).¹¹¹

By using εὐθύς – *euthus* Hakham Tsefet is “signalling a larger irony by which, in spite of all appearances, G-d’s plan is going straight.”¹¹²

ישׁי- STRAIGHT

Εὐθύς – *euthus* is best translated by the Hebrew word ישׁי. This word is associated with the Hebrew title for Yisrael – Yeshurun (those who go straight). ישׁי and εὐθύς – *euthus* captures the true character and nature of the Jewish people walking out the Torah.

Gen 15:4 And it happened that **immediately – straightway** the voice of the LORD spoke to him saying, “This one will not be your heir” ...

The Mishnah in Abot teaches us the importance of immediate moral conduct.

m. Aboth 2:1 I A Rabbi says, “**What is the straight path which a person should choose for himself?** Whatever is an ornament to the one who follows it, and an ornament in the view of others. “**Be meticulous in a small religious duty as in a large one**, for you do not know what sort of reward is coming for any of the various religious duties. “And reckon with the loss [required] in carrying out a religious duty against the reward for doing it, “and the reward for committing a transgression against the loss for doing it. “And keep your eye on three things, so you will not come into the clutches of transgression: “Know what is above you: “(1) An eye which sees, and (2) an ear which hears, and (3) all your actions are written down in a book.”¹¹³

m. Aboth 4:2 Ben Azzai says, “**Run after the most minor religious duty as after the most important, and flee from transgression.**” “For doing one religious duty draws in its wake doing yet another, and doing one transgression draws in its wake doing yet another. “For the reward of doing a religious duty is a religious duty, and the reward of doing a transgression is a transgression.”¹¹⁴

COMMENTARY TO HAKHAM TSEFET’S SCHOOL OF PESHAT

PESHAT HERMENEUTIC RULE #6

The 6th Peshat hermeneutic rule states, **Ka-yoẓe bo mi-maḳom aḥer**: Similarity in content to another Scriptural passage.

This hermeneutic rule will allow us to delve further into our pericope’s meaning. Because the content is similar through verbal connection, we can make a connection between the Torah Seder and the Pericope of Mordechai.

Mar 11:13 And seeing a **fig tree** from a distance **having leaves**, he went toward it, if perhaps he would find anything on it. And coming on (to) it, he found **nothing except leaves**, for it was not yet the season of figs.

¹¹¹ Friberg, T., Friberg, B., & Miller, N. F. (2000). *Vol. 4: Analytical lexicon of the Greek New Testament*. Baker's Greek New Testament library. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books. p.178

¹¹² Sabin, M. N. (2006). *The Gospel According to Mark*. Collegeville, MIN: Liturgical Press. pp. 11– 12

¹¹³ Neusner, J. (1988). *The Mishnah: A new translation*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press. p. 675

¹¹⁴ Ibid p. 682

Our Torah Seder looks at a group of rebellious individuals who would defy their leader and G-d. It is interesting that Hakham Tsefet should use a fig leaf analogy to represent those who defy G-d. Here we draw analogous comparison between Adam HaRishon and the men of our Torah Seder.

Gen 3:6-7 And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat; and she gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat. And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig-leaves together and made themselves girdles. And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden toward the cool of the day; and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden. ^(JPS)

The fig leaves sewed together were supposed to hide the sin of rebellion, which Adam and Chavah committed against G-d. The fear experienced by Adam and Chavah is seen by implication. They “hid” and cover their naked bodies with fig leaves to cover their sin. We would also opine that it is impossible for a physical object to cover a spiritual condition. The sin of rebellion contaminates the soul. The men of our Torah Seder have bathed in rebellion so long that their souls are tainted. It is no longer possible to cover or hide their sin. Therefore, the sin of Adam and Chavah is that of attempting to please G-d through human means.

There is no “redemption and atonement” apart from the gift of G-d, i.e. the Torah. Redemption and atonement cannot be produced without obedience to the “Oracles of G-d” i.e. The Oral Torah. When we read of the “works of the Torah/Nomos,” we need some clarity as to what “works” are being discussed. The proper way to understand the phrase “works” in the present conversation on Adam and Chavah’s covering themselves with “fig leaves” is, as we have stated “human attempts to please God.” If we accept that, no human works devoid of the Torah can please G-d we have a perfect understanding of Hakham Shaul’s intention in the Igeret to the Romans below. In other words, when we hermeneutically understand these words aright, we understand that we must join G-d’s gift of the Torah with the idea of “being made whole” (redemption). Works that men contrive or imagine apart from the Torah can NEVER produce “redemption,” bring a man to “spiritual wholeness” or bring us into connection with G-d.

Adam and Chavah covered themselves with “fig leaves,” why?

This must have sparked Hakham Tsefet’s memory of Yeshua and the fig tree. Looking at the analogy of Adam and Chavah we see that sin is related to the fig tree.

Berakhot 40a R. Meir holds that the tree of which Adam ate was the vine, since the thing that most causes wailing to a man is wine, as it says, And he drank of the wine and was drunken.¹¹⁵ **R. Nehemiah says it was the fig tree, so that they repaired their misdeed with the instrument of it, as it says, And they sewed fig leaves together.**¹¹⁶

The fig leaves that covered their body were to rectify the sin of rebellion. Here we will draw a Prophetic analogy. The covering of fig leaves was because of fear. Adam and Chavah knew they were “naked.” Their sin was exposed.

Mic 4:4 Each of them will sit under his vine And under his fig tree, With no one to make them afraid, For the mouth of the LORD of hosts has spoken.

The cure for the bite of a viper is often found in the poison. This simple logic tells us that the fig is analogous of peace and the Messianic era.

¹¹⁵ Gen. IX, 21. The reference is to Noah.

¹¹⁶ Ibid. III, 7.

Peshat Hermeneutic rule #7 states, **Dabar ha-lamed me-'inyano**: Interpretation deduced from the context.

