

PIRKEI D'REBBI ELIEZER I

פרקי דרבי אליעזר

Translated by
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הקדמה

מראש הישיבה

מורינו הרב יעקב שניידמאן שליט"א

במסכת סנהדרין דף סח. תניא כשחלה רבי אליעזר נכנסו רבי עקיבא וחביריו לבקרו הוא יושב בקינוף שלו והן יושבין בטרקלין שלו ואותו היום ערב שבת היה ונכנס הורקנוס בנו לחלוץ תפלו גער בו ויצא בנוזיפה אמר להן לחביריו כמדומה אני שדעתו של אבא נטרפה אמר להן דעתו ודעת אמו נטרפה היאך מניחין איסור סקילה ועוסקין באיסור שבות כיון שראו חכמים שדעתו מיושבת עליו נכנסו וישבו לפניו מרחוק ארבע אמות אמר להם למה באתם אמרו לו ללמוד תורה באנו אמר להם ועד עכשיו למה לא באתם אמרו לו לא היה לנו פנאי אמר להן תמיה אני אם ימותו מיתת עצמן אמר לו רבי עקיבא שלי מהו אמר לו שלך קשה משלהן נטל שתי זרועותיו והניחן על לבו אמר אוי לכם שתי זרועותיי שהן כשתי ספרי תורה שנגללין הרבה תורה למדתי והרבה תורה לימדתי הרבה תורה למדתי ולא חסרתי מרבתי אפילו ככלב המלקק מן הים הרבה תורה לימדתי ולא חסרוני תלמידי אלא כמכחול בשפופרת ע"כ והנה לשון חסרתי צריך ביאור דהרי בפשוטו אין התלמיד מחסר רבו בלמדו ממנו.

ונראה שיש לפרש מלת חסרון ממש, והיינו שהרב נותן לתלמידו מעצמותו ממש, ובבחינה שמחסר עצמו ליתן לתלמידו ומכ"מ אינו נשאר חסר משום שלעולם יש ברכה שמשלים החסרון. ועיין במדבר פרק כז' (כג) בפרשת פנחס כשמינה משה את יהושע כתיב "ויסמך את ידיו עליו ויצוהו כאשר דבר ה' ביד משה": ופירש רש"י ויסמך את ידיו – בעין יפה יותר ויותר ממה שנצטווה. שהקב"ה אמר לו וסמכת את ירך, והוא עשה בשתי ידיו, ועשאו ככלי מלא וגדוש ומלאו חכמתו בעין יפה: כאשר דבר ה' – אף לענין ההוד נתן מהודו עליו ע"כ. וצריך לבאר ענין זו של סמיכה. דלא מסתבר לומר שעל ידי סמיכה למד יהושע ממשה רבינו כל חכמתו, ועוד הא כבר למד כל התורה ממשה רבינו דהא יהושע היה תלמידו שלא ימוש מתוך האהל. ונראה שאין ענין הסמיכה

למסור לו ידיעות התורה שהיה לו, רק למסור לו כח חכמתו והוא כח נפשי, וכמו שנתן מהודו שהוא דבר רוחני, ועוד נראה מרש"י שהבאנו "ועשאו ככלי מלא וגדוש ומלאו חכמתו", שיש שתי כחות בסמיכה חדא שיכול לעשות תלמידו ככלי קבול, וגם יכול למלא אותו כלי בכח חכמתו. ונראה שאותו כח שהיה למשה רבינו ליתן ליהושע הוא באמת הכח שיש לכל רב ליתן מעצמו לתלמידו. וכמו שמשה רבינו על ידי סמיכתו נתן מחכמתו והודו ליהושע, כן שייך לכל רב ליתן מעצמיותו לתלמידיו.

ולפי"ז נבאר דר"א אמר שקבל מרבו ככלב המלקק מן הים. דכוונתו לא היה על שיעור מה שלמד מרבותיו, רק על כח החכמה והוא כח הנפשי שקיבל. ואמר על עצמו שלא קיבל מרבותיו כמו כלי קבול ממש, והיינו שלא היה ככלי שרבו שפך לתוכו, רק קבל ככלב המלקק, ואמר על תלמידיו שחסרו רק כמכחול בשפופרת, והיינו שלא היו בבחינת כלי כלל ואפילו לא ככלב רק כנוטל במכחול שאין לו בית קבול. ונראה שלא היה יכול לעשום אותם כלים לקבל מפני החרם שהיה עליו. ונראה עוד להסביר בזה מה שאמר ר' אליעזר ששתי ידיו הן כשתי ספרי תורה נגללים והיינו דבמשה רבינו שמסר מעצמיותו ליהושע כתוב שסמך את ידיו היינו שתי ידיו בעין יפה, וכן היה בכח ר"א לסמוך בשתי ידיו על תלמידיו ליתן להם כל התורה כולה.

ובאמת כל א' מישראל אף כשמקבל מחבירו שייך בו בחינת תלמיד מרב, שהרי אמרינן איזהו חכם הלומד מכל אדם ואף בזה אמרינן עשה לך רב דמשמע דאיכא ענין לעשות מכל אדם רב, נמצא דכל אחד המלמד לחבירו יש לו כח להיות רב ולמסור מעצמיותו לחברו, וזה דבר נפלא. השי"ת יתן לנו הסיוע שכולנו נשתמש בכח זה לטובה להחזיק עצמנו בתורה ויראת שמים.

SUMMARY OF RABBI YAAKOV SCHNAIDMAN'S PROLOGUE

The Gemara in Sanhedrin (68a) relates that when Rabbi Eliezer became sick, Rabbi Akivah and his colleagues visited him. . . .

Realizing that Rabbi Eliezer was of sound mind, the Torah scholars entered sitting four *amos* away from him. He asked them, "Why did you come?"

They answered, "We came to learn Torah."

He asked them, "Why didn't you come until now?"

They answered, "We didn't have free time."

He said, "I will be surprised if you die a natural death."

Asked Rabbi Akiva, "What will be my death?"

Answered Rabbi Eliezer, "Your death will be worse than the rest."

Rabbi Eliezer took his two arms and placed them over his heart saying, "Woe to my two arms that are like two rolled up Torah scrolls. I have learned much Torah and I have taught much Torah. Although I learned much Torah from my teachers, I only detracted from their knowledge as much as a dog laps water from the ocean. Although I taught much Torah, my students have only detracted from my knowledge as much as an applicator removes makeup from a tube."

The phrase "I only detracted from their knowledge" needs an explanation, because one who learns from another does not subtract knowledge from the teacher.

Possibly we can explain that Rabbi Eliezer was not referring to the transmission of Torah knowledge, rather he was referring to the transmission of the capacity to acquire Torah. This is a G-d given gift, which is acquired and passed down from teacher to student.

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In fact, the teacher gives of his very essence when he transfers the capacity to acquire Torah to a student. His own capacity is then replenished with the help of heaven.

Moshe our Teacher, gave from his glory and from his capacity to acquire knowledge to Yehoshua, as the verse says, *and you shall give from your glory on him*, and, *He placed his hand on him and commanded him*. Rashi explains that Moshe transferred these qualities to Yehoshua by placing his two hands upon him, like one who fills a utensil to capacity and overflowing. Moshe gave Yehoshua the capacity to be a vessel which can acquire Torah knowledge.

So too, Rabbi Eliezer acquired from his teacher the ability to absorb Torah knowledge and he wanted to impart this to his students. However, he was not on the level of Yehoshuah who was like a vessel formed specifically to receive the teaching of Moshe. Instead his ability to absorb from his teachers was merely like a dog lapping at the ocean. His students were on a lower level; they were only like an applicator, which removes makeup from the tube but is itself not capable of absorbing.

Since Rabbi Eliezer was referring to the divine capability to absorb Torah, he referred to his arms as two Torah Scrolls; just as Moshe conferred on Yehoshua the capacity to absorb the Torah by placing his two hands on him, Rabbi Eliezer wished to place his hands on his students conferring on them this capacity.

One who learns from another, receives not only Torah knowledge, but also this capacity to absorb Torah knowledge. Indeed, our Sages tell us, "Make for yourself a Torah teacher," which can be interpreted to mean that one should absorb from one's teacher this capacity as well.

May Hashem assist us to be able to utilize this capacity to the fullest to acquire Torah and fear of Heaven.

TRANSLATOR'S INTRODUCTION

Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer, first printed in Constantinople in 1514, is a timeless classic that highlights, embellishes and elaborates on the narrative portions of *sefer Bereishis* and *sefer Shemos*.

The author of this highly acclaimed work, is the Tanna Rabbi Eliezer ben Horkenus (Hyrkanus) Hagadol. The *sefer* includes engrossing insights on Creation, Adam and Chavah, Noach, and the lives of the Patriarchs. The eye-opening commentaries, culled from *midrashim* and *aggados*, explain many mystifying episodes and reveal the underlying meaning of puzzling passages in the Torah.

RABBI ELIEZER BEN HORKENUS (HYRCANUS)

The first chapter tells the inspiring story of Rabbi Eliezer's early years. In his youth he was an ignorant farmhand doing menial work. Driven by a passionate thirst for Torah, he set out for Yerushalayim to learn in the great yeshivos. Undaunted by hunger and deprivation he persevered and reached his goal, eventually becoming the foremost disciple of the illustrious Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai, the leading Torah sage at the end of the Second Beis Hamikdash period.

Chapters 3-11 deal with the six days of Creation, shedding new light on the momentous events at the beginning of time. We learn about eight things that were created on the first day, eight things that were created on the second day, and seven things that existed before the world was created, namely: the Torah, Gehinnom, Gan Eden, the Throne of Glory, the Beis Hamikdash, *teshuvah*, and the name of Mashiach.

An essay in connection with the fourth day of Creation explains the complex calculation of the leap-year (intercalation). This knowledge was imparted to Adam, Enosh, Noach, Shem, Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov. The commentary on the fifth day

enumerates the kosher birds and fishes, and the story of Yonah the prophet is related in great detail because it was on a Thursday that Yonah fled from before G-d.

On the sixth day of Creation, G-d conferred with the Torah regarding how man is to be created. Since G-d is the first King of the world, the nine greatest rulers in history—from Nimrod, Nebuchadnezzar, Alexander the Great to King Mashiach—pay homage to G-d, the first King.

Chapters 12-25 cover the time span from Adam to Noach. A beautiful interpretation is given of *Mizmor Shir leyom haShabbos*, [“a psalm, a song for the Shabbos day”] (*Tehillin* 92) which Adam sang in Gan Eden on the Shabbos of Creation.

We learn about the dispute between the schools of Hillel and Shammai as to whether heaven or earth was created first, about the “Confusion of the Tongues” and the Dispersion. We find out that Nimrod took Adam’s garment, and he was killed by Eisav who coveted that garment. Yaakov put it on in order to secure the *berachah* from his father Yitzchak.

Chapters 26-32 offer midrashic commentaries on the ten trials of Avraham, his pursuit of the four mighty kings, G-d’s covenant of *milah*, and the *Akeidah* (the Binding of Yitzchak). We discover that all the parts of ram of the *Akeidah* are preserved for eternity, and that its ashes form the foundation of the golden incense Altar in the Sanctuary of the Beis Hamikdash.

Interspersed among the midrashic themes, a number of relevant *halachos* and customs are discussed, such as the various *minhagim* of Havdalah (ch. 20), the custom of placing the infant boy on the Chair of Eliyahu at a *bris*, and many other laws and customs.

An electrifying commentary at the end of the 30th chapter quotes Rabbi Yishmael’s list of fifteen things the Arab nations will do in time to come, including building a [Moslem] house of worship on the site of the Beis Hamikdash. Citing *Daniel* 2:24, Rabbi Yishmael predicts that the Arab nations will wage three major world-wars to be followed by the coming of Mashiach.

BIUR RADAL

The primary commentary on *Pirkei d'Rabbi Eliezer* is *Biur Radal* by Rabbi David Luria (1798-1855, b. Bychov, district of Mohilev), known as Radal, the acronym of the letters of his name. A follower of the Vilna Gaon, Radal studied under Rabbi Shaul Katzenellenbogen of Vilna and became one of the foremost Torah authorities of his time. A man of an incredible range and depth of knowledge, he was beloved and admired by all for his kindness, humility, and piety.

A prolific author, Radal wrote eighteen important *sefarim*, including a commentary on the Mishnah (Vilna, 1886) and *Or Yakrus* on the *Zohar* in which he proves that Rabbi Shimon bar Yocha'i authored the *Zohar*.

In his running commentary *Biur Radal*, he explains every passage of *Pirkei d'Rabbi Eliezer*. In a lucid style of writing he clarifies every knotty phrase, corrects the numerous copyists' errors, substantiating his emendations by citing parallel sources in the *Midrash*, *Talkut*, *Rabbeinu Bachya*, *Ramban*, *R. Yonasan ben Uziel* and many others. I found *Biur Radal* to be an indispensable aid to understanding this *sefer*.

Pirkei d'Rabbi Eliezer speaks directly to the reader, it stimulates and inspires. Its teachings have enlightened generation after generation. The story of Rabbi Eliezer's spectacular advance from total ignorance to exalted greatness in Torah demonstrates that "Heaven helps a person to pursue the road he chooses to follow" (*Makkos* 10b), proving that everyone has the potential to grow in Torah learning.

It is my sincere hope that this translation will awaken a heightened love of Torah and mitzvos, *lilmod ulelameid lishmor velaasos*, "to learn, teach, safeguard, perform and fulfill all the words of Your Torah."

AVRAHAM YAAKOV FINKEL
Kislev 5769/09

PIRKEI DREBBI ELIEZER I

CHAPTER ONE

THE EARLY YEARS OF RABBI ELIEZER BEN HORKENUS

Once while the laborers of Rabbi Eliezer ben Horkenus' father were plowing fields of soft soil, [Eliezer] was plowing fields of rocky soil. [Despondent over his unfulfilled dream to study Torah, Eliezer] sat down and wept.

"Why are crying?" asked his father. "Are you upset about plowing the rocky fields? If so, plow the easy field."

Despite plowing the easy field, Eliezer sat down and cried.

"Why are you crying?" [Horkenus asked]. "Is it [even difficult] for you to plow the soft field?"

"No, Father."

"Then why are you crying?"

"Because I want to learn Torah."

"You want to learn Torah at twenty-eight years of age? Take a wife, have children, and send them to a Torah school, [and the merit of their Torah studies will be reckoned as your own,]" Horkenus said.

[Deeply depressed,] Eliezer did not eat anything for the next two weeks, until Eliyahu Hanavi of blessed memory appeared to him.

"Son of Horkenus," he said, "why are you crying?"

"Because I want to learn Torah."

"If you want to learn Torah, go to Yerushalayim [and learn] from Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai."

[Eliezer] went to Yerushalayim to learn from Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai. He sat [in the yeshivah] and cried.

“Why are you crying?” [Rabbi Yochanan asked.]

“Because I want to learn Torah.”

“What is your father’s name?”

[Eliezer] did not answer.

“Did you ever learn to recite the Sh’ma, the Shemoneh esrei, and Grace after Meals?”

“No, I never did.”

“Stand up,” Rabbi Yochanan said, “and I will teach you all three [of these fundamental mitzvos.]” Eliezer again broke into tears.

“Son, why are you crying?” Rabbi Yochanan asked.

“Because I want to learn [the entire] Torah.”

Thereupon [Rabbi Yochanan] taught him two halachos each day of the week. [Eliezer] reviewed them, engraving them in his memory and soul.

Eliezer did not eat for eight days. Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai discomfited by the bad odor of his breath, asked him to stand further away. Eliezer cried.

“Why are you crying?” Rabbi Yochanan asked.

“Because you wish me to stand [four ells away from you] as though I were afflicted with boils,” Eliezer replied.

Said Yochanan ben Zakkai, “Son, just as a bad odor emanates from your mouth [because of your desire to learn Torah], so may the scent of the decrees of the Torah emanate from your mouth and rise to heaven.”

“What is your father’s name?” Rabbi Yochanan asked.

“I am the son of Horkenus.”

Rabbi Yochanan exclaimed, “You are the son of one of the most prominent men in the country, yet you did not tell me! I insist that you have dinner with me.”

“I am sorry, Rabbi, but I already ate at my lodging.”

“With whom are you boarding?”

“At the home of Rabbi Yehoshua ben Chananiah and Rabbi Yose Hakohen.”

[Rabbi Yochanan] sent a messenger to ask the two hosts

whether Eliezer had eaten with them. They told [the messenger], “No, [he did not eat.] In fact, he has not eaten anything for eight days!”

Afterwards, Rabbi Yehoshua ben Chananiah and Rabbi Yose Hakohen [personally] told Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai that he has not eaten anything for eight days!

CHAPTER TWO



RABBI ELIEZER BECOMES A GREAT TORAH SCHOLAR

The sons of Horkenus said to their father, “Go to Yerushalayim and disinherit your [runaway] son Eliezer.”

[Horkenus] went to Yerushalayim to disinherit Eliezer, arriving during a festive gathering in honor of Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai. The outstanding personalities in Yisrael, including Ben Tzitzis Hakeses, Nakdimon ben Gurion, and Ben Kalba Savua, were gathered at the banquet.

Why was he called Ben Tzitzis Hakeses? Because his couch (*kis-sei*) was elevated above [the couches] of all the notables of Yerushalayim. Nakdimon ben Gurion [had stored up enough food] to supply three *se’ab* of flour [per day] for each inhabitant of Yerushalayim [had the Roman siege lasted twenty-one years]. Four *kor* of grain could be planted on Kalba Savua’s land, and the walls of his mansion were overlaid with gold.

[The students] told Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai, “Rabbi Eliezer’s father has arrived.”

“Prepare a seat [of honor] for him,” Rabbi Yochanan requested. The seat next to Rabbi Yochanan was assigned to Horkenus.

[Rabbi Yochanan] glanced at Rabbi Eliezer and said, "Please relate some Torah thoughts."

[Rabbi Eliezer] replied, "Rabbi, let me give you an analogy. Just as a cistern cannot hold more water than one puts into it, so too, I cannot relate more Torah wisdom than I received from you."

[Replied Rabbi Yochanan,] "Let me give you a different analogy: Just as a wellspring can yield a boundless flow of fresh water, so too, can you deliver Torah thoughts that exceed [the teachings] given at Sinai. If you are embarrassed [to give a lecture in my presence], I will leave [the *beis midrash*]."

Rabbi Yochanan rose from his seat and went outside. Rabbi Eliezer began his discourse with his face radiating a sun-like brilliance and gleaming with the luminescence of Moshe's face. [It was so bright,] people could not tell whether it was day or night.

Rabbi Yochanan returned and kissed Rabbi Eliezer on his head, saying, "How fortunate are you, Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov, to have offspring like this!"

Horkenus asked, "About whom is he saying this?"

"About your son Eliezer," he was told.

"He did not say it correctly," Horkenus retorted. "He should have [referred to me,] saying, I am fortunate to have such a son."

Rabbi Eliezer sat down and continued his discourse while his father was standing. Seeing his father standing, Rabbi Eliezer was appalled.

"Father, please sit down," he said. "I cannot give a Torah lecture while you are standing!"

"I did not come [to hear your lecture]," Horkenus replied. "In fact, I came to disinherit you. But now, seeing all this glory, I will disinherit your brothers instead, giving their share to you immediately, [so that you need not wait for my demise.]"

Rabbi Eliezer refused the gift, countering. "Why shouldn't I be equal to them?" ["I do not want to derive benefit from my Torah learning."] Had I wished for property, G-d would have given it to me, for it says, *The earth and its fullness, the inhabited land and those who dwell in it, belong to Hashem (Tehillim 24:1)*. Had I desired silver and gold, He would have given it to me, for it says,

Mine is the silver and Mine is the gold—the word of Hashem, Master of Legions (Chaggai 2:8). But I wanted nothing but the Torah, from the Holy One, blessed be He, as it says, Therefore I have declared the fairness of every precept regarding everything! I have hated every path of falsehood” (Tehillim 119:128).

CHAPTER THREE



RABBI ELIEZER'S DISCOURSE

Rabbi Eliezer ben Horkenus opened his discourse with the verse, *Who can express the mighty acts of Hashem, [and who] can make all of His praise heard? (Tehillim 106:2).*¹ No one in the world can express the mighty deeds of the Holy One, blessed be He, or make all His praise be heard. Even the ministering angels can relate only a fraction of His mighty deeds! Although [we cannot comment on G-d's existence before Creation,] we can expound on the great things He performed [after Creation] and will perform in the future, in order to exalt the Name of the Holy One, blessed be He, among the creatures He created in the world, as it says, *Each generation will praise Your deeds to the next (Tehillim 148:4).*

Before the world was created, only the Holy One, blessed be He, and His great Name existed. Then G-d envisioned the creation of the world. He conceived the plan for the world, but it was not

¹ This paragraph, ending with, *Each generation will praise Your deeds to the next (Tehillim 148:4)*, introduces these chapters in which Rabbi Eliezer summarizes his thoughts and states the purpose of his teachings.

able to stand. This is analogous to a king who wishes to build a palace. He cannot begin erecting it unless he makes a blueprint of its foundation, entrances and exits. So too, the Holy One, blessed be He, designed the world, but He was unable to begin until He created *teshuvah*.

SEVEN THINGS CAME INTO BEING BEFORE CREATION

Seven things came into being before the world was created, namely: The Torah, Gehinnom, Gan Eden, the Throne of Glory, the Beis Hamikdash, *teshuvah*, and the name of Mashiach.

How do we know this about the Torah? It says, *Hashem made me at the beginning of His way, before His works of old* (*Mishlei* 8:22). The word *before* implies “before the world was created.”

How do we know this about Gehinnom? It says, *For Hell has been prepared from yesterday* (*Yeshayah* 30:33). *From yesterday* denotes “before the world was created.”

How do we know this about Gan Eden? From the verse, *Hashem G-d planted a Garden in Eden, from before time* (*Bereishis* 2:8). *From before time* means before the world was created.

How do we know this regarding the Throne of Glory? Because it says, *Your Throne is established from of old* (*Tehillim* 93:2). *From of old* signifies “before the world was created.”

How do we know this concerning the Beis Hamikdash? Because it says, *Like the Throne of Glory, exalted from the first* (*Yirmeyah* 17:12). *From the first* means “before the world was created.”

How do we know this pertaining to *teshuvah*? Because the verse, *Before the mountains came into being* (*Tehillim* 90:2), is followed by the verse, *You return man to contrition* (90:3). The word *before* indicates, “before the world was created.”

How do we know this about the name of Mashiach? Because it says, *May his name endure forever, may his name connote mastery as long as the sun endures* (*Tehillim* 72:17), and it says further, *And you, O Beis Lechem—Efrasah—least among the clans of Yehudah. From you one shall come forth to rule Yisrael for Me—one whose ori-*

gin will be from early times, from days of old (*Michah* 5:1). *From days of old* means, “before the world was created.”

Immediately, The Holy One, blessed be He, consulted the Torah, which is called *Tushiah*—wisdom, about creating the world. The Torah replied: “Master of the universe! If a king has no legion nor an encampment [of warriors], over whom does he rule? And without a nation to praise the king, what glory does the king have?” The Master of the universe listened and liked what He heard.

Said the Torah: The Holy One, blessed be He, consulted me about creating the world, for it says [concerning the Torah,] *With me there is counsel and tushiah*—wisdom (*Mishlei* 8:14).

This is the source of the saying of the Sages: “A kingdom without advisers is not a kingdom.” From where [else] do we know this? From the kingdom of David, which had advisers, as it says, *David’s uncle, Yehonasan, was an adviser; he was a wise man and a scribe* (1 *Divrei Hayamim* 27:32). If the Kingdom of David had advisers, how much more so will an ordinary person benefit from advice, as it says, *The wise man heeds counsel* (*Mishlei* 12:15), and, *Salvation lies in much counsel* (*Mishlei* 11:14).

THE ORDER OF CREATION

Eight things were created on the first day of Creation: heaven, earth, light, darkness, emptiness, void, the spirit of G-d, and water, for it says, *The spirit of G-d hovered over the water* (*Bereishis* 1:2). Some say: Day and night were also created, for it says, *And there was evening, and there was morning; one day* (*Bereishis* 1:5).

Eight things were created on the second day: the well [that provided water for B’nei Yisrael in the wilderness], the *manna*, the staff [with which Moshe performed the miracles in Egypt], the rainbow, the written characters [of the Hebrew alphabet], the engraving tool,² the garment [of Adam Harishon,] and the demons.

² The instrument G-d used to engrave the Ten Commandments.

Ten things were envisioned by G-d [before Creation]: Yerushalayim, the souls of the Patriarchs, the path of the righteous, Gehinnom, the waters of the Flood, the second Tablets, the Shabbos, the Beis Hamikdash, the Holy Ark, and the [spiritual] Light of the World to Come.

From what place was heaven created? From the light of the Garment in which the Holy One, blessed be He, is cloaked. [Heaven] continually expanded until G-d said, "*Dai! Enough!*" [One of] G-d's Names is *Shad-dai*, because He told heaven "*Dai!*" and it ceased expanding. How do we know heaven was created from the Light of G-d's Garment? For it says, *Covering with light as with a garment, stretching out the heavens like a curtain* (*Tehillim* 104:2).

From what place was the earth created? From the snow beneath the Throne of Glory. G-d took snow and cast it on the water; it froze and became earth. As it says, *He says to the snow, "Become earth!"* (*Iyov* 37:6).

The rings³ of the heavenly [curtain] are attached to the waters of the ocean, since the waters of the ocean extend between the edge of the earth and the edge of heaven, as it says, *He who roofs His upper chambers with water* (*Tehillim* 104:3). The dome of heaven, extends like a tent sheltering mankind [in its protective shade], as it says, *He stretches [the heavens] like a tent to dwell in* (*Yeshayah* 40:22).

The world has four sides: east, west, south, and north. The east side is where the sun begins to shine. Dew and rain of blessing enter the world from the south side. Darkness descends upon the world from the west side. Snow, hail, cold, heat, and rain come down on the world from the north side.

Alternatively: G-d created the north side, but did not complete it, saying, "If anyone wishes to declare himself G-d, let him complete the [north] side, so we can recognize that he is G-d." [In fact] demons, tempests, spirits, fiends, lightning and thunder to punish those that claim to be G-d, dwell in the north side. Evil

³ The previous verse compares heaven to a curtain, therefore the foundation of the heaven is referred to as curtain rings.

goes forth from that side [to afflict] the world, as it says, *From the North the evil will be released upon all the inhabitants of the land* (*Yirmeyah* 1:14)

TEN UTTERANCES

With ten utterances the world was created: 1. *G-d said, "Let there be light;"* 2. *G-d said, "Let there be a firmament;"* 3. *G-d said, "Let the waters be gathered;"* 4. *G-d said, "Let the earth sprout;"* 5. *G-d said, "Let there be luminaries;"* 6. *G-d said, "Let the waters teem;"* 7. *G-d said, "Let the earth bring forth;"* 8. *G-d said, "Let us make man;"* 9. *G-d said, "Behold I have given you"* (*Bereishis* 1:29); 10. *G-d said, "It is not good that man be alone"* (2:18).⁴

WISDOM, KNOWLEDGE, AND UNDERSTANDING

G-d established [the world] with the three attributes of wisdom, understanding, and knowledge, as it says, *Hashem founded the earth with wisdom, He established the heavens with understanding; through His knowledge the depths were cleaved* (*Mishlei* 3:19,20).

The *Mishkan* (Tabernacle) was built with the same three attributes, as it says, *I have filled him with a G-dly spirit, with wisdom, understanding, and knowledge* (*Shemos* 31:3),

The *Beis Hamikdash* was also erected with these three attributes, as it says, *He was the son of a widowed woman, from the tribe of Naftali; his father had been a Tyrian coppersmith. He was full of wisdom, understanding, and knowledge* (1 *Melachim* 7:14).

And with these three attributes [the *Beis Hamikdash*] will be rebuilt in time to come, as it says, *Through wisdom a house is built, and it is established through understanding; and through knowledge its chambers become filled* (*Mishlei* 24:3,4).

⁴ The Gemara in *Rosh Hashanah* 32a does not include this last verse, and considers, *In the beginning* (*Bereishis* 1:1) the tenth utterance.

These three attributes will be given as a gift to Yisrael in time to come, as it says, *For Hashem grants wisdom; from His mouth [comes] knowledge and understanding* (Mishlei 2:6).

A double portion of these three attributes will be given to King Mashiach, as it says, *The spirit of Hashem will rest upon him—a spirit of wisdom and understanding, a spirit of counsel and strength, a spirit of knowledge and fear of Hashem* (Yeshayah 11:2).