The men who scouted Eretz Yisreal and brought back a slanderous report sinned by slander against G-d. We are taught that these men would have no part of the Olam HaBa. We must also conclude that they would have no part in the Messianic age.

Sanhedrin 10:1 All Israelites have a share in the world to come as it is said, Your people also will be all righteous/generous, they will inherit the land forever; the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified (Is. 60:21). And these are the ones who have no portion in the world to come: He who says, the resurrection of the dead is a teaching which does not derive from the Torah, and the Torah does not come from Heaven; and an Epicurean. R. Aqiba says, "Also: He who reads in heretical books, "and he who whispers over a wound and says, *I will put none of the diseases upon you which I have put on the Egyptians, for I am the Lord who heals you* (Ex. 15:26)." Abba Saul says, "Also: he who pronounces the divine Name as it is spelled out."

Note that the plagues of Egypt are mentioned.

Sanhedrin 10:3 ...The spies have no portion in the world to come, as it is said, *Even those men who brought up an evil report of the land died by the plague before the Lord* (Num. 14:37)—*Died*—in this world. *By the plague*—in the world to come.

The Mishnah draws a parallel from within itself¹¹⁷ and the Torah demonstrating that the plague is an alternative expression for not being able to take part in the Olam HaBa and the Messianic era.¹¹⁸

Therefore, we must deduce that the "plague" is related to the idea of not having a part in the Olam HaBa. If we look at Hakham Tsefet's fig tree, we will see that it too is "plagued" and not able to produce. Yeshua tells the tree that it would not produce for anyone in this present age.

The Prophet Yermi'yahu sees the fig tree as a picture of destruction. The foreign nations would come to plunder Yisrael **eating all the fruit of the vine and its figs**.¹¹⁹

The Prophet Habakuk in his prayer sees the fig tree as a sign of judgment and possibly the harbinger of Messiah.

Hab 3:17 For though the **fig tree will not blossom**, neither will fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive will fail, and the fields will yield no food; the flock will be cut off from the fold, and there will be no herd in the stalls; ^(JPS)

When we unite the Tosefta of Luqas and the Peshat of Hakham Tsefet, we note that Yeshua makes a plea for Teshuba. This great plea in the Tosefta is made three times. The first two are found in the word "repent." the third is in the analogy of the fig tree. The message is clear. If you do not repent from evil practices, you will have no part in the Olam HaBa. Who is the gardener in the present Tosefta? Is he not the First Parnas/Pastor who leans towards the side of Chesed?

¹¹⁷ The Mishnah in Sanhedrin 10:1 tells us that the Egyptians will not have a part in the olam haba. It connects Egypt with the plagues. The plague mentioned in 10:3 connects with the plague of 10:1 and deduces that the spies who died by plague would not have their part in the world to come.

¹¹⁸ We deduce by logic that if a person will not have a part in the world to come this would also exclude him from the Messianic era.

¹¹⁹ Cf. Yermiyahu 5:15-16; 8:13; Hos 2:12 (2;14); Hab 3:17

COMMENTARY TO HAKHAM SHAUL'S SCHOOL OF REMES

THEMATIC CONNECTIONS

From the present materials, we can now determine which “branches” of Judaism were being pruned away. The number of “Judaisms” alive during the first century is a matter of debate. History has shown that some of those branches all but disappeared. However, some of them have amazingly resurfaced in our present time. These “branches” allegorically speaking have brought what would seem to be irreparable damage to the Olive Tree, i.e. Judaism. When the horticulturist has to look at the health of the tree when attending to its care he must determine what branches are producing fruit and which are not. He will often discover that the tree has dead limbs or limbs that do not produce fruit. The worse scenario is the latter. The nonproductive branch steals necessary resources from the tree. This can be seen allegorically if we look at the priesthood that Hakham Tsefet and Hakham Shaul were witnessing in their day. The Tz'dukim, a branch of Judaism per se, deprived the Jewish people of vital resources. In reviewing all the damage that was done by these “priests” we intimate that they robbed the Jewish people of the First Century of the opportunity to usher in the days of Messiah.

What we must remember and learn from Hakham Shaul's pericope this week gives way to the truth unexplained by many “false-branches” who, like the Tz'dukim would drain the Jewish community of its livelihood. **A branch grafted into the Olive tree cannot be from another species!** Therefore, we are not speaking of just any “wild” branch grafted into the Olive Tree (Orthodox Judaism). Consequently, the “wild” olive branch we understood to be an “uncultivated branch.” There are several situations that can be the case in point. However, there are also halakhic issues at hand. First, are the rulings concerning “mixtures” as we have it in the Mishnah, tractates Kilyaim and Orlah. It is evident that the tree that provided the new “branches”¹²⁰ was possibly a tree that remained unattended (uncultivated) for some time or a new tree that was not yet in the state of edible fruit (orlah). These trees are “uncircumcised” (orlah) per se. This is very relevant to our proximity of Shavuot. The so-called “wild olive” is simply an “uncircumcised” branch who when grafted into the stock of the B'ne Yisrael is no longer uncircumcised nor a stranger!

Lev 19:23-25 ¶ 'When you enter the land and plant all kinds of trees for food, then you will count their **fruit as uncircumcised** (orlah). Three years it shall be uncircumcised (orlah) to you; *it will not be eaten.* 'But in the fourth year all its fruit will be holy ("set apart for G-d's service by formal, legal restrictions and limitations."), an offering of praise to the LORD. 'In the fifth year you are to eat of its fruit, that its yield may increase for you; I am the LORD your God.

If we understand this passage correctly, we will see that the fruit of the tree is forbidden until the fifth year. From this we understand that the tree, or at minimum the branches is left uncultivated (uncircumcised). The Greek word περιίστημι - *periistēmi* means to “stand around.” Because it is also the Greek word for circumcise we can note that there is a “cutting around” or perhaps we might interject the idea of being “pruned” and or “pruned away.” Therefore, we note that “cutting away,” “pruning off” and “circumcision” are all related. A Gentile convert must be “cut off” from his previous Gentile world in order to be “grafted into” the stock of the B'ne Yisrael.