CHAPTER FOUR

THE HEAVENLY ANGELS

On the second day [of Creation], the Holy One, blessed be He, created the expanse of heaven called *rakia*, the angels, fire [used] by man, and the fire of Gehinnom. [This gives rise to a question:] How can we say that the *rakia* was created on the second day, after all, the heaven and earth were created on the first day, as it says, *In the beginning, G-d created heaven and earth* (Bereishis 1:1)?

Rabbi Eliezer says the *rakia* refers to the expanse above the heads of the “four Chayah Angels,” as it says, *There was a likeness of a rakia-expanse above the heads of the Chayah, like the color of the awesome ice* (Yechezkel 1:22). *Like the color of the awesome ice*, means [it looked] like diamonds and pearls. They illuminate the sky like a lamp lighting up a house and like the sun shining strongly at noon, as it says, *The light that dwells with Him* (Daniel 2:22). In time to come, the *tzaddikim* will also shine this way, as it says, *The wise will shine like the radiance of the expanse* (ibid. 12:3).

Were it not for this *rakia*-expanse, the world would drown in the

water above and below it, for this *rakia*-expanse divides between water and water, as it says, *G-d said, "Let there be a rakia-expanse in the middle of the water, and it shall divide between water and water."* *Water and water*, refers to the water above and the water below.

FOUR GROUPS OF ANGELS

When the angels that were created on the second day are sent by G-d on a mission, they become winds. When they worship G-d, they become fire, as it says, *He makes the winds His messengers, the flaming fire His attendants* (*Tehillim* 104:4).

There are four groups of angels that sing praises before the Holy One, blessed be He: The first group is the camp of Michael standing to the right [of the *Shechinah*]; the second group is the camp of Gavriel standing to the left [of the *Shechinah*]; the third group is the camp of Uriel standing in front [of the *Shechinah*]; the fourth group is the camp of Refael standing behind the *Shechinah*. The *Shechinah* of the Holy One, blessed be He, stands in the middle. And [the Holy One, blessed be] He, is enthroned upon a high and lofty Throne, suspended high in the sky with its glorious appearance resembling *Chashmal*, as it says, *I saw the color of Chashmal* (*Yechezkel* 1:27). A Crown rests on His Head, and a diadem with the Ineffable Divine Name is on His Forehead. His eyes roam throughout the land. He is half ice and half hail.⁵ On His right there is life, on His left there is death. A staff of fire is in His Hand, and a curtain is spread in front of Him. Seven angels created for that purpose minister before Him inside the curtain, which [in Rabbinic literature is called *Pargod*.] . . .

Two *Serafim Angels* are standing there, one to the right of the Holy One, blessed be He, the other to His left. Each of them has six wings. *With two wings they cover their faces* (*Yeshayah* 6:2), so as not to gaze at the *Shechinah*. *With two wings they cover their feet* (*ibid.*), so that their feet, which resemble calf feet, will not be seen

⁵ Symbolic of the Divine Attributes of Mercy and Strict Justice.

by the *Shechinah*, and He will not be reminded of the golden calf. *And with two wings they fly (ibid.)*, revering and sanctifying His great Name. One proclaims and the other answers, saying, *Holy, holy, holy, is Hashem, Master of Legions, the whole world is filled with His glory (Yeshayah 6:3)*.

The Chayah Angels stand near His glory, but do not know the place of His glory. Therefore they say, "Wherever His Glory is, *Blessed is the glory of Hashem from His place (Yechezkel 3:12)*."

Yisrael, a unique nation in the world, declares the Oneness of His Name constantly, [twice] every day, saying, *Shema! Hear O Yisrael, Hashem, our G-d, Hashem is the One and Only (Devarim 6:4)*. He responds, "I am Hashem, your G-d who saves you from all distress."

CHAPTER FIVE



DIVISION OF THE WATERS

On the third day [of Creation] the earth was flat like a plain, and the surface of the world was entirely covered with water. When G-d's command, *The waters shall be gathered (Bereishis 1:9)*, went forth, mountains and hills rose from the ends of the earth, spreading over the entire world to form deep valleys. The waters flowed into the valleys gathering there, as it says, *the gatherings of water He called seas (Bereishis 1:10)*. Immediately the waters rose and mighty [waves] attempted to cover the earth as before. But the Holy One, blessed be He, angrily scolded and stepped on them, placing them beneath the soles of His feet. With His palm He measured precisely how far the waters may reach,

forming the sand as a boundary for the sea, like a man who makes a fence around his vineyard. When the waters rise and see the sand in front of them they retreat, as it says, *Will you not fear Me?—the word of Hashem—Will you not tremble before Me? For I have set sand as a boundary for the sea* (*Yirmeyah* 5:22).

WATER FROM ABOVE AND BELOW

Before the waters were gathered, the wellsprings⁶ and the deep waters were created. The deep waters are underground reservoirs of water, on which the ground is suspended like a ship floating in the middle of the sea, as it says, *Who spread out the earth on the waters* (*Tehillim* 136:6).

G-d opened the gateway to Gan Eden bringing forth from there vegetation to cover the surface of the entire earth. He brought forth various species of fruit-bearing trees, and all kinds of plants and herbage bearing their own seed, as it says, *each containing its own seed* (*Bereishis* 1:11). He [thereby] prepared for all living beings a table set with food before they were created,⁷ as it says, *You spread a table for me* (*Tehillim* 23:5).

Wellsprings rise from the deep, watering all of creation.

Rabbi Yehoshua says: It takes sixty years to circumnavigate the earth. One of the deep waters close to Gehinnom gushes hot water to provide pleasure for people.

Rabbi Yehudah said: Once a month, passages rise up from the deep waters to supply water for the entire earth, as it says, *A mist ascended from the ground and watered the whole earth* (*Bereishis* 2:6).

Through these passages clouds convey sounds to the seas. Through their channels the seas convey the sounds to the deep waters. One deep water calls out to the next to bring up water and supply it to the clouds, as it says, *Where deep calls to deep in the roar of your water channels* (*Tehillim* 42:8). The clouds draw water from

⁶ Text emended by *Biur Chardal*.

⁷ Text emended by *Biur Chardal*.

the deep wells, as it says, *He raises clouds from the end of the earth* (*Tebillim* 135:7). Then wherever G-d orders them to make it rain, it rains. The earth instantly begins to sprout, like a widow who becomes pregnant as a result of adultery.⁸

But when the Holy One, blessed be He, wants to bless the produce of the land, providing food for mankind, He opens His good heavenly treasures of upper waters making it rain on the land with “male waters”. The earth immediately becomes pregnant like a bride who conceives from her first husband and sprouts blessed seed, as it says, *G-d will open His good treasury in heaven* (*Devarim* 28:12), and it says, *As a young man takes a maiden in marriage, so will your children settle in you* (*Yeshayah* 62:5), and it says, *Just as the rain and the snow descend from heaven* (*ibid.* 55:10).

CHAPTER SIX

THE SUN AND THE MOON

On the fourth day of Creation, G-d created the two great luminaries, equal in size, height, appearance, and radiance, as it says, *G-d made the two large lights* (*Bereishis* 1:16). They became involved in rivalry, each telling the other, “I am greater than you.” Peace could not be established between them. What did the Holy One, blessed be He, do? He made one bigger and the other one smaller, as it says, *the greater one to rule by day and the smaller one to rule by night, and the stars* (*ibid.*).

⁸ The Gemara in *Taanis* 6b says that rain that falls from heaven is like the husband of the earth, and is “rain of blessing.” But when the earth is watered with water arising from wells, it is as though it conceived from an adulterous relationship.

The remainder of this chapter, and Chapter Seven, deal with highly complex and technical astronomy issues, which are not suitable for this translation.

CHAPTER EIGHT



INTERCALATING THE YEAR

On the 28th of Elul the sun and the moon were created, and the counting of years, months, days, nights, hours, minutes, seconds, seasons and cycles was initiated by the Holy One, blessed be He. The cycles of years and the computation of leap years was before G-d, Who conveyed the computation to Adam in Gan Eden, as it says, *This is the sefer [the counting] of the Chronicles of Adam* (*Bereishis* 5:1). [This teaches that Hashem gave to Adam] a perpetual calendar for all future generations of man. Adam transmitted [this calendar] to Chanoch, explaining to him the secret of intercalation⁹ whereupon he added a month to the year, as it says, *Chanoch walked with G-d* (*Bereishis* 5:24), which means, Chanoch followed the calendar count that G-d had transmitted to Adam.

Chanoch transmitted the secret of intercalation to Noach who intercalated the years. He said, *As long as the earth lasts, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, and day and night, shall never again cease [to exist]* (*Bereishis* 8:22). *Seedtime* is the quarter [beginning with] Tishri, *harvest* is the quarter [beginning

⁹ The Jewish calendar is based on lunar months. The calculation of the precise moment of the appearance of the new moon is called *sod ha'ybbur*, "the secret, or principle of intercalation" (*Rosh Hashanah* 20b).

with] Nissan, *cold* is the [quarter beginning with] Teves, and *heat* is the [quarter beginning with] *Tammuz*. Thus, summer and winter will be at the appointed time, the sun will shine during the day, and the moon will shine at night, as it says, *they will not cease [to exist]*.

Noach transmitted the secret of intercalating the years to Shem who was called a “kohen.” Was Shem the son of Noach really a kohen? Since he was a firstborn son and served G-d day and night he was called a kohen, as it says, *Malkitzedek*,¹⁰ *king of Shalem . . . he was a kohen to G-d the Most High* (*Bereishis* 14:18).

Shem transmitted the [secret of intercalation] to Avraham who intercalated the years. He was called a kohen, as it says, *Hashem has sworn and will not relent: “You shall be a kohen forever”* (*Tehillim* 110:4). From what source do we know that Shem transmitted it to Avraham? Because it says, *On the words of Malkitzedek* (*ibid.*).

Avraham transmitted [the principle of intercalation] to Yitzchak, and after Avraham’s death Yitzchak intercalated the years, as it says, *After Avraham died, G-d blessed Yitzchak his son*, (*Bereishis* 28:11). He blessed him because he acted on the principle of intercalation and added a month to the year.

Yitzchak transmitted the secret to Yaakov. When Yaakov left Eretz Yisrael [to go to Lavan] he wanted to intercalate the year. Said the Holy One, blessed be He, “Yaakov, you are not permitted

The lunar month is the period between two new moons, which is 29.53 days. Thus, the lunar year made up of twelve lunar months is 12×29.5 , or about 354 days. The solar year—the period of time in which the earth completes one revolution around the sun, is 365 days, making the lunar year about eleven days shorter than the solar year. This means that if in a given year Pesach falls in April, then the next year it would fall eleven days earlier, and so on. If nothing were done to correct the situation, Pesach and the other Yamim Tovim would be moving throughout the four seasons of the year. The Torah specifies that Pesach should be in the spring as it says, *Safeguard the month of spring so that you will be able to keep Pesach to Hashem your G-d* (*Devarim* 16:1). Therefore, the lunar calendar must be adjusted to the solar year so that Nissan remains in the spring. The correction is achieved by periodically inserting Adar II as a thirteenth lunar month creating a “leap year,” a procedure called intercalation. This is done in the third, sixth, eighth, eleventh, fourteenth, seventeenth, and nineteenth years of the nineteen year cycle.

¹⁰ Malkitzedek is Shem (Rashi),

to intercalate the year outside Eretz Yisrael. Your father Yitzchak will intercalate the year in Eretz Yisrael,” as it says, *Now that Yaakov had returned from Padan Aram, G-d appeared to him again and blessed him* (*Bereishis* 35:9). Why does it say He appeared to him again? Because when He appeared to him the first time he prevented him from intercalating the year outside Eretz Yisrael, but when he returned to Eretz Yisrael G-d told him, “Go and intercalate the year,” as it says, *G-d appeared to him again and blessed him. . . . and He blessed him.* G-d gave Yaakov an everlasting blessing because he acted in line with the principle of intercalation.

INTERCALATION MUST BE PERFORMED IN ERETZ YISRAEL

This teaches us that even if *tzaddikim* and Torah scholars live outside Eretz Yisrael, and a shepherd lives in Eretz Yisrael, the year must be intercalated by the shepherd. Furthermore, even if prophets live outside Eretz Yisrael and laymen live in Eretz Yisrael, the year may only be intercalated by the laymen living in Eretz Yisrael.

When the Jews were sent into exile in Babylonia, those that remained in Eretz Yisrael intercalated the years. When no one was left in Eretz Yisrael,¹¹ the years were intercalated in Babylonia. When Ezra and the entire community returned to Eretz Yisrael, the *navi* Yechezkel wanted to intercalate the years in Babylonia. Said the Holy One, blessed be He, “Yechezkel, you are not permitted to intercalate the years outside Eretz Yisrael. Your brothers, the entire House of Yisrael [who are living in Eretz Yisrael,] will intercalate the years,” as it says, *Son of man, the House of Yisrael dwell on their land*” (*Yechezkel* 36:17)—they are the ones who shall intercalate the years.

¹¹ After Gedaliah was assassinated no one remained in Eretz Yisrael for fifty-two years (*Shabbos* 147b).

DIVINE REVELATION AT THE END OF GALUS

Yaakov transmitted the secret to Yosef, and he intercalated the years in Egypt. After Yosef and his brothers died the [knowledge of intercalation] diminished in Yisrael. Just as the knowledge of intercalation diminished when Yisrael was in bondage in Egypt, so will this knowledge diminish at the end of the fourth exile among the nations,¹² which will be followed by the coming of Mashiach. And just as the Holy One, blessed be He, revealed Himself to Moshe and Aharon in Egypt, so will He reveal Himself at the end of the fourth *galus*, as it says, *Hashem said to Moshe and Aharon in Egypt, saying: This month shall be for you the beginning of the months* (*Shemos* 12:1,2). What does the word *saying* imply? Until now, I kept the secret of intercalation to Myself; from now on it is your [task] to intercalate the years.