But you were made to **stand**¹²¹ **by your faithful obedience:**¹²² As noted above περιίστημι - *periistēmi* means to “stand around.” What we would like to point out is that the later part of this compound word ἵστημι -

¹²⁰ We will posit more than one allegorical solution below. Gentiles with the Nefesh Yehudi

¹²¹ Cf. m. Abot 1:1

¹²² The ability to “stand” is because the Gentile (with the nefesh Yehudi) is made to stand by a Hakham. Thus, we say that he stands in faithful obedience to G-d and his Torah Teacher.

histēmi means to **stand**. Thus, we see that the “pruning away” has a double meaning. Firstly, the branch is pruned away from the parent tree. Secondly, it is “grafted” into the principal tree where it is made **to stand in the fifth year**. The allegorical picture should now begin to appear. The talmid’s master knows that he cannot reap from the soul of his talmid until the fifth year. This is to say that the student must complete four levels of Torah learning before he can begin to serve at the bench.

ALLEGORICAL TREE TRIMMING AND THE TRESS’ HEALTH

The removal of dead limbs and those that do not produce fruit is important to the health of any fruit tree. As such, we can readily understand the allegory that Hakham Shaul is positing. We remove the limbs that deter the productivity of the tree as a normal landowner would. Thus, we note that the allegory fits individual and groups. This is because the tree is often pictured as an allegorical man. This allegory fits both Adam and Yeshua. Firstly, we note that Adam, before he fell was said to have a stature wherein his head reached into the heavens and his feet were planted on the earth. Consequently, the allegory of the tree fits Adam very well. The crown of the tree reaches into the heavens and the trunk, i.e. body spans between the heavens and earth. The feet are the roots and lower trunk fastened to the earth. The branches that raise into the heavens are blown in the wind, or by the Ruach. The reader will take note that the Ruach moving the limbs about is the **voice of the Divine**. We must also interject the understanding that the Hebrew word for “leaf” also means to “ascend.” When Adam and Chavah (Eve) fell due to eating fruit from the wrong branch, they hid themselves in the trees of the Garden. They specifically hid themselves from the Voice of the Divine walking through the Garden to find the (fallen) man among the moving leaves who was now lost in the Garden. Not only was he lost in the Garden he was confused by the fruit from the forbidden branch. With his “branches”¹²³ Adam, before he fell could reach into the Heavens and bring down the heavenly nectar of the Ohr HaGanuz (primordial light). Adam’s sin made him a bare branch, or a branch with no leaves, “ability to ascend.” Therefore, he sewed for himself leaves to appear as if he were a fruit-bearing tree. And to once again be able to ascend and receive the Heavenly Light. The bare limb without leaves left Adam with no way to ascend into the heavens any longer. He possessed no leaves to drink in the Ohr HaGanuz. He now possessed no ability to reach for the heavens as if to reach out to the Oalm HaBa.

Yeshua’s tree on the Gilguleth (which is translated "Place of a Skull") was the place of atonement for many sins of antiquity. Here is the mystical picture of redemption and resurrection. Many fruit bearing trees are deciduous. The allegorical picture of leaves falling off the trees is also awe-inspiring. Deciduous, means to fall off with maturity. The tree appears to die and resurrect in the cycle of spring. The fruit of the tree is also a picture of this truth. The fruit falls to the earth. When a seed has been covered with the appropriate amount of earth the seed will sprout from the earth and begin the process of growth in to a tree of its own. The earth receives the seed stripping away all parts that will allow the seed to sprout. But, the earth not only strips the tree of things that are not necessary, it also invests life into the seed by the declaration of G-d made at creation.

Gen 1:11 Then God said, "Let the earth sprout vegetation: plants yielding seed, *and* fruit trees on the earth **bearing fruit after their kind** with seed in them"; and it was so.

Another way to understand this pericope of Romans is to see it as echoing the blessing that G-d,, most blessed be He bestowed upon our father Abraham, and which states:

Gen 12:3 “And I will **bless (or graft in)** them that bless you, and him that **curses (or blasphemes)** you will I curse; and in you will all the families of the earth/land **be blessed (or grafted in).**”

It is here in this text of Genesis 12:3 that we have the precedent for Hakham Shaul’s words: “**But if some of the**

¹²³ Speaking here in allegory

(non-fruit bearing) **branches were pruned away, you being from an uncultivated olive tree were grafted in among them** (the fruit-bearing branches) **also join fellowship in the fatness of the olive root."**

ALL ISRAELITES HAVE A SHARE IN THE WORLD TO COME!

Two verses from the Tanakh are intimated here. We find the phrase **πᾶς Ἰσραήλ** 148 times in the Tanakh. Here Hakham Shaul uses the diachronic phrase **πᾶς Ἰσραήλ** to mean "the remnant," "the chosen" and "the others" relating to every generation of the Jewish people, showing those from every generation will have their part in the Olam HaBa.

This same phrase is found in the Mishnah and Talmud. The Mishnah, after telling us that all Yisrael will have their part in the Olam HaBa goes on to tell us who will NOT have part in the Olam HaBa. The two key groups for us to mention here are those who do not believe the resurrection is mentioned in the Torah and the Epicureans.

The phrase cited by Hakham Shaul, is an affront to the Tz'dukim (the Sadducees). As such, we can determine that it was already established among the P'rushim (Pharisees) that the Tz'dukim who also embraced epicurean pursuits would not have their part in the Olam HaBa.

Sanders suggests that this phrase "All Yisrael" was penned before 70 c.e.¹²⁴ As such, the P'rushim were trying to make a direct attack on the philosophy of the Tz'dukim. He also believes that Hakham Shaul is trying to show that the Priesthood of the Tz'dukim was invalidated long before 70 c.e. Eppstein takes the Tz'dukim out of office before 60/61 c.e. He also points out that they had actually "excommunicated" themselves as members of the covenant before the temple was destroyed.¹²⁵ Other information seems to suggest that they may have migrated towards Rome near this time.¹²⁶ Consequently, Hakham Shaul refers to them as the "enemies of G-d."¹²⁷ However, it may be that Hakham Shaul is referring to those who will not accept the Mesorah as the enemies of G-d. If this is the case, we would suggest that the opposing group may extend to other groups such as the Shammaites who opposed the Mesorah of Hillel. We will further deal with this below.

THEY ARE OPPOSED TO THE MESORAH, ENEMIES OF GOD

It is general knowledge that there were many factions and opinions on how the Torah was to be "walked" out in personal life during the first century. The P'rushim preserved many of the teachings and opinions of the previous generations. The P'rushim were the fundamental halakhic group of the Second Temple period. Because we know that, there were "many Judaisms"¹²⁸ according to Neusner, we seldom take the time to see how these differing groups were able to dwell together in Eretz Yisrael. We would naturally assume that each group followed the Torah according to their own interpretation. For example, we know that the Tz'dukim opposed the P'rushim and their halakhic views. This is especially true for the Tz'dukim who governed the Temple and its workings.

¹²⁴ Sanders, E. P. *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion*. 1st American ed. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977. pp. 147-152

¹²⁵ Victor Eppstein, *When and How the Sadducees Were Excommunicated*, *Journal of Biblical Literature*
Vol. 85, No. 2 (Jun., 1966), pp. 213-22

¹²⁶ Ibid

¹²⁷ See translation above Rom 11:28

¹²⁸ Neusner, Jacob. *First-Century Judaism in Crisis: Yohanan Ben Zakkai and the Renaissance of Torah*. Augmented ed. New York: Ktav Pub. House, 1982. p. 39

The establishment of halakhic norms was the fruit of Hillel's labors. While Shammai may have played his part in pushing the P'rushim towards the forefront, it was Hillel and his school of thought that established a halakhic norm. The question at hand is, just how much did the other groups accept Hillel's normative halakhah?

Newman in his work "Proximity to Power and Jewish Sectarian Groups of the Ancient Period, A Review of Lifestyle, Values, and Halakhah in the Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, and Qumran" using Rabbinic sources shows that the P'rushim (Pharisees) were, as noted above the group that held the greatest influence over the people in the First Century. Now when we say "the people" we are not just speaking of the "Am HaAretz," the people of Land" i.e. the uneducated Jews. The dominant citizens of Yerushalayim generally accepted their halakhic norms.

Perhaps the clearest demonstration of the contrast between the norm-orientated approach demanding obedience to social norms and the value-orientated position demanding non-compromise with social norms is the story of a conversation between a Sadducee father and his son.¹²⁹ This is the story of a Sadducee son who serves as High Priest at the Temple on the Day of Atonement. When he burned incense, he acted according to the Sadducee tradition of igniting before entry of the Holy of Holies, in contrast to the Pharisaic opinion. After proudly announcing his action, his father reprimanded him saying that even though they have an alternative tradition, they have accepted upon themselves to act according to the Pharisaic tradition. The father expected his son to die soon due to his disobedience.¹³⁰

As he says: "even though we do expound matters as you say, we do not do things in the way in which we expound them. **We obey the words of the Sages" (the Hakhamim).**¹³¹

Newman here shows that the Hakhamim and their halakhic rulings established a normative life for everyone living in Yerushalayim. But, we must assert that this is generally true of all groups that had interaction with each other. Newman also shows that there were those who refused to act according to the normative halakhah of the Hakhamim. This is especially true of the Tz'dukim who governed the Temple.

In other words, it is very likely that even though there were many differing groups there was a halakhic norm established by the Hakhamim.

We must assume that a seceding group (that does not compromise and prefers values over other factors) would determine otherwise, that if a mistake was made it should be discussed and corrected, that absolute truth was more binding than a court's ruling. But, in the Pharisaic world, the court's ruling was more binding than absolute physical truth. This is well expressed in the words of Rabbi Gamaliel to Rabbi Yehoshua: "My Rabbi in wisdom and my pupil in having accepted my words."¹³²

Without making a lengthy commentary on all that Newman has posited, we conclude that the Halakhah of the Hakhamim was far more influential than had been previously believed. And, this shows just how obstinate the Tz'dukim were, who held the Priestly offices.

¹²⁹ The sources on this issue: BT Yoma 19b; Tosefta Yoma 1 (for various versions see next two notes), Yerushalmi Yoma 1, 5 (39b).

¹³⁰ Newman, Hillel, and Ruth M. Ludlam. *Proximity to Power and Jewish Sectarian Groups of the Ancient Period: A Review of Lifestyle, Values, and Halakhah in the Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, and Qumran*. Brill Reference Library of Judaism, v. 25. Leiden ; Boston: Brill, 2006. p. 210

¹³¹ Ibid p. 211

¹³² Ibid p. 215

Now the words of Hakham Shaul make sense. If the Tz'dukim who managed the Priesthood and the Temple were constantly contentious, those who accepted the normative halakhah of the Hakhamim would have considered them rebels and outcasts. To recount the words of Eppstein, they "excommunicated" themselves. We find this very truth applicable today. When the norms of the Hakhamim are not accepted the contentious excommunicate themselves.

It should be evident that not all the P'rushim agreed with every halakhic ruling of their Hakhamim. However, opinions were of no consequence when it came to actual practice. Today everyone seeks the opinion of Rabbi Google and to become self-proclaimed Hakhamim. Eppstein shows us that regardless of opinion exegetically or otherwise, in the end we follow the words of the Hakhamim!¹³³ If we fail to accept this norm, we as noted above are the branches pruned away. Eventually the repentant will be grafted back in. But, those who remain in their rebellious state will be cast into the fire.