THE INTERCALATION CEREMONY

Intercalation must be declared by three [judges]. Rabbi Eliezer said: By ten [judges], for it says, *G-d stands in the Divine assembly* (*Tehillim* 82:1), [and an “assembly” (*eidah*) consists of ten men]. If one judge leaves, a *sefer Torah* is brought in and opened before the judges. The judges are seated in a semi-circle, [with the seating arranged] according to their wisdom. They gaze downward [deferentially], spreading their hands [in prayer] toward their Father in heaven. The head of the assemblage recites [the berachah over the intercalation]. [In the past] they heard a heavenly voice cry out, *Hashem said to Moshe and Aharon in Egypt, saying: This month shall be for you the beginning of the months*. But because of the sins of the generation they do not hear anything now; as if G-d does not allow the *Shechinah* to rest among them.

¹² There are four exiles: Babylonia, Persia, Greece, and our present *galus*, which is called the Roman *galus*.

How fortunate were the people who were present at that time, as it says, *Praises to the people who know the shofar's cry; Hashem, by the illumination of Your countenance they walk* (Tehillim 89:16), they walk by the radiance of the countenance of the Holy One, blessed be He.

WHEN TO INTERCALATE

A year is intercalated for three reasons: because of fruit-trees, the grain crop, and *tekufah*.¹³

We do not intercalate the year if only the fruit-trees and the grain crop have not ripened, but we do intercalate the year because of the lateness of the *tekufah*. If the *tekufah* of *Teves* (winter solstice) begins on the 21st of *Teves* or later, the year must be intercalated. When [*tekufas Teves*] begins before the 21st of *Teves*, the year is not intercalated. Seven years of a nineteen-year cycle are intercalated, some after a one-year interval and others after a two-year interval, in the 3rd, 6th, 8th, 11th, 14th, 17th, and 19th year of the 19-year cycle of intercalation.

On Rosh Chodesh Nissan, the Holy One, blessed be He, appeared to Moshe and Aaron in the land of Egypt. This took place in the 12th year of the great cycle of the moon,¹⁴ the 17th year of the 19-year cycle of intercalation.

¹³ The four *tekufah* seasons are calculated according to the solar year, each season equaling one fourth of 365 days. *Tekufas Nissan* begins on March 21; *tekufas Tammuz* on June 21, *tekufas Tishri* on September 23, and *tekufas Teves* on December 22. Should *tekufas Tammuz* extend until after Sukkos, so that Sukkos would fall too early in the year, or *tekufas Teves* until the sixteenth of Nissan, and Pesach would fall too early, an extra month was added so that the Yamim Tovim would fall in their appropriate season, i.e., Pesach in the spring, Sukkos in the fall.

¹⁴ The great cycle of the moon lasts 21 years. The Exodus occurred in the year 2448 from Creation. (2448÷21=116+12) Thus, the Exodus took place in the 12th year of the 116th great cycle of the moon.

CHAPTER NINE

THE CREATIONS OF THE FIFTH DAY

On the fifth day of Creation, G-d caused the waters to teem with male and female, kosher and non-kosher flying creatures. There are two signs identifying a flying creature as kosher: a crop and a stomach that can be peeled. Rabbi Eliezer says an extra toe [is also a kosher sign].

Two species of fowl were selected for a burnt offering: turtle doves and young common doves.

On the fifth day [of Creation] G-d caused the waters to teem with male and female, kosher and non-kosher fish. Fish having the two identifying signs of fins and scales are kosher. Fish without these signs are not kosher.

On the fifth day [of Creation] G-d caused the waters to swarm with male and female, kosher and non-kosher species of locusts. Those that have the two kosher-signs of long jumping legs and wings covering their entire body, are kosher. Fishes and locusts that swarm from the water may be eaten without *shechitah*, but fowl may only be eaten with *shechitah*.

The blood of creatures created from the water may be eaten like water; the blood of creatures created from the earth may not be eaten. Birds are an exception to this rule, although they were created from water their blood may not be eaten. Additionally the blood of birds must be covered with dust.

THE NATIONS OF THE WORLD

The waters were not the only ones commanded to bring forth swarms. The nations of the world, which are compared to water,

were also [commanded to multiply in swarms], as it says, *Al, the roar of many peoples that roar as roars the sea; the rage of nations that rage as the mighty waters rage* (*Yeshayah* 17:12). Just as the waters swarmed on the day [of creation,] so will the nations of the world swarm in time to come. They will wage war against each other and destroy one another, as its says, *One nation was battered by the other and one city by the other, for G-d confounded them with all kinds of trouble* (2 *Divrei Hayamim* 15:6). This will be followed by the redemption of Yisrael, as it says [in the next verse], *But you be strong, and do not lose resolve, for there is reward for your action* (*ibid.* v.7).

YISRAEL LIKENED TO RIVERS

Water from rivers, as long as they flow through the land, is good and blessed; sweet tasting, and delightful [to bathe in]. But once they run into the sea, [their water] becomes brackish, harmful, acrid, and unpleasant for bathing. Similarly, when Yisrael places his trust in the protection of his Creator, he is blessed and pleasant, and the world benefits from him. But when he drifts away from his Creator, adopting the customs of the nations, [and placing his trust in the astrological signs,] he becomes despised and hated, and the world does not appreciate him. Just as rivers although they are swallowed by the sea, [remain distinct,] so too, although Yisrael is swallowed by the fire of Gehinnom, [they are not destroyed, rather they are purified by the fire]^{14a}. All rainwater ends up in the sea as seed for the creatures of the sea, causing fish to mate.

OTHER OCCURENCES ON THE FIFTH DAY

On the fifth day [of the week], the waters in Egypt turned to blood. On the fifth day [of the week] our ancestors departed

^{14a} Translation according to Radal.

Egypt. On the fifth day [of the week] the waters of the Yarden River stood still before the Ark of the Covenant of Hashem (*Yehoshua* 3:17). On the fifth day [of the week] King Chizkiah stopped up the source of the waters in Yerushalayim, as it says, *He, Chizkiah, stopped up the upper source of the waters of Gichon* (2 *Divrei Hayamim* 32:30).

LIVYASAN

On the fifth day [of Creation,] G-d brought forth from the waters the bar-like serpent¹⁵ Livyasan, whose dwelling is in the waters below. Between its two fins the center bar of the whole world is moored. All the great sea-monsters are food for Livyasan, who opens its mouth scaring the sea-monster that is destined to be eaten that day, to flee into its mouth. The Holy One, blessed be He, sports with the Livyasan every day, as it says, *You fashioned Livyasan to sport with* (*Tehillim* 104:26).

Rabbi Meir says: The creatures that were created from earth, mate on land; those that were created from water, mate in water. However, fowl, although they were created from water, mate on land, as it says, *Let the flying creatures multiply on the land* (*Bereishis* 1:22). Those that swarm from the water, multiply through eggs; animals that were created from the earth, multiply by giving birth to live young.

¹⁵ Mentioned in *Yeshayah* 27:1. The Livyasan symbolizes the great world powers (Rashi).

CHAPTER TEN

THE VOYAGE OF YONAH

On the fifth day [of the week] Yonah fled from before Hashem. Why did he flee? On one occasion G-d sent him to restore the boundary of Yisrael from the Approach of Chamas, and his prophecy was fulfilled, as it says, *He restored the boundary of Yisrael from the Approach of Chamas* (2 Melachim 14:25).

On another occasion G-d sent him to destroy Yerushalayim, but when the people did *teshuvah*, the Holy One, blessed be He, out of His great kindness reconsidered and did not destroy [Yerushalayim. Since his prophecy was not fulfilled] the people called him a false prophet.

When G-d sent him to Nineveh, Yonah drew a logical conclusion, reasoning: "I know that this nation is inclined to do *teshuvah*. When they do so, The Holy One, blessed be He, will unleash His anger upon Yisrael [because they do not do *teshuvah* when warned by a prophet]. I will be called a false prophet not only by the Jews, but by non-Jews as well [since my prophecy of the destruction of Nineveh will not materialize]. I will therefore flee to a place where no one speaks of His glory. I cannot flee to heaven, since His glory is declared there, as it says, *His glory is on the heavens* (*Tehillim* 113:4). I cannot flee on the land since His glory is proclaimed there, as it says, *The whole world is filled with His glory* (*Yeshayah* 6:3). I will flee [to the sea,¹⁶] where no one declares His glory."

¹⁶ Text corrected by the Vilna Gaon.

THE GREAT STORM

The only available ship was two days away. Yonah went to Yafoh, but could not find space on any ship. What did the Holy One, blessed be He, do, to test Yonah? He blew a storm causing the ship to return to Yafoh. When Yonah saw this he was happy, saying, "Now I know I did the right thing."

He told [the sailors], "I will join you on your journey [regardless of where you are going]."

"We are bound for Tarshish," they said.

"Then I will sail with you," he replied.

It is customary to pay the fare when disembarking from a boat. But Yonah, because he was happy, paid the fare when boarding, as it says, *Yonah arose to flee to Tarshish from before Hashem . . . He found a ship bound for Tarshish. He paid its fare and boarded it (Yonah 1:3).*

One day into the voyage, a storm blew up on their right and left. The other ships sailed uneventfully in a calm sea, but the ship carrying Yonah was in deep distress, as it says, *The ship was in danger of breaking up (ibid. v.4).*

Rabbi Chananiah said: The sailors on the ship hailed from all seventy nations [of the world]. Each took hold of his idol, as it says, *The sailors became frightened and they cried out, each to his god (ibid. v.5).*

They bowed saying, "Let each of us pray to his idol, and the idol that will rescue us from this crisis is the true god." Each appealed to his idol, but it did not help. Deeply troubled, Yonah fell into a deep sleep.

The captain went to him, crying out, "We are in mortal danger! How can you be sleeping so soundly? What nationality are you?"

"I am a Hebrew," Yonah replied.

YONAH IS CAST INTO THE SEA

“We have heard that the G-d of the Hebrews is great,” the captain said. “Get up, call upon your G-d! Perhaps He will be kind and perform miracles for us as He did for you at the Sea of Reeds.”

Said Yonah, “I will not conceal from you that this misery is my fault. Pick me up and heave me overboard, and the sea will calm down for you,” as it says, *Pick me up, and heave me overboard, and the sea will calm down* (*ibid.* v.12).

Rabbi Shimon says: The sailors did not accept Yonah’s suggestion to cast him overboard. Instead, *they cast lots, and the lot fell on Yonah* (*ibid.* v.7).

What did they do? They flung the ship’s cargo overboard to lighten the ship’s load, but it did not help. They tried to return to shore, but could not do so. What did they do? They took Yonah and stood him at the edge of the ship saying, “Hashem, G-d of the world, let us not be guilty of shedding innocent blood, for we do not know anything about this man, yet he told us,¹⁷ “This predicament is my fault. Pick me up, and cast me into the sea.”

Thereupon they lowered him into the sea until his knees, and the storm subsided. They pulled him back, and the storm blew again. Next they lowered him until his navel, and the storm subsided. They pulled him up, and the storm blew again. Then they lowered him up to his neck, and the storm abated, but when they pulled him back the storm resumed blowing in full force. Finally, they cast him overboard, whereupon the sea calmed instantly.

SWALLOWED BY THE FISH

Rabbi Tarfon said: The fish that swallowed Yonah was chosen at Creation, as it says, *Hashem had designated a large fish to swallow Yonah* (*Yonah* 2:1). He entered the mouth [of the fish] like a man

¹⁷ Text corrected according to *Midrash Tanchuma*.

entering a great synagogue, standing erect. The two eyes of the fish were like open windows¹⁸ providing light for Yonah.

Rabbi Meir said: A pearl hanging inside the fish shone for Yonah like the midday sun, letting him see the sea and all that is in its depths. Indeed, the verse, *Light is sown for the righteous* (*Tehillim* 97:11) applies to Yonah.

The fish said [to Yonah], “[Evidently] you do not know that today it is my turn to be eaten by Livyasan.”

“Take me to him,” Yonah said.

YONAH MEETS LIVYASAN

Said Yonah to Livyasan, “It is because of you that I have come here. [I wished] to find your place of lodging [so that] in time to come [I will be able to bring you out of the sea.¹⁹] I will place a rope in your tongue and pull you up to be slaughtered and prepared for the grand banquet for the tzaddikim.”

[Yonah] showed Livyasan the seal of our Father Avraham [i.e., his *milah*], and said, “Look upon the covenant.” When [Livyasan] saw it, he ran from Yonah a distance of two days [travel].

YONAH SEES THE GREAT PHENOMENA

Yonah said [to the fish,] “I have saved you from being eaten by Livyasan. Now I want you to show me all that exists in the sea and the deep.” [The fish] showed him the large river that runs into the ocean, as it says, *The deep widened around me* (*Yonah* 2:6).

Then he showed him the Sea of Reeds, which Yisrael traversed, as it says, *Reeds were tangled around my head* (*ibid.*). Following that, he showed him the breakers and waves coming out of [the sea], as it says, *All your breakers and waves passed over me* (*ibid.* v.4).

¹⁸ Translated according to Tanchuma.

¹⁹ According to *Biur R. David Luria*.

Next he showed him the pillars and posts of the world, as it says, *The earth, its bars [were closed] against me forever (ibid. v.7)*. After that he showed him Gehinnom, as it says, *Yet you lifted my life from the pit, O Hashem, my G-d (ibid.)*. Next he showed him the lowest pit of the grave, as it says, *From the belly of the grave I cried out— You heard my voice (ibid. v.2)*. Next he showed him the Sanctuary of Hashem, as it says, *I descended to the bases of the mountains (ibid. v.7)*. From this source we know that Yerushalayim rests on seven mountains. Next he showed him the *Shesiah* stone which is anchored in the deep beneath the Sanctuary of G-d, and on which the sons of Korach stand praying.

YONAH'S PRAYER

Said the fish, “Yonah, you are standing beneath the Sanctuary of G-d. Pray now, and your prayer will be answered.”

Replied Yonah, “Stay where you are [without moving around], because I want to pray.”²⁰ The fish stood still, and Yonah prayed to the Holy One, blessed be He.

Yonah prayed, “Master of the universe! You are called ‘the One who brings down and raises.’ I was brought down; please raise me. You are the One who causes death and restores life. Look, my soul is near death. Please revive me.”

But his prayer was not answered until he said, “*What I have vowed I will fulfill. (ibid. 2:7)*. I vowed to bring up Livyasan and slaughter him before You, I will fulfill it on the day of Yisrael’s salvation.”

The Holy One, blessed be He, instantly gave a hint to the fish, which ejected Yonah, as it says, *Hashem addressed the fish, and it spewed out Yonah onto dry land (ibid. v.11)*.

²⁰ Praying in a moving vehicle or ship is not as acceptable as praying while the vehicle is standing still (*Rambam, Hilchos Tefillah* ch.5).