During the First Century, two dominant groups wrestled for power and control of the Jewish nation. What may not be evident is that the two powers were wrestling with an age-old problem. The division of the Kingdom began centuries before ending in eventual exile. We must realize that HaShem's plan is eternal and His system of authority has been in place for thousands of years. With each faction, the nation becomes more fractured. We must learn to unify under the authorities established by G-d. Hakham Shaul shows us that we have to become united through being grafted into one tree under the authority of the Hakhamim.

Questions for Understanding and Reflection

1. From all the readings for this week, which verse or verses touched your heart and fired your imagination?
 2. In your opinion what is the prophetic statement for this week?
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-

Blessing After Torah Study

Barúch Atáh Adonai, Elohénu Meléch HaOlám,
Ashér Natán Lánu Torát Emét, V'Chayéi Olám Natá B'Tochénu.
Barúch Atáh Adonái, Notén HaToráh. Amen!
Blessed is Ha-Shem our God, King of the universe,
Who has given us a teaching of truth, implanting within us eternal life.
Blessed is Ha-Shem, Giver of the Torah. Amen!

"Now unto Him who is able to preserve you faultless, and spotless, and to establish you without a blemish, before His majesty, with joy, [namely,] the only one God, our Deliverer, by means of Yeshua the Messiah our Master, be praise, and dominion, and honor, and majesty, both now and in all ages. Amen!"

¹³³ Victor Eppstein, *When and How the Sadducees Were Excommunicated*, Journal of Biblical Literature, Vol. 85, No. 2 (Jun., 1966), pp. 213-22

Saturday Evening April 28, 2018
Evening: Counting of the Omer Day 28

Evening Counting of the Omer Day 28
Then read the following:

| Day of the Omer | Ministry | Date | Ephesians | Attributes |
|-----------------|-------------------------------|---------|-----------|---------------------------------|
| 28 | Parnas 1/Moreh ¹³⁴ | Iyar 13 | 4:29 | Confidence united with humility |

Ephesians 4:29 Let not any of your former speech¹³⁵ come out of your mouth,¹³⁶ but speak only what is good to building up in showing favor,¹³⁷ that it may only show God's loving-kindness to the hearers.

Sunday Evening April 29, 2018
Evening: Counting of the Omer Day 29

Evening Counting of the Omer Day 29
Then read the following:

| Day of the Omer | Ministry | Date | Ephesians | Attributes |
|-----------------|---------------------------------|---------|-----------|---------------------------------------|
| 29 | Parnas 2/Masoret ¹³⁸ | Iyar 14 | 4:30 | Sincerity united with Loving-kindness |

Ephesians 4:30 And do not frustrate the Nefesh Yehudi¹³⁹ from God, by whom you are sealed for the

¹³⁴ **Moreh** = Hebrew for School Teacher.

¹³⁵ **σαπρός** – *sapros* clearly means “corrupt,” with regard to speech etc. However, what most scholars overlook is the fact that those addressed are the Gentile converts. Therefore, we see that Hakham Shaul is telling them that they cannot talk as they used to talk. Nor can they speak in any degrading manner as members of the Congregation.

¹³⁶ The teachings of the Moreh united with the 1st Parnas train the Gentile in how to speak within the Congregation. The Gentile proselyte needs to learn from the Moreh and the Parnas the appropriate manner of speech. He cannot talk or use the vocabulary of the past. Likewise, when the proselyte learns the language of the Torah/Mesorah his perspective changes so that he is a member that edifies the Congregation. Furthermore, the Gentile converts cannot offer any degrading communication towards the Jewish people since he has joined himself to the Community of G-d's elect.

¹³⁷ Thielman, F. (2010). *Ephesians*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic. p. 317

¹³⁸ Masoret = Hebrew for Enforcer of the Mesorah (traditions), and functions as the President of the Congregation, Chief Pastor of the congregation and also as Catechist (i.e. teacher of converts together with the Moreh (School Teacher).

¹³⁹ Monotheistic vocabulary will not allow us to translate πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον in the traditional sense as “Holy Spirit” referring to the “Spirit” as if it were a member of polytheistic trinitarianism. The context here clearly demands that translation as the Nefesh Yehudi, the (Jewish) Soul/spirit from the heavens. Therefore, the passage as a whole speaks of the conversion process whereby the Gentile Convert is “sealed.” The general covenantal seal for Gentile men as converts is circumcision. Therefore, the “seal” proving that one is in possession of the Nefesh Yehudi is circumcision. Thielman notes the similarity of vocabulary with Yesha'yahu (Isaiah) 63:9-10. Because the vocabulary is only partially synonymous, we can determine that the “Holy Spirit” of those passages is the “Divine Agent” and not an aspect of “Deity.” The Yesha'yahu passages show that the “Holy Spirit” is the Divine “messenger” who was to go before the B'ne Yisrael (Shemot 23:23). Thielman, F. (2010). *Ephesians*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic. p. 317

day of redemption.¹⁴⁰

Monday Evening April 30, 2018
Evening: Counting of the Omer Day 30

Evening Counting of the Omer Day 30
Then read the following:

| Day of the Omer | Ministry | Date | Ephesians | Attributes |
|-----------------|-----------------|---------|-----------|---------------------------------------|
| 30 | Parnas 2/Chazan | Iyar 15 | 4:30 | Sincerity united with Reverential Awe |

Ephesians 4:30 Let all every form of outburst of resentment¹⁴¹ and anger¹⁴² and verbal abuse and slander be put away from you, with all malice.¹⁴³ And be kind to one another,¹⁴⁴ compassionate, being gracious to one another, just as God for Messiah's sake was gracious to you.