THE SAILORS BECOMING RIGHTEOUS CONVERTS

When the sailors saw the great signs and miracles the Holy One, blessed be He, performed for Yonah, they immediately cast their idols into the sea, as it says, *They watch false vanities; they forsake their kindness (ibid. v.9).*

Returning to Yafo [the sailors] went up to Yerushalayim where they underwent *milah*, as it says, *Then the men felt a great fear of Hashem; they slaughtered a Shelamim sacrifice to Hashem (ibid. 1:16).* How could they slaughter a Shelamim sacrifice? Surely we do not accept such sacrifices from non-Jews! Their sacrifice was the blood of their *milah*, which counts as the blood of a sacrifice. Each of them vowed to bring his wife and household to fear the G-d of Yonah, and they fulfilled their vows. The berachah [in the weekday *Shemoneh esrei*]: *On the righteous, on the devout . . . on the righteous converts and ourselves, may Your compassion be aroused*, applies to them and others like them.

CHAPTER ELEVEN



THE CREATIONS OF THE SIXTH DAY

On the sixth day [of Creation], G-d brought forth from the earth all the species of animals, including male and female, kosher and non-kosher. Kosher animals have two identifying signs; they bring up the cud and have split hooves.

Three species of animals were chosen to be brought as burnt offerings: the ox, the sheep, and the goat.

Any kosher animal that is neither a *neveilah*, [which means it died without *shechitah*,] nor a *tereifah*, [which means it was torn in a way that causes it to die,] may be eaten, as it says, *Like the green plants I have given you everything* (*Bereishis* 9:3). However, three organs may not be eaten, the *cheilev*-fat, the blood, and the *gid hanasbeh* (displaced sinew).

On the sixth day [of Creation] G-d brought forth from the earth seven species of kosher wild animals: the gazelle, the deer, the antelope, the wild goat, the chamois, the bison, and the giraffe. All of these must be slaughtered and may be eaten like fowl.²¹ All other wild animals are not kosher.

On the sixth day [of Creation] G-d brought forth all creeping and swarming insects from the earth. All of these are non-kosher.

All these animals that were created from the earth, their life-force and the body are from the earth, and when they die they return to [the earth] from which they were created, as it says, *When You retrieve their spirit they perish* (*Tehillim* 104:29), and it says, *The spirit of the beast descends down into the earth* (*Koheles* 3:21).

On the sixth day [of Creation] G-d brought forth from the earth a Behemah²² *that lies on a thousand mountains*.²³ Every day it grazes on a thousand mountains, and at night [the grass] sprouts back as if it had not been touched, as it says, *For the mountains present him their crops* (*Iyov* 40:2). It drinks from the waters of the Yarden River, which encircles all of Eretz Yisrael, the half [of the Yarden that is seen on the eastern side] flows above ground and the other half flows through underground channels, as it says, *He feels secure that he can gulp the Yarden into his mouth* (*ibid.* v.23). [The Behemah, also called the *Wild Ox*] is designated to be served at the great banquet for the tzaddikim [in Time to Come], as it says, *His Maker can direct His sword up close* (*ibid.* v.19) [to slaughter the *Wild Ox* for the great banquet of the tzaddikim].

²¹ Their *cheilev*-fat may be eaten.

²² The Behemah is a gigantic animal mentioned in Aggadic literature.

²³ See *Tehillim* 50:10.

CREATION OF MAN

Immediately [after creating all living beings for the benefit of man,] G-d said to the Torah, *Let us make man in Our image, after Our likeness (Bereishis 1:26)*.

Replied the Torah, “Master of the universe! The world belongs to You. The man you want to create has a short lifespan, is sated with anxiety, and will fall into sin. If you are not slow to anger with him, it would be better for him not to have been created.”

Retorted the Holy One, blessed be He, “Do you think I am called, *Slow to Anger and Abundance of Kindness*, for nothing?”

G-d gathered red, black, white, and yellow dust. The red was for [Adam’s] blood, the black for his innards, the white for his bones and sinews, and the yellow for his body.

Why did He gather dust from the four corners of the earth? The Holy One, blessed be He, said, “If a person travels from east to west, and dies along the way, the earth of that place will not be able to say, ‘The dust of your body is not from here, I will not accept you. Go back to the place from where you were created.’ ” No matter where a person dies, the dust of his body came from there, and that is the place where he returns. The dust of that place accepts him, as it says, *You are dust, and to dust you will return (Bereishis 3:19)*.

TIMELINE OF ADAM’S FIRST DAY

The [sixth] day [of Creation] lasted twelve hours. In the first hour, G-d gathered the dust for Adam; in the second hour He kneaded it; in the third hour He fashioned it; in the fourth hour He inserted a soul into it; in the fifth hour He made him stand upright; in the sixth hour [Adam] assigned names [to all the creatures]; in the seventh hour Chavah became his wife; in the eighth hour, they were commanded [not to eat from] the fruit [of the Tree of Knowledge]; in the ninth hour they went to bed as two, and arose as four; in the tenth hour G-d brought Adam into Gan Eden, and

he transgressed G-d's commandment; in the eleventh hour, Adam was judged; in the twelfth hour he was expelled, as it says, *He drove Adam out [of Gan Eden] (Bereishis 3:24)*.

ADAM RECEIVES HIS SOUL

G-d kneaded the dust of Adam in a pure place, the navel of the earth, fashioning and perfecting him there. But Adam did not have a spirit and a soul. What did the Holy One, blessed be He, do? He blew into him the breath of the soul of life, as it says, *He blew into his nostrils the soul of life (Bereishis 2:7)*. Adam stood erect gazing upward and downward. His height reached from one end of the world to the other,²⁴ as it says, *Back and front You have designed me (Tehillim 139:5)*—*back* means toward the west; *front* means toward the east. Viewing all the animals G-d had created, Adam praised his Creator, saying, *How abundant are Your works, Hashem (ibid. 104:24)*. Standing upright he looked like the image of G-d.

ADAM AND THE ANIMALS PRAISE THE CREATOR

The animals saw him and were frightened. Thinking he was their Creator, they bowed down before him. He said, “You have come to bow down to me. Instead, let us – you and I—don grandeur and might, declaring the kingship of the One who created us. A king cannot declare his own kingship; it is the people who declare the kingship of a king. If the people do not declare the king's kingship, he cannot declare it himself.”

Adam was the first to declare G-d as King, and all the animals followed suit. He declared, *Hashem reigns, He dons grandeur (ibid. 93:1)*.

²⁴ A metaphor; his knowledge and understanding spanned the world.

TEN KINGS

Ten kings reigned over the entire world. The first King, is the Holy One, blessed be He, for He reigns over heaven and earth. He envisioned establishing kings in this world, as it says, *He alters times and seasons; He deposes kings and establishes kings* (Daniel. 2:21).

The second king to rule over the entire world was Nimrod. All the people [of the world] were terrified of the waters of the Flood, [and therefore they lived in the valley of Shinar (Babylonia) and built the Tower of Babel]. Nimrod was their king, as it says, *The beginning of his kingdom was Bavel (Babylonia)* (Bereishis 10:10).

The third king to rule over the entire world was Yosef, as it says, *[People from] all the earth came to Egypt* (Bereishis 41:57). It does not say “from the land” [which would imply “from Egypt”] but *all the earth* [meaning “from one end of the world to the other”]. The people paid the mandatory tax and brought gifts to buy provisions from Yosef. For forty years he served as viceroy to the king of Egypt and for forty years he reigned in his own right, as it says, *A new king arose over Egypt who did not know Yosef* (Shemos 1:8).²⁵

The fourth king to rule over the entire world was Shlomoh, as it says, *Shlomoh ruled over all the kingdoms* (1 Melachim 5:1). *[Year after year the kingdoms] paid taxes and brought vessels of silver and gold, clothing, arms, spices, horses and mules* (ibid. 10:25).

The fifth king was Achav, king of Yisrael, as it says, *[Oradiah said to Eliyahu,] As Hashem your G-d lives, there is not a nation or kingdom where my lord [Achav] has not sent to seek you* (1 Melachim 18:10). There were 232 provinces in the world, as it says, *Achav counted the young sons of the officers of the provinces, and they were two hundred and thirty-two* (ibid. 20:16). Achav controlled the provincial governors, who paid taxes and donated gifts to him.

Achashverosh ruled half of the world—a hundred and sixteen provinces. In the merit of Esther eleven provinces were added [to

²⁵ Implying that the king who ruled beforehand did know Yosef, for this king was Yosef himself (*Bayis Hagadol*).

his kingdom], as it says, *Achashveirosh, who reigned from Hodu to Kush,*²⁶ *a hundred and twenty-seven provinces (Esther 1:1).*

The sixth king was Nevuchadnetzar, as it says, *Wherever people, beasts in the field, and birds of the sky dwell, He has given them into your hand and made you ruler over them all (Daniel 2:38).* Nevuchadnetzar even reigned over the birds, indeed a bird did not chirp without his permission, as it says, *No one shook a wing and opened a mouth and chirped [in protest] (Yeshayah 10:14).*

The seventh king was Koresh (Cyrus), king of Persia, as it says, *Thus says Koresh, king of Persia: Hashem, G-d of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth (2 Divrei Hayamim 36:23).*

The eighth king was Alexander of Macedonia, who ruled from one end of the earth to the other, as it says, *I was contemplating this, and behold, a he-goat comes from the west, across the surface of the entire world (Daniel 8:5).* The verse does not say, “across the surface of the world,” but, *across the surface of the entire world.* Alexander wanted to know about the faraway reaches of the world. He also wished to ascend to heaven and descend to the deep to know what was happening there. [G-d] split his kingdom into the four direction of the world, as it says. *But after he has arisen, his kingdom will be broken and will be divided into the four directions of heaven (Daniel 11:4).*

The ninth king will be King Mashiach who will reign in time to come from one end of the world to the other, as it says, *The stone that struck the statue became a great mountain and filled the entire earth (Daniel 2:35).*

HASHEM, THE FIRST AND THE TENTH KING

The tenth king will be the same as the first, as it says, *I am the first and I am the last and aside from Me there is no God (Yeshayah 44:6).* And it says, *Hashem will be King over the entire world (Zechariah 14:9).* The kingdom will return to its heirs, at which time *the false*

²⁶ Commonly identified as India and Ethiopia.

gods will perish completely (Yeshayah 2:18), and Hashem alone will be exalted on that day (ibid. v.11). He will care for His sheep and He will lay them down, as it says, I Myself will graze My flock, and I Myself will let them lie down (Yechezkel 34:15). We will see this with our own eyes, as it says, With their own eyes they will see that Hashem returns to Tzion (Yeshayah 52:8). Amen.

CHAPTER TWELVE

ADAM HARISHON IN GAN EDEN

The Holy One, blessed be He, showed Adam extraordinary love, by creating him from a place that is pure and holy. From what place did He create him? From [earth at] the site of the Beis Hamikdash.

He then brought him into his palace, as it says, *G-d took Adam and placed him in Gan Eden to work it and watch it (Bereishis 2:15)*. What work was done in Gan Eden? Did the vineyard need pruning? Did the land need plowing and furrowing, the crop need harvesting, or the sheaves need binding? Why, the trees [and crops] grew by themselves! Perhaps one might say that Gan Eden had to be watered, and that was the work. However, a river flowed out of Eden, as it says, *A river flowed out of Eden to water the garden (Bereishis 2:10)*. So what does, *to work it and watch it*, mean? [Adam worked it] by engrossing himself in the study of Torah and guarding the path of the Tree of Life, which are the [mitzvos of] the Torah, as it says, *It [the Torah] is a tree of life for those who grasp it (Mishlei 3:18)*.

A COMPATIBLE HELPMATE

Adam walked in Gan Eden like one of the ministering angels. Said the Holy One, blessed be He: I am the only One in My world, and he is the only one in his world. The concept of procreation does not apply to Me; neither does it apply to him. In time to come, living beings will say, “Since he does not procreate, he is the one who created us.” [To preclude this, Hashem said,] *it is not good for man to be alone. I will make a helper—kenegdo—compatible for him* (*Bereishis* 2:18).

Rabbi Yehudah said: Do not read *kenegdo* – compatible for him; read instead *lenagdo*—to oppose him. If he is deserving, she will be a compatible helper; otherwise, she will oppose and fight him.

When the earth heard [that man would be fruitful and multiply] it trembled and quaked, saying to its Creator, “Master of all the worlds, I do not have strength to feed the flocks of man!”

HEALTHFUL SLEEP

Replied the Holy One, blessed be He, “You and I together will feed the flocks of man.” They divided the task, G-d’s assignment was the night and the earth’s responsibility was day. What did G-d do? He created healthful sleep, which nourishes and heals man and provides him with life and tranquility, as it says, *So now I have lain down calmly; I have slept and I am at rest* (*Iyov* 3:13).

The Holy One, blessed be He, supports the earth and waters it so that it produces fruit and food for all living beings. But man [after his sin] *will [only] derive food [from the earth] with anguish all the days of his life* (*Bereishis* 3:17).

THE CREATION OF CHAVAH

G-d taking pity on Adam, and not wishing to cause him pain, put Adam into a deep sleep. Taking one of his bones and flesh from his

heart [He formed a woman] making her his helpmate and placing her next to him. When Adam awoke and saw her standing before him, he immediately embraced and kissed her, saying, “Blessed are you in G-d’s name—bone of my bone—you are worthy to be called *ishah*—woman,” as it says, *Bone from my bones and flesh from my flesh, she shall be called Ishah—woman* (*ibid.* 2:23).

G-D’S NAME INCLUDED IN *ISH* AND *ISHAH*

As long as he was alone, he was called Adam. Rabbi Yehoshua ben Korcha says: The name Adam is a contraction of *basar vadam*—flesh and blood. After a helpmate woman was built from him, he was called *ish*—man, and she was called *ishah*—woman. What did the Holy One, blessed be He, do? He included His name [*Yud—Hei*] in their names, [inserting the *yud* into *ish*, and attaching the *hei* to *ishah*, saying,] “If they follow in My ways, keeping My mitzvos, My name will be part of them, saving them from distress. If they do not, I will remove My Name [*Yud—Hei*] from them [removing the *yud* from *ish* (*alef, yud, shin*) and the *hei* from *ishah* (*alef, shin, hei*)] and all that will remain from either name is *eish* (*alef, shin*)—fire. [They will destroy one another] for fire consumes fire, as it says, *For it is a fire; it consumes unto doom* (*Iyov* 31:1).”