Tuesday Evening May 01, 2018
Evening: Counting of the Omer Day 31

Evening Counting of the Omer Day 31
Then read the following:

| Day of the Omer | Ministry | Date | Ephesians | Attributes |
|-----------------|------------------|---------|-----------|----------------------------------|
| 31 | Parnas 2/Darshan | Iyar 16 | 5:1-2 | Sincerity united with Compassion |

¹⁴⁰ Some sources suggest that the 2nd Pastor is equated with the idea of "surrender." This passage clearly denotes this special quality. The Gentile New/Convert and those who would "build up" the Congregation must learn to surrender to the loving-kindness of G-d.

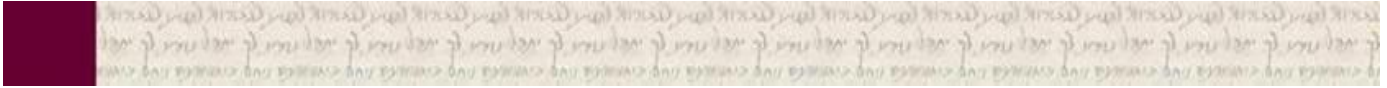
¹⁴¹ This is an internal issue. Therefore, Hakham Shaul is showing that internal issues when externalized are a serious danger to the congregation.

¹⁴² See ὀργή – *orge* above

¹⁴³ The 2nd Parnas and the Chazan join in controlling evil speech, temper tantrums and conflict in the congregation. When these two forces are joined, evil does not stand a chance. Their combined effort is Justice mixed with Justice. The 2nd Parnas is a symbol of surrender as we noted above. However, in the present case the surrender is not on the part of the Congregational Officers. The 2nd Parnas and the Chazan joined together bring all injustice under appropriate control. However, outbursts of anger as applied here are not simple abusive tantrums. The 2nd Parnas and Chazan are dealing with legalism here. ὀργή, is always seen to be protecting something recognized to be right, becomes in the political life of the following period the characteristic and legitimate attitude of the ruler who has to avenge injustice. Because the 2nd Parnas, here described in the Greek word ὀργή – *orge* has a propensity for justice. Therefore, "anger" must not be allowed to progress into sin. That the two officers 2nd Parnas and the Chazan are in office here dealing with this problem shows the absolute mastery of their gift and office. The two officers demand a change in conduct.

¹⁴⁴ The element of growth and transformation now laid out for the converts by the 2nd Parnas with the Chazan who persuade the convert to accept loving-kindness as a lifestyle.

Ephesians 5:1-2 Therefore,¹⁴⁵ because you are recipients of the Nefesh Yehudi, now being the beloved children¹⁴⁶ of God, you must imitate¹⁴⁷ Him.¹⁴⁸ And walk¹⁴⁹ in love, as Messiah our model has loved us, and has given himself as if he had been an offering and a sacrifice¹⁵⁰ to God¹⁵¹ for a sweet smelling savor¹⁵² for us.¹⁵³



Wednesday Evening May 02, 2018 Evening: Counting of the Omer Day 32

Evening: Counting of the Omer Day 32 Then read the following:

¹⁴⁵ **וְכֵן** – *oun* “therefore” connects with 4:1, 17. In both cases, the Darshan is present. Therefore, we can see our “divisions” are actually interconnected with itself.

¹⁴⁶ Acceptance of the Nefesh Yehudi (Jewish Soul) brings the soul into loving relationship with G-d. The recipients are the beloved children of G-d. As His beloved children, we are called to imitate His actions. This verse could also be read. Be beloved imitators of G-d’s love as His children.

¹⁴⁷ Cf. Lev 11:44 “Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am holy.” Note here the similarity between the words of Hakham Shaul and Philo. (Spec. 4:73) ⁷³ for it was a felicitous and true saying of one of the wise men of old, that men never act in a manner more resembling the gods than when they are bestowing benefits; and what can be a greater good than for mortal men to **imitate** the everlasting God? (Virt. 1:168-169) And in another place also the lawgiver gives this precept, which is most becoming and suitable to a rational nature, that men should imitate God to the best of their power, omitting nothing which can possibly contribute to such a similarity as the case admits of. XXIV. Since then you have received strength from a being who is more powerful than you, give others a share of that strength, distributing among them the benefits which you have received yourself, in order that you may **imitate** God by bestowing gifts like his; ¹⁶⁹ for all the gifts of the supreme Ruler are of common advantage to all men; and he gives them to some individuals, not in order that they when they have received them may hide them out of sight, or employ them to the injury of others, but in order that they may bring them into the common stock, and invite all those whom they can find to use and enjoy them with them. Philo. (1993). *The Works of Philo, Complete and Unabridged in one volume*. (N. U. Edition, Ed., & C. Yonge, Trans.) Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers. p. 623, 657

¹⁴⁸ This shows us that the gift of the Nefesh Yehudi is earned. Once the recipient has the Nefesh Yehudi as a gift he must “become” the Nefesh Yehudi.

¹⁴⁹ This is Hakham Shaul’s third use of **περιπατέω** – *peripateo*, meaning, “walk about.” Each instance **περιπατέω** – *peripateo*, “walk” refers to halakhic norms, conduct established in the Torah, and catechistically elucidated in the Oral Torah. Here we have a summons to faithful obedience. The three instances of **περιπατέω** – *peripateo*, show three responses expected of the Congregation. However, the phrase refers to habitual conduct. Therefore, we should read, “make this your habitual conduct,” or “make this your habitual walk.”