THE WEDDING CEREMONY

The Holy One, blessed be He, built ten *chuppah* canopies for Adam Harishon in Gan Eden, comprised of precious jewels, pearls, and gold. For an [ordinary] groom one *chuppah* is erected; for a king, three *chuppahs* are made; but in honor of Adam Harishon the Holy One, blessed be He, created ten *chuppahs* in Gan Eden, as it says, *In Eden, the garden of G-d, your chuppah was of every precious stone—odem, pittedah, and yahalom, tarshish, shoham, and yashfeh, sapir, nofech, barkas, and gold* (*Yechezkel* 28:13). The angels beat

drums and danced like girls, as it says, *The drums were beaten and the girls were dancing for you on the day of your creation (ibid.)*.

The Holy One, blessed be He, said to the angels, “Let us act with kindness toward Adam Harishon and his helpmate, for the world depends on kind deeds.”

The Holy One, blessed be He, said further, “I prefer kind deeds to the sacrifices and burnt offerings Yisrael will bring for Me on the Altar in time to come,” as it says, *For I desire kindness, not sacrifice (Hoshea 6:6)*. The angels served as attendants guarding the *chuppahs*, as it says, *He will charge His angels for you, to protect you in all your ways (Tehillim 91:11)*. The phrase, *your ways* signifies “the ways a groom [has marital relations with his bride].” The Holy One, blessed be He, officiated as cantor. Just as the cantor blesses the bride under the *chuppah*, so did the Holy One, blessed be He, bless Adam and his helpmate, as it says, *G-d blessed them (Bereishis 1:28)*.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN



ADAM'S SIN

Envy, lust, and glory remove a man from the world (Avos 5:28). The ministering angels said to the Holy One, blessed be He, “Master of all the worlds! *What is man that You recognize him? Man is like a breath (Tehillim 144:3,4), unable to control even his earthly [impulse] (Iyov 41:25)*. [Thus how can he dominate others?]”

Replied G-d, “Just as you exalt Me in the higher worlds, so does he declare the Oneness of My Name on earth. Can you give names

to all the living beings?” They tried but were unable. Instantly, Adam arose and named all the creatures, as it says, *Adam named every livestock animal and bird of the sky* (*Bereishis* 2:20).

When the angels saw this they said, “If we do not devise a plan to cause Adam to sin against his Creator, we will never be able to control him.”

SAMAEL (SATAN) GETS INVOLVED

Samael, was one the great heavenly princes. The *chayos* and *serafim* [angels] had six wings whereas Samael had twelve wings. Samael descended [to earth] with his company of angels. He saw that among all the creatures the Holy One, blessed be He, created, there was none as cunning in causing evil as the serpent, as it says, *The serpent was the most cunning among all the wild beasts* (*Bereishis* 3:1). It looked like a camel²⁷ and [Samael] mounted and rode it.

The Torah shrieked, “The world has just now been created; is that an opportune time to rebel against the Omnipresent? (*Iyov* 39:18). Master of the universe! Crush the horse—[the serpent,] and its rider—[Samael].”

This is analogous to a man possessed by an evil spirit. All his actions and words are controlled and programmed by the evil spirit. So too, all the serpent’s actions and words were dictated by Samael, as it says, *Because of his evil the wicked one is cast off [from G-d]* (*Mishlei* 14:32).

A PARABLE

A parable: A king married a woman entrusting her with all the jewels and pearls he owned. He told her, “You can have everything I possess, except for this barrel which is full of scorpions.” An old

²⁷ Before the sin, serpents had legs.

man came asking for some vinegar, adding, “How does the king treat you?”

“He gave me all he owns, except for this barrel full of scorpions,” she replied.

Said the old man, “All the king’s most precious treasures are in this barrel. He did not tell you this, because he wants to marry another woman and give it to her.”

The king represents Adam [who prohibited her from eating from the tree on G-d’s command]; the woman is Chavah; the old man asking for vinegar is the serpent. About them – [the serpent and its rider Samael]—it says, *There lie the evildoers, fallen* (*Tehillim* 36:13).

THE SERPENT ENTICES CHAVAH

The serpent thought, “I know Adam will not listen to me, because it is hard to persuade a man. I will talk to the woman who is fickle, and I can surely entice her, as it says, *She can be convinced and knows nothing* (*Mishlei* 9:13).”

The serpent approached the woman, saying, “Is it true that you, were commanded not to eat [the fruit] of this tree?”

“That’s right,” she replied. “As it says, *But of the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden . . .*” Her words gave the serpent an opportunity to ensnare her.

Said the serpent, “This command is rooted in envy. When you eat from this tree you will become like G-d. What does G-d do? He creates worlds and destroys worlds. You will also be able to create worlds and destroy worlds. Just as He causes death and restores life, so will you be able to cause death and restore life.” As it says, *Really, G-d knows that on the day you eat from it, your eyes will be opened* (*ibid.* 3:5).

The serpent then touched the Tree. The Tree cried out, “Wicked one! Do not touch me!” as it says, *Let not the foot of the arrogant tread on me, and let not the hand of the wicked move* (*Tehillim* 36:12,13).

Said the serpent to the woman, "You see, I touched the Tree, and did not die. Go ahead and touch it, and you will also not die."

Thereupon the woman touched the Tree. Seeing the Angel of Death approaching, she said, "Perhaps I will die, and the Holy One, blessed be He, will create another woman and give her to Adam. I will make him eat from the Tree too; if we die, both of us will die, and if we remain alive, both of us will live."

She took and ate fruits of the Tree and invited her husband to eat some of the fruit with her. When Adam ate the fruit of the Tree, his eyes were opened and he suddenly realized he was naked. His teeth were set on edge [with remorse].

He said to her, "What have you given me to eat that has caused my eyes to be opened and my teeth to be set on edge? Just as my teeth are set on edge, so will the teeth of future generations be set on edge [for they will suffer death as the result of my transgression.]"

CHAPTER FOURTEEN



HASHEM DESCENDS TO PUNISH ADAM

The Holy One, blessed be He, descended to the world ten times: 1. Once in Gan Eden. 2. Once in the generation of the Tower. 3. Once in Sedom. 4. Once at the Burning Bush. 5. Once at Sinai. 6, 7. Twice at the "cleft in the rock".²⁸ 8, 9. Twice in the Tent of Meeting. 10. Once in time to come.

²⁸ See *Shemos* 33:22. G-d allowed Moshe to see *His back* (v. 23), i.e., a vague degree of knowledge.

Once in Gan Eden [to judge Adam], as it says, *They heard the sound of Hashem, G-d, manifesting itself in the garden* (Bereishis 3:8). And referring to that incident it says, *My Beloved has gone down to His garden, to the bed of spices* (Shir Hashirim 6:2). The righteous and true Judge, sitting in true judgment, summoned Adam, saying, “Why did you flee from Me?”

“When I heard Your call, my bones began to tremble,” Adam replied, as it says, *I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was uncovered, so I hid* (Bereishis 3:10). This verse means: *I hid* from my Creator; *I was afraid* because of my actions, *because I became uncovered* from Your command.

ADAM’S GARMENT

What was Adam Harishon’s [original] garment? A skin of scales covered by a cloud of glory. When he ate the forbidden fruit the skin of scales was removed, the cloud of glory departed, and he saw himself naked, as it says, *G-d said, “Who told you that you were naked? Did you eat from the tree which I commanded you not to eat?”* (ibid. 3:11).

Adam replied, “Master of all the worlds! When I was alone, did I ever sin against You? The woman you brought to me made me stray, as it says, *The woman that you gave to be with me—she gave me from the tree what I ate* (Bereishis 3:12).

The Holy One, blessed be He, said to Chavah, “Not only did you yourself transgress, but you caused Adam to transgress!”

Replied Chavah, “Master of the universe! The serpent distracted me causing me to sin against You, as it says, *The serpent seduced me, and I ate* (ibid. v.13).

G-D CURSES ADAM, CHAVAH, AND THE SERPENT

[G-d] pronounced nine curses and the death penalty on Adam, Chavah, and the serpent. He caused Samael (Satan) and his com-

pany to fall from their holy place in heaven. He chopped off the feet of the serpent, cursing it more than all the wild beasts and all the livestock. Every seven years it would shed its skin in great suffering. It would creep on the earth along its belly, and its food would turn to dust in its innards. Viper's venom and death would be in its mouth.

G-d sowed hatred between the serpent and the woman, so [people] would trample it. In addition, he was cursed with death.

G-d punished the woman with nine curses and death. They are: The discomfort of menstrual flow and virginal blood, the pain of pregnancy and birth, the anguish of raising children, [the chagrin] of covering her head like a mourner and being subservient to her husband as a Hebrew slave who becomes permanently indentured by piercing his ear. She cannot testify as a witness. In addition she was cursed with death.

G-d summoned Adam and gave him nine curses and death. He diminished man's strength through seminal pollution and marital relations. Man sows wheat and harvests thorns. Man eats vegetation like his livestock. He earns his livelihood with anxiety, and he eats his bread with the sweat of his brow. In addition he was cursed with death.

WHY THE EARTH WAS CURSED

[*The earth will be cursed because of you (Bereishis 3:17).*] What sin did the earth commit to deserve to be cursed? [The earth] did not tell [Adam that the serpent was enticing Chavah]. When people commit grave sins, G-d sends an epidemic [as punishment], and when people commit minor sins, G-d strikes the produce of the earth, as it says, *The ground will be cursed because of you (ibid. 3:17)*

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

CHOOSING LIFE OR DEATH

Rabbi Eliezer said: I heard G-d speak with my own ears. What did He say? *See, today I have set before you [a free choice] between life and good [on one side] and death and evil [on the other] (Devarim 30:15).*

The Holy One, blessed be He, said, “I gave Yisrael the two alternatives of good and evil, which are life and death.” Good can be attained either through kind deeds or through righteousness. The prophet Eliyahu stands at the juncture [of the two choices] and when a person chooses life, Eliyahu announces, *Open the gates, so the righteous nation, keeper of the faith, may enter!* (Yeshayah 26:20).

SHEMUEL HANAVI’S CHOICE

The prophet Shemuel wavered between the two choices, wondering, “Which of the two paths shall I take? If I take the path of kind deeds, the path of righteousness seems preferable, and if I choose the path of righteousness, the path of kind deeds seems the better option. I call on heaven and earth to be my witnesses that I do not turn away either of them; rather I will adopt both approaches.”

Said the Holy One, blessed be He, “Shemuel, you had the choice of either approach [and you chose both of them,] therefore, I pledge that I will give you three precious gifts.” Thus we learn that whoever chooses to be righteous and do kind deeds receives the three precious gifts of life, righteousness, and honor, as it says, *Whoever strives for righteousness and kindness, will find life, righteousness, and honor (Mishlei 21:21).*

WARNINGS AT THE FOUR GATEWAYS

There are four gateways through which [one who chooses evil] can pass²⁹. Each gateway is guarded by seven angels, four sitting on the outside of the gate, three sitting on the inside. The angels sitting outside are compassionate; those inside are ruthless angels.

When a person enters the first gateway he is greeted by the compassionate angels who tell him, "Why do you want to enter this blazing fire? Why do you want to join the wicked who agonize amidst the searing coals? Listen to us, and do *teshuvah*!"

If he follows their advice, fine. If he does not, they tell him, "In there you will not find life." As he is about to enter the second gateway, they warn him, "You entered the first gateway, but don't enter the second!"

The compassionate angels [sitting outside the second gateway] greet him, saying, "Why do you want to detach yourself from G-d's Torah? People will say you are contaminated; they will shun you! Listen to us and do *teshuvah*!"

If he heeds their advice, fine. If he does not, they warn him, "In there you will not find life." As he enters the third gateway, they warn him, "You entered the second gateway, why do you want to enter the third?"

The compassionate angels [at the third gateway] greet him, saying, "Why do you want to be erased from the Book of Life? Aren't you better off being inscribed in it, rather than being deleted from its roster? Listen to us and do *teshuvah*!"

If he listens to them, fine. If he does not, woe to him and woe to his head! As he enters the fourth gateway they warn him, "You entered the third gateway, but don't enter the fourth gateway."

The compassionate angels [at the fourth gateway] rush forward to greet him, saying, "You entered all these portals, yet you did not do *teshuvah*. Up to this point, the Holy One, blessed be He, accepts those that do *teshuvah*, forgiving and pardoning iniquity, de-

²⁹ The four gateways refer to four levels of sin one can commit. (RaDaL)

claring daily, ‘Please do *teshuvah!*’, as it says, *Return, O wayward sons* (*Yirmeyah* 3:14).”

If he listens to [the compassionate angels,] fine. If not, pity him and his fate. The ruthless angels say, “Since he has not listened, *When his spirit departs he returns to his earth* (*Tehillim* 146:4).” Iyov says about these people, *G-d does all these things with man two or three times* (*Iyov* 33:29).

G-D’S PROMISE TO RABBI ELIEZER

The Holy One, blessed be He, said to Eliezer,³⁰ “Since you have made of yourself *a three-ply cord* (*Koheles* 4:9) [by accepting Torah and mitzvos], I will apply to you the verse, *You shall become whole-hearted with Hashem your G-d* (*Devarim* 18:13).

CHAPTER SIXTEEN



CELEBRATING WITH BRIDE AND GROOM

The world depends on three things: on Torah study, on the service [of G-d], and on kind deeds (*Avos* 1:2). How do we know the world depends on Torah study? It says, *Thus said*

³⁰ All the commentators are baffled by this saying. According to *Bayis Gadol*, Rabbi Eliezer ben Horkenus is speaking about himself, as he did in the beginning of this chapter: “I heard G-d speaking with my own ears.” He says that just as the angels at the gateways are urging everyone to engage in Torah study, so did they exhort him, as a young man, to learn Torah (as related in chapter one).

Hashem: Were it not for My covenant day and night; I would not have set up the laws of heaven and earth (Yirmeyah 33:25), and [to clarify that My covenant day and night, refers to the Torah,] it says, This Book of the Torah shall not depart from your mouth; rather you should contemplate it day and night (Yehoshua 1:8).

How do we know the world depends on “Service of G-d”? It says, *The service of the upright is His desire (Mishlei 15:8)*. What does *service* mean? It means prayer, as we find that Daryavesh (Darius) said to Daniel, *May your G-d whom you serve continually, save you (Daniel 6:17)*. Surely the Jews in Babylonia did not offer sacrifices, thus service must mean prayer.

How do we know the world depends on acts of kindness towards grooms? We learn this from the Holy One, blessed be He, Who performed kind deeds to Adam and his helpmate, saying to the angels, “Let Us act with kindness toward Adam and his helpmate.” Thereupon the Holy One, blessed be He, and the angels descended to perform kindness for Adam and his helpmate. Said the Holy One, blessed be He, “I cherish acts of kindness more than the sacrifices and burnt offerings Yisrael will bring on the Altar in time to come, as it says, *I desire kindness, not sacrifice (Hoshea 6:6)*.

Rabbi Yose says: How do we know that a marriage is celebrated for seven days? From Yaakov our Father, who celebrated his marriage to Leah for seven days, as it says, *Wait until this week of wedding celebrations is over (Bereishis 29:27)*. All the townspeople [of Aram] gathered to show kindness to Yaakov, as it says, *Lavan invited all the local people and made a wedding feast (ibid. 22)*.

The Holy One, blessed be He, told the people of Aram, “Since you were kind to My servant Yaakov, I will be kind to you and reward you in this world,” as it says, *Through [Naaman] Hashem had granted victory to Aram (2 Melachim 5:1)*. The wicked are not rewarded in the World to Come, [therefore He rewarded them in this world.]

THE ROAD SHRINKS

Rabbi Shemayah says: [Before Eliezer was sent by Avraham to his family to find a wife for Yitzchok], Avraham left his entire legacy to Yitzchak handing a deed to this effect to his servant Eliezer, so that he could boast about [Yitzchok's wealth] at the home of [Avraham's] relatives. The distance from [Avraham's residence,] Kirias Arba, to Charan, [Lavan's hometown,] is a seventeen day journey, yet the servant reached Charan in three hours. He wondered, "[How is this possible?] Today I left, and today I arrived!" As it says, *I came today to the well* (*Bereishis* 24:42).

Rabbi Abbahu said: The Holy One, blessed be He, wishing to show kindness to Yitzchak, sent an angel ahead of Avraham's servant, Eliezer, causing the road to shrink, allowing him to reach Charan in three hours.

A MATCH ARRANGED BY G-D

The Holy One, blessed be He, planned [Yitzchok and Rivkah's marriage in advance. Therefore He arranged for Rivkah,] a princess³¹ who had never drawn water from a well, to draw water that day. He also arranged that this young girl who did not know any man, agreed to marry Yitzchak, because from the moment of her birth she was destined by G-d to become his wife, as it says, *Were they to be lifted up on the scales, together they would be lighter than a breath* (*Tehillim* 62:10). [The Sages interpret *together they would be lighter than a breath* to mean, "when they were still in the womb, lighter than a breath, they were destined to be together."]

Lavan, [Rivkah's brother,] and Besuel, [her Father] agreed [to the match], saying, "Since this is from G-d, we cannot prevent it, as it says, *Lavan and Besuel both spoke up. "It is something from G-d! We cannot say anything to you, bad or good. Rivkah is right here in front of you. Take her and go."* (*Bereishis* 24:50,59).

³¹ The Midrash says that Besuel, Rivkah's father, was the king of Aram Naharayim.

[Eliezer] arose in the morning and seeing an angel waiting for him outside, said [to Lavan and Besuel,] *“Do not delay me, G-d has already shown my mission to be successful (ibid. 56), for the angel is waiting for me outside.”*

They ate and drank at the wedding feast, as it says, *He and his men ate and drank (ibid. 54)*. [Besuel and Lavan] blessed Rivkah like a cantor who blesses the bride at the *chuppah*, as it says, *They blessed Rivkah and said to her . . . (ibid. 60)*.

YITZCHAK DAVENING MINCHAH

In the sixth hour of the day, the servant left Charan with Rivkah and her attendant on camelback. In order that he not be alone with Rivkah during the night, the earth shrank in front of Eliezer, so that he arrived in Chevron in three hours, toward the time of *Minchah*. At that same time Yitzchak went out to *daven Minchah*, as it says, *Yitzchak went out lasuach—to meditate—in the field (ibid. 63)*. *Sichah*, means “prayer,” as it says, *A prayer of an afflicted man when he swoons, and before Hashem he pours forth sicho—his prayers (Tehillim 102:1)*.

RIVKAH EMULATED SARAH

Rabbi Yishmael says: Avraham said to his son Yitzchak, “There is reason to suspect this servant of lewdness and falsehood,” as it says, *A Canaanite³² with scales of deceit in his hands, who loves to cheat (Hoshea 12:8)*. See if he defiled her. If she is a pure virgin, she is destined for you by the Al-mighty. Yitzchok brought her into the tent and verified that she was a virgin. Then, finding her as pure as his mother Sarah, he married her, as it says, *Yitzchak brought her into his mother Sarah’s tent (ibid. 67)*. [The verse, *his mother Sarah’s tent*,

³² The Midrash says: Canaan refers to Eliezer (*Bereishis Rabbah* 60).

also teaches] that she emulated Sarah by acting modestly in the tent, as it says, *The honor of a princess is to dwell within* (*Tehillim* 45:15). *Yitzchak was then consoled for the loss of his mother* (*Bereishis* 24:67).

It was the custom in Yisrael to verify a girl's virginity, to preclude any doubt, as it says, *The girl's father and mother obtain evidence of their daughter's virtue* (*Devarim* 22:15).

ELIEZER IS OG, KING OF BASHAN

Avraham's servant, the elder of his household, was Eliezer. How did he become Avraham's servant? When [Avraham] left Ur Kasdim, the rulers of that generation gave him gifts. Nimrod's gift was his servant Eliezer. When [Eliezer] performed kindness to Yitzchak [by finding him his wife, Rivkah, Avraham] set him free. Since the unworthy do not receive their reward in the World to Come, the Holy One, blessed be He, gave [Eliezer] his reward in this world by making him Og, king of Bashan.

SHIMSHON'S MARRIAGE

Rebbi says: What is the source for celebrating [a marriage with] seven days of feasting? From Shimshon, who took a wife from the land of Pelishtim and celebrated with seven days of feasting, as it says, *It happened when [the woman and her father] saw him, they took thirty companions to be with him* (*Shofetim* 14:11) What is implied by the words, *with him*? They were eating and drinking with him, as it says, *Shimshon said to them, "Let me now pose you a riddle. If you tell me [its solution] during the seven days of feasting* (*ibid.* 12). And it says, *They could not tell the solution of the riddle for three days* (*ibid.* 14).³³

³³ It is unclear what proof can be derived from the second verse. In *Talkut Shofetim* the verse is not cited (*Biur Rav David Luria*).

A GROOM'S MAJESTY

A *chosson* is like a king. Just as a king does not go out alone, neither does a *chosson*. Just as a king wears dignified attire, so does a *chosson* wear dignified apparel during the seven days of feasting. Just as a king is exalted by everyone, so is a *chosson* lauded by everyone during the seven days of feasting. Just as a king's face beams like the sun, so does a *chosson's* face glow like the sun during the seven days of feasting, as it says, *[The sun] is like a groom emerging from his bridal chamber* (*Tebillim* 19:6).

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN



KINDNESS TOWARDS MOURNERS

Where do we derive the mitzvah of acting with kindness toward mourners? From the Holy One, blessed be He, who performed an act of kindness for His servant Moshe by burying him as it says, *He buried him in the valley* (*Devarim* 34:6). Were it not written [in the Torah], one could not say such a thing.

AHARON'S DEMISE

Rabban Gamliel, son of Rabbi Yehudah Hanasi says: Not only did G-d perform an act of kindness to Moshe, He also did so for Aharon. [Moshe, Aharon, and Elazar] ascended Mount Hor. [Aharon died, and Moshe and Elazar descended.] All the tribes of Yisrael assumed that Moshe and Elazar came down leaving Aharon

[alive] on Mount Hor. They did not think Aharon died and they thought they were not required to perform kindness [by mourning him]. What did the Holy One, blessed be He, do? He made Aharon's casket pass above the encampment so that it was seen hovering in the air by all Yisrael. They then believed Aharon died, and performed acts of kindness for him, as it says, *The entire congregation saw that Aharon had perished* (Bamidbar 20:29).

Only the men did acts of kindness for Moshe, as it says, *B'nei Yisrael bewailed Moshe* (Devarim 34:6), but both the men and women performed acts of kindness for Aharon, as it says, *They bewailed Aharon for thirty days, the entire House of Yisrael* (Bamidbar 20:29). Why? Because Aharon loved and pursued peace. Every day he passed through the encampment, restoring peace between man and wife, and between man and his neighbor. Therefore all Yisrael did acts of kindness for him.

The verse says, *B'nei Yisrael journeyed . . . to Moseirah; there Aharon died and he was buried there* (Devarim 10:6). Although Aharon died on Mount Hor, since he was not mourned until Moseirah, the Torah says that he died and was buried there.³⁴

SEVEN DAYS OF MOURNING

Rabbi Yose says: From where do we learn to observe seven days of mourning? From Yaakov our Father, for Yosef observed seven days of mourning after Yaakov's death, as it says, *He ordained a seven-day mourning period for his father* (Bereishis 50:10). All the prominent [Egyptian] government officials joined the funeral, as it says, *Chariots and horsemen came up along with him* (ibid.9), therefore, The Holy One, blessed be He, said to them, "You acted with kindness toward My servant Yaakov. I will reward you and your offspring in this world." Thus, when the Egyptians perished in the Red Sea, the fish did not devour them,³⁵ and they merited to be

³⁴ Text emended by *Biur Rav David Luria*.

³⁵ *Biur Rav David Luria*, based on *Pesachim* 117a.

buried, as it says, *You stretched out Your hand, the earth swallowed them* (*Shemos* 15:12).

ACTS OF KINDNESS TOWARD MOURNERS

From what source do we learn [the mitzvah of performing] acts of kindness toward mourners? From [the evil Queen] Izevel.³⁶ Whenever a bridal party passed her palace, which was close to the market, she would come out clapping her hands, cheering them, and joining the procession for ten steps. When a funeral passed the market, she would come out slapping her hands mournfully, chanting dirges, and joining the funeral cortege. Eliyahu Hanavi prophesied about her, *The dogs will devour the flesh of Izevel in the portion of Yizre'el* (2 *Melachim* 9:36). However, the dogs did not devour the limbs with which she performed acts of kindness, as it says, *So they went to bury her, but they did not find anything left of her except the skull, the feet, and the palms of her hands* (*ibid.* 35).

KINDNESS OF THE MEN OF YAVESH GILAD

From what [other] source do we learn [the mitzvah of performing] acts of kindness toward mourners? From the men of Yavesh-Gilad. When Shaul and his sons fell [in battle], the men of Yavesh Gilad said, “Are we not required to act with kindness toward the man who saved us from the disgrace of the Ammonites?”³⁷ And so it says, *All [the inhabitants of] Yavesh-Gilad heard about all that the Philistines had done to Saul, and all the daring men arose, and they carried the remains of Saul and the remains of his sons, and they car-*

³⁶ The wicked wife of Achav, who annihilated the prophets of Hashem (1 *Melachim* 1:4).

³⁷ Nachash the Ammonite demanded that the right eye of each inhabitant of Yavesh-Gilad be put out (1 *Shemuel*, 11:2). Rashi comments that our “right eye” is the Torah. Nachash wanted to burn a *sefer* Torah publicly.

ried them back to Yavesh. They then buried their bones . . . (1 Divrei Hayamim 10:11-12).

We console mourners with bread and wine, as it says, *Give strong drink too the woebegone and wine to those of embittered soul* (Mishlei 31:6).

THEIR REWARD

The men of Yavesh-Gilad acted with kindness toward Shaul and his sons by fasting, weeping, and eulogizing, as it says, *They fasted for seven days* (1 Shemuel 31:13). Said the Holy One, blessed be He, to them, “I will reward you in time to come. When I gather Yisrael from the four corners of the earth, the first to be gathered will be half the tribe of Menashe [in the land of Gilad on the east bank of the Yarden], as it says, [G-d says;] *Mine is Gilad, and Mine is Menashe* (Tehillim 60:9). Next, He will gather Ephraim and Yehudah, as it says, *Menashe and Ephraim is the stronghold of My head, Yehudah is My lawgiver* (*ibid.*).

[Another explanation for] *Mine*³⁸ *is Gilad*: This refers to Achav who fell [in battle] in Ramos Gilad; *and Mine is Menashe* refers to King Menashe; *Ephraim is the stronghold of My head* refers to Yeravam ben Nevat [a descendant of the tribe of Ephraim who rebelled against the Kingdom of the House of David]; *Yehudah is My lawgiver* refers to Achitofel [the erstwhile advisor of David who deserted him to assist Avshalom in his rebellion]. *Moav is My wash-basin* (*ibid.* 10) refers to Geichazi [Eliyahu’s dishonest servant]. *Upon Edom will I cast My shoe* (*ibid.*) refers to Doeg, the Edomite.³⁹ *Over Peleshes, hisroahei—you will shout triumphantly* (*ibid.*). [The word *hisroahei* can be translated, *I will befriend*, so that the verse can be interpreted, “I must search a merit for all these who

³⁸ G-d is saying: The sins of these people are Mine alone, and I shall find a way to tolerate their sins in order to admit them into the World to Come (Rashi).

³⁹ 1 Shemuel 21:8. Doeg resided in Edomite territory. According to the Sages, he was a chief judge who betrayed David, informing Shaul that David had found refuge in Nov (*ibid.* 22:9)

sinned against the house of David so that friendship is established among them.”

THE THREE-YEAR FAMINE

Rabbi Pinchas says: In the time of David, thirty years⁴⁰ after Shaul and his sons were slain, there was a famine for three years in a row, as it says, *In the days of David there was a famine for three years* (2 *Shemuel* 21:1).

When Yisrael went up [to Yerushalayim] for the Yom Tov pilgrimage in the first year [of the famine], David said to them, “See whether there are any idolaters among you, because the sin of idol worship is punished by drought,” as it says, *Be careful that your heart not be tempted . . . and He will lock up the skies so that there will not be any rain* (*Devarim* 11:16). They searched but did not find [any idol worshippers].