¹⁵⁰ The Remes text is drawing on allegory to make its point. The point is to be as though you were an offering before G-d. The more familiar example is Yitzchak. The point here is not whether this is a literal sacrifice, which it is not or allegorical speech. Because it is Remes, it is most certainly allegorical. Secondly, the “lesson” is for us to mimic G-d and if that seems impossible, we have Messiah as a model. We must understand that **θυσία** – *thusia* does not represent a “sin offering.” Therefore, Messiah’s “sacrifice” is not for the sake of atonement in this case. We find the corresponding offering to be a **קָרְבָן** – *qorban* meaning to bring near. Therefore, the summary is not that Messiah is a “sacrifice” but a means of drawing near to G-d. Eadie, J. (2005). *A Commentary on the Greek Text of Paul's Letter to the Ephesians*. (M. G. Rev. W. Young, Ed.) Birmingham, AL: Solid Ground Christian Books. p. 364

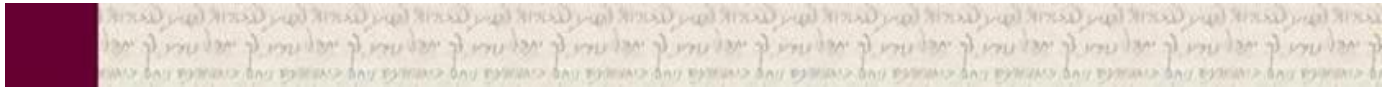
¹⁵¹ The sweet smell, **רֵיחַ** – *reyach* **נִיחֹחַ** – *nichowach* can be read a smell of comfort, or, the fragrance of the comforter. As Edie points out there is no easy way to say **רֵיחַ נִיחֹחַ**. As we have stated above the emphasis is not on a “literal” sacrifice, but rather the moral excellence of Messiah. Eadie, J. (2005). *A Commentary on the Greek Text of Paul's Letter to the Ephesians*. (M. G. Rev. W. Young, Ed.) Birmingham, AL: Solid Ground Christian Books. p. 365

¹⁵² The sweet smelling aroma is the prayers of the Tsadiqim as they recite the liturgical prayers of the Siddur.

¹⁵³ Not found in all manuscripts.

| Day of the Omer | Ministry | Date | Ephesians | Attributes |
|-----------------|-------------------|---------|-----------|----------------------------------|
| 32 | Parnas 2/Parnas 1 | Iyar 17 | 5:3-5 | Sincerity united with Confidence |

Ephesians 5:3-5 For let not fornication¹⁵⁴ and any uncleanness¹⁵⁵ or any kind of greed be once named among you, as these things are not proper for Tsadiqim,¹⁵⁶ neither what is shameful,¹⁵⁷ foolish talking,¹⁵⁸ course jesting, which are not becoming, but rather giving of prayerful thanks.¹⁵⁹ For you already know this, that no fornicator, or unclean person, or greedy one (who is an idolater), has any inheritance in the Kingdom/Governance of Messiah and of God (through the Hakhamim and Bate Din as opposed to human kings).¹⁶⁰



Thursday Evening May 03, 2018
Evening: Counting of the Omer Day 33

Evening Counting of the Omer Day 33
(Semi-festival of Lag BaOmer)
Then read the following:

| Day of the Omer | Ministry | Date | Ephesians | Attributes |
|-----------------|----------|---------|-----------|--|
| 33 | Parnas 2 | Iyar 18 | 5:6-7 | (Glory) - Orange Virtue: Temimut (Sincerity) Ministry: Parnas [Pastor] |

¹⁵⁴ Because our textual base is Remes, we realize that Hakham Shaul is not speaking in "literal" terms. This means that the insinuation is maintaining spiritual fidelity, "faithful obedience" to G-d.

¹⁵⁵ While the Greek word **ἀκαθαρσία** – *akatharsia*, "uncleanness" does have the connotations of sexual impropriety, as noted above the fidelity is spiritual rather than physical.

¹⁵⁶ Cf. Eph. 1:1 above. The conduct of the "Tsadiqim" should be a model of faithful obedience. The idea of the sexual impropriety is that of turning from G-d to self-serving conduct and behavior.

¹⁵⁷ **Αἰσχρότης** – *aischrotes* corresponding to **בְּשֵׁנָה** – *bā-šenā* disgraceful behavior or speech.

¹⁵⁸ Lashon HaRa – the evil tongue. The noise of vulgarity chokes the Spirit/Divine Presence. Because these two Parnasim are connected to the Darshan (Prophecy) they relate to holy speech.

¹⁵⁹ Let it be here noted that this phrase, **εὐχαριστία** – *eucharistia* has nothing to do with the Catholic/Christian notion of eucharist. The true meaning is found in the Talmud and Oral Torah as can be noted here... "It is forbidden man to enjoy anything of this world without benediction," **b. Ber., 35a**. "At good news one says: Blessed be He who is good and who does good. But at bad news one says: Blessed be the judge of truth ... Man has a duty to pronounce a blessing on the bad as he pronounces a blessing on the good," **b. Ber., 54a**. Thanks are forever: "In the future all sacrifices will cease, but the offering of thanks will not cease to all eternity. Similarly all confessions will cease, but the confession of thanks will not cease to all eternity," *Pesikta (de Rab. Kahana)*, collection of homilies 9 (79a). When one senses G-d, whether in Torah study, nature or by any other means, he should say the appropriate blessing. Through this blessing we have made a connection with the Divine.

¹⁶⁰ The mention of the "Governance relates to the ten men of the congregation and our theme for Hakham Shaul's Letter to the Ephesians. The "Governance of Messiah is an expression of the Governance of G-d," through the Hakhamim and Bate Din as opposed to human kings.

The balance of ministry is clear at this point. The 1st Parnas wants to war with every adversary. Where there is union between these two Pastors, they scrutinize their battles carefully. While the 1st Pastor is like the moon in his waxing and waning the 2nd Pastor is consistent and constantly devoted.

Ephesians 5:6-7 Let no man deceive you¹⁶¹ with vain words,¹⁶² for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the children (sons) of disobedience.¹⁶³ Therefore, do not be partakers with them.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶¹ We see the office and ministry of the 2nd Parnas as restrictive. The restriction is against the philosophical vanity of Replacement Theology (philosophy). This is accomplished by true scholarship. Therefore, we see Hakham Shaul's allusion to **Lag B' Omer** the holiday of the Torah Scholar. This officer is often willing to be self-sacrificing as noted above. He sacrifices for the sake of unity and edification. In this venue, he becomes a key builder in the congregation. He will not "sacrifice" for vanities sake. He concedes only for the "cause." However, this persona is the real watchdog of the congregation. He draws his strength from the Chazzan and compassion from the 1st Parnas/Pastor. This Pastor is highly creative with the ability to build and strengthen the congregation, by motivating it with (Prophetic) vision he receives from the Darshan. Were it not for his apprehension of the prophetic vision of the Maggid/Darshan the congregation could be like a dog chasing its tail. It is evident that Hakham Shaul is perfectly aware of the characteristics of this Officer. This can be seen in his warning against the Yetser HaRa/Lashon HaRa.

¹⁶² While there is some debate as to whom "any man" is, we understand this to be the dividing sect of Gentile Philosophers or philosophies. These "philosophies" were designed to replace the truth of the Torah. These "vain philosophies" were the replacement to the Oral Torah. Therefore, blaspheme against the Oral Torah/Mesorah is initiated in the form of a replacement "Oral" presentation of vain philosophy. We note that the "vain philosophy" is considered "empty words." This is because of the Hebrew idea of "Tob" (good) and "Ra" (bad). "Tob" true meaning is that which is beneficial and "Ra" meaning that which is "empty" or "vain." The Torah Oral/Written is a means of accessing the consciousness of G-d. When these "vain philosophies" are propagated they nullify that connection and awareness.

¹⁶³ As noted above the ministry of the 2nd Parnas leans towards the left column. Therefore, we should expect a stern character leaning towards justice and judgment. This is easily seen in the comment "**wrath of God comes upon the children of disobedience.**" This officer is a part of the balancing of the congregation. This officer teaches the congregation not to succumb to the trappings of human philosophy. True strength and reassurance comes from within the G-dly community. Therefore, we see that this officer, as an echo of Hokhmah is an integral part of the assembly. While this officer should be the echo of Binah, he is captivated with the essence of Hokhmah.

¹⁶⁴ Only abstinence from the morass of confusion can one be free. One needs an established halakic norm to truly be free. The trappings of vanity are bondage and detraction from genuine freedom. The 2nd Parnas is the true gate to freedom.

Next Sabbath:

Shabbat: "Pin'chas ben El'a'azar" – Sabbath: "Phinehas, the son of Eleazar"

| Shabbat | Torah Reading: | Weekday Torah Reading: |
|--|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| פינחס בן-אלעזר | | Saturday Afternoon |
| "Pin'chas ben El'a'azar" | Reader 1 – B'Midbar 25:10-18 | Reader 1 – B'Midbar 26:52-54 |
| "Phinehas, the son of Eleazar" | Reader 2 – B'Midbar 26:1-7 | Reader 2 – B'Midbar 26:54-56 |
| "¿Quién puede contar...?" | Reader 3 – B'Midbar 26:8-14 | Reader 3 – B'Midbar 26:52-56 |
| B'Midbar (Num.) 25:10 – 26:51 | Reader 4 – B'Midbar 26:15-22 | |
| Ashlamatah: Mal 2:5-7 + 3:1-6, 10 | Reader 5 – B'Midbar 26:23-34 | Monday and Thursday Mornings |
| | Reader 6 – B'Midbar 26:35-41 | Reader 1 – B'Midbar 26:52-54 |
| Psalms: 104:27-35; 105:1-16 | Reader 7 – B'Midbar 26:42-51 | Reader 2 – B'Midbar 26:54-56 |
| | Maftir – B'Midbar 26:48-51 | Reader 3 – B'Midbar 26:52-56 |
| Mk 11:15-26: Luke 19:45-48; Rm 11:33-36 + 12:1-8; | Mal 2:5-7 + 3:1-6, 10 | |



Hakham Dr. Yosef ben Haggai
Rabbi Dr. Hillel ben David
Rabbi Dr. Eliyahu ben Abraham

The Ten (3 + 7) Men of a Jewish Nazarean Congregation

| Bench of Three Hakhamim (Local Bet Din) | | | HEAVENLIES Or HEAVENLY PLACES |
|--|--|---|--|
| | <p>Keter (Crown) – Colourless Ministry: Invisible Divine Will in the Messiah</p> | | |
| <p>Binah (Understanding) - Gray Virtue: Simchah (Joy) Ministry: 2nd of the bench of three APOSTLE</p> | | <p>Chochmah (Wisdom) - Black Virtue: Emunah (Faithful Obedience) Ministry: Chief Hakham 1st of the bench of three APOSTLE</p> | |
| | <p>Da'at (Knowledge) - White Virtue: Yichud (Unity) Ministry: 3rd of the bench of three APOSTLE</p> | | |
| The Seven Paqidim (Servants at the Bench) | | | EARTHLY Or EARTHLY PLACES |
| <p>Gevurah (Strength/Might) – Scarlet Red Virtue: Yir'ah (Fear of G-d) Ministry: Sheliach [Chazan/Bishop]</p> | | <p>G'dolah / Chessed (Greatness/Mercy) – Royal Blue Virtue: Ahavah (love) Ministry: Masoret [Catechist/Evangelist]</p> | |
| | <p>Tiferet (Beauty) - Yellow Virtue: Rachamim (Compassion) Ministry: Darshan or Magid [Prophet]</p> | | |
| <p>Hod (Glory) - Orange Virtue: Temimut (Sincerity) Ministry: Parnas [Pastor]</p> | | <p>Netzach (Victory) – Emerald Green Virtue: Bitahon (Confidence) Ministry: Parnas [Pastor]</p> | |
| | <p>Yesod (Foundation) - Violet Virtue: Emet (Truth/Honesty) Ministry: Parnas [Pastor] (Female – hidden)</p> | | |
| | <p>Shekhinah / Malkhut (Presence) – Purple Virtue: Humility Ministry: Meturgeman/Moreh/ Zaqen [Teacher/Elder]</p> | | |
| | | | |