When Yisrael went up [to Yerushalayim] for the Yom Tov pilgrimage in the second year [of the famine], David said to them, “See whether there are any adulterers among you, because the sin of adultery is punished by drought,” as it says, *You have brought guilt upon the land with your adultery and with your evil* (*Yirmeyah* 3:2). The text continues, *the raindrops have been withheld, and the late rain did not happen* (v.3). They searched but did not find any adulterers.

When Yisrael went up [to Yerushalayim] for the Yom Tov pilgrimage in the third year [of the famine], David said to them: “See whether there are any murderers among you, because the sin of bloodshed is punished by drought,” as it says, *Do not pollute the land in which you live; it is blood that pollutes the land* (*Bamidbar* 35:33). They searched but could not find any murderer. Said David to them, “This can only mean that [the drought] is because of me.”

⁴⁰ Text according to *Talkut*.

THE CAUSE OF THE DROUGHT

David stood before the Holy One, blessed be He, and prayed. The Holy One, blessed be He, told him, “[The drought] is because of Shaul who was anointed with the holy anointing oil and in whose days there was no idol worship in Yisrael. He [has a share in the World to Come] together with the prophet Shemuel, as Shemuel said, *Tomorrow you and your sons will be with me* (1 *Shemuel* 28:19).⁴¹ You live in Eretz Yisrael, yet [Shaul] is [buried] outside of Eretz Yisrael [in Gilad.]”

David immediately convened all the sages and leading personalities in Yisrael. They crossed the Yarden and came to Yavesh-Gilad where they found that the remains of Shaul and his son Yonasan had not decomposed, as it says, *He guards all his bones, not even one of them was broken* (*Tehillim* 34:21). They placed the remains in a coffin, carrying them across the Yarden, as it says, *They buried the bones of Shaul and his son Yonasan . . . They did all that the king demanded* (2 *Shemuel* 21:14). What did [David] the king demand? He demanded that Shaul’s coffin be carried over all Eretz Yisrael, to each and every tribe. In every tribe, as the coffin of Shaul passed, the people and their sons and daughters came out in a show of kindness, fulfilling the mitzvah of performing acts of kindness. [This continued] until they arrived at the border of the tribe of Binyamin. When the Holy One, blessed be He, saw that all Yisrael had shown kindness to Shaul, He mercifully brought rain, as it says, *G-d answered the prayers of the land after that* (*ibid.* 21:14).

CROWNED AS KING AT EIGHT YEARS OF AGE

Rabbi Nesanel says: Three hundred years before Yoshiah was born, his name was announced [as the future king], as it says, *Behold, a*

⁴¹ Text emended according to Hagaon Rav Zev Einhorn. He states: “The text needs a great deal of emendation.”

son will be born to the house of David, Yoshiah will be his name (1 *Melachim* 132). He became king when he was eight years old. Does an eight year-old boy have enough sense [to govern]? [His great merit was that] he despised the idolaters, smashing their pillars, burning their sacred trees, and crushing their images. His merit shone before the Holy One, blessed be He, and before the Throne of Glory. But because of misdeeds that were done in secret, the righteous [King Yoshiah] perished [at thirty-nine years of age]. Thereupon, all the people of Yehudah and Yerushalayim together with the prophet Yirmeyah came to perform kindness for Yoshiah, as it says, *Yirmeyah lamented over Yoshiah. All the men and women singers mentioned Yoshiah in their lamentations until this day* (2 *Divrei Hayamim* 35:25).

Rabbi Meir says: The *men singers* are the Levi'im who stand on their platform while singing. The *women singers* are their wives.

Rabbi Shimon says: The phrase [*men and women singers*] refers not only⁴² to the Levi'im and their wives, but to the wise women [of all times,] as it says, *Thus said Hashem, Master of Legions: Contemplate, call upon the dirge-women to come and send for these women to come* (*Yirmeyah* 9:16). Thus, all Yisrael accepted upon themselves to do deeds of kindness for all the sages and leading personalities of Yisrael, as it says, *They made [these dirges] a firm custom in Yisrael* (2 *Divrei Hayamim* 35:25).

TWO ENTRANCES TO THE BEIS HAMIKDASH

Realizing that acts of kindness rate highly with G-d, Shlomoh built the Beis Hamikdash with two entrance gates [to the Temple Mount]; one for *chassanim* (grooms) and one for mourners and individuals who were excommunicated. On Shabbos, people sat between these two gates. When someone entered through the Gate of Chassanim they realized he was a *chassan* and wished him, "May the One who dwells in this House, gladden you and grant you sons

⁴² The word "only" inserted by Rav Zev Wolf Einhorn

and daughters!” When a person entered the Gate of Mourners with his head covered to his lips, they knew he was a mourner and said to him, “May the One who dwells in this House comfort you.” When someone entered the Gate of Mourners with a shorter head covering, they knew that he was excommunicated, and said to him, “May the One who dwells in this House comfort you. May He inspire you to listen to your colleagues and they will befriend you once again.” [They instituted this,] so all Yisrael would fulfill the mitzvah of performing kind deeds.

After the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash it became customary for *chassanim* and mourners to go to the synagogue or study hall. The local people who gather there would rejoice with the *chassan*, or sit on the floor with the mourner, in order to fulfill the mitzvah of performing kind deeds.

The following special berachah is given to people who do acts of kindness: “Blessed are You Hashem, who bestows a rich reward on those who perform acts of kindness.”⁴³

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN



SANCTIFYING SHABBOS

Beis Shammai says: Heaven was created before the earth, as it says, *In the beginning G-d created heaven and earth* (*Bereishis* 1:1) [with heaven mentioned before earth]. Beis Hillel says: The earth was created first, as it says, *You laid the earth's foundation earlier, and the heavens are Your handiwork* (*Tehillim* 102:26).

⁴³ This is not a formal *berachah*, rather a good wish (*Biur Rav David Luria*).

Beis Shammai says: Heaven was created first, as it says, *Also, My hand has laid the foundation of the earth, and My right hand has measured out the heavens* (*Yeshayah* 48:13).⁴⁴ Rivalry erupted [between the two schools] about this matter until the *Shechinah* rested on them and they agreed that heaven and earth were created simultaneously.

How did the Holy One, blessed be He, do this? He extended His right hand to spread the heavens and His left hand to lay the foundation of the earth, as it says, *Also, My hand has laid the foundation of the earth, and My right hand has measured out the heavens*. As a result, the earth and heaven came into being together.

G-D'S CONSTANT SUPERVISION

Heaven and earth and all their components were thus completed (*Bereishis* 2:1). Does this mean that heaven and earth were complete and able to sustain themselves without G-d's constant supervision?⁴⁵ Surely it says, *Do I not fill heaven and earth?* (*Yirmeyah* 23:24). The verse only means the process, commands and work of creation was completed, [however, without G-d's constant supervision they would revert instantly to primordial nothingness].

Said Yisrael to the Holy One, blessed be He, "Master of all the worlds! Although You completed and ended your works of creation in the six days, please do not let Your mercy and kindness come to an end, for if Your mercy and kindness would cease, we could not continue to exist, for the world depends on Your compassion and kindness, as it says, *For the mountains may be moved and the hills may falter, but My kindness shall not be removed from you. . .* (*Yeshayah* 54:10)."

⁴⁴ This definitely is a typographical error, because the verse proves the opposite, that the earth was created first. Perhaps it should say: Beis Hillel says: The earth was created first, . . . (*Biur Rav David Luria*). *Bayis Hagadol* holds that it should be deleted.

⁴⁵ Translation of the perplexing Hebrew text according to *Biur Rav David Luria*.

SHABBOS

With the seventh day, G-d finished all the work that He had done (Bereishis 2:2). The Holy One, blessed be He, wished to dedicate seven things. Six were actually dedicated, and one was left for the future. Thus, He created, completed, and dedicated [the work] of the first day, as it says, *It was evening and it was morning, one day (Bereishis 1:5).* The same happened on all the days of Creation, but on the seventh day G-d did not perform any work, nor does it say, *It was evening and it was morning* [the seventh day]. This is because [the seventh day] is set aside for the future, as it says, *It will be a unique day; it will be known as Hashem's day, neither day nor night (Zechariah 14:7).*

To what can this be likened? To one who owns a cherished object, which he will bequeath to no one but his son who served him. So too, the Holy One, blessed be He, possessed the Shabbos, a day of tranquility and holiness. He will bequeath it only to Yisrael. Therefore when B'nei Yisrael departed Egypt, G-d gave them the Shabbos and they observed two Shabbasos even before receiving the Torah,⁴⁶ as it says, *You made known Your sacred Shabbos to them, and You instructed them with commandments, decrees, and teachings through the hand of Your servant Moshe (Nechemiah 9:14).*⁴⁷

G-D OBSERVES THE SHABBOS

Is it conceivable that the Holy One, blessed be He, would observe and sanctify the Shabbos, yet Yisrael would not be required to observe and sanctify the Shabbos? [This is unthinkable!] We know G-d observes the Shabbos since He gave Yisrael the manna for forty years only on the six weekdays and never on Shabbos. To prevent you from saying that G-d did not have strength to give manna

⁴⁶ The laws of Shabbos were given in Marah, before their arrival at Sinai (Rashi on *Shemos* 16:25).

⁴⁷ Shabbos is mentioned before the giving of the commandments at Sinai.

every day, needing to rest before giving it [the next week,] G-d gave them a double portion [of manna] on Friday, as it says, *You must realize that G-d has given you the Shabbos, and that is why He gave you food for two days on Friday* (*Shemos* 16:29). When Yisrael saw G-d resting, they also rested [not going out on Shabbos to gather manna,] as it says, *The people rested on Shabbos* (*ibid.* 30).

RECITING KIDDUSH

G-d blessed the seventh day and sanctified it (*Bereishis* 2:3). Although G-d blessed and sanctified the day of Shabbos, Yisrael is only required to observe and sanctify the Shabbos [by reciting *Kiddush* over wine.] The Sages derived from this, that whoever makes *Kiddush* over wine on Friday night will live to a ripe old age in this world, in addition to receiving years of life in the World to Come.

It says, *Keep the Shabbos as something sacred to you* (*Shemos* 31:14). What does “keeping the Shabbos” entail? Abstaining from: work, igniting fire, going one footstep beyond the Shabbos boundary,⁴⁸ carrying an object more than four *amos*⁴⁹ in a public domain,⁵⁰ and moving an object from a private domain⁵¹ into a public domain.

It says, *It is an eternal sign between Me and B'nei Yisrael* (*ibid.* 17). The Holy One, blessed be He said, “I gave Shabbos to Yisrael [as a sign] between Me and them. During the six days of Creation I made the world and I rested on Shabbos, therefore I gave them

⁴⁸ One is not allowed to walk more than 2000 *amos* (which is about a kilometer) from the place he establishes as his “residence” at the onset of Shabbos. This law is based on the verse, *No man shall go out of his place on the Shabbos day* (*Shemos* 16:2). The area within 2000 *amos* is called one’s *techum Shabbos* (Shabbos boundary).

⁴⁹ An *amah* (cubit) is the measurement from the elbow to the end of the index finger.

⁵⁰ A street or marketplace that is at least 16 *amos* wide. According some, it is only a public domain if 600,000 men pass through daily.

⁵¹ *Shulchan Aruch* (*Orach Chaim* 345:2) defines a private domain as an area enclosed by walls (*mehitzos*) ten *tefachim* (handbreadths) high.

six workdays and the seventh day for blessing, *kedushah*, and rest for Myself and for them. Therefore it says, *Between Me and B'nei Yisrael.*"

G-D LOVES SEVEN

The Holy One, blessed be He, created seven heavens, yet He chose only *Aravos* [the seventh heaven] as His abode, as it says, *Extol He who rides upon Aravos,*⁵² *with His name Y-ab* (Tehillim 68:5).

The Holy One, blessed be He, created seven lands [in the seven climate zones],⁵³ but He chose only Eretz Yisrael, as it says, *It is a land constantly under G-d's scrutiny, the eyes of Hashem your G-d are on it at all times* (Devarim 11:12).

The Holy One, blessed be He, created seven mountains, yet He chose only Mount Sinai, as it says, *Why do you prance, O you mountains of majestic peaks? The mountain that G-d chose as His abode* (Tehillim 68:17).⁵⁴

The Holy One, blessed be He, created seven seas, yet He chose only Yam Kineres,⁵⁵ and bequeathed it to the tribe of Naftali, as it says, *Naftali shall be totally satisfied and filled with G-d's blessing. He shall occupy the sea [and the area] to its south* (Devarim 33:23).

The Holy One, blessed be He, created seven deserts, and He chose only the Desert of Kadesh, leading Yisrael through it on their way out of Egypt.

The Holy One, blessed be He, created seven worlds,⁵⁶ and chose only the seventh world. In six of them there is a cycle of life and death, but the seventh will be all Shabbos and tranquility for eternal life.

⁵² *Aravos* is the seventh heaven, also known as *Sh'mei Shamayim*. It is the storehouse of the *neshamos*.

⁵³ The seven lands: Earth, Land, Arka, Chareivah (Dry Ground), Yabashah, (Dry Land), Tevel (World), Cheled (Decaying Earth) (*Aros d'Rebbi Nosson* 37:9).

⁵⁴ The highest mountains have no cause for pride. G-d chose Mount Sinai to give the Torah.

⁵⁵ The Sea of Galilee.

⁵⁶ The world is destined to last for seven millennia (*Sanhedrin* 97a)

The Holy One, blessed be He, created seven days. Of them He chose the seventh day, as it says, *G-d blessed the seventh day, and He declared it to be holy* (*Bereishis* 2:3).

The Holy One, blessed be He, created [a cycle] of seven years, and of those [seven] years, he selected the year of *shemittah*.⁵⁷

The Holy One, blessed be He, forgives the sins of one who observes the Shabbos in this world, as it says, *Praiseworthy is the man . . . who guards the Shabbos* meichallelo—*against desecrating it* (*Yeshayah* 56:20). Read not *meichallelo*; read instead *machul lo*—“he is forgiven.” This teaches you that all his sins are forgiven.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

THE HYMN TO THE SHABBOS

Ten things were created on the [first] Shabbos eve, at twilight: The mouth of the earth,⁵⁸ the mouth of the well,⁵⁹ the mouth of the donkey [which spoke to Bilam], the rainbow, the manna, the staff,⁶⁰ the *shamir*,⁶¹ the script,⁶² the engraving tool,⁶³

⁵⁷ *Shemittah*, the Sabbatical year in which no planting or harvesting may be done, occurs every seventh year. The land “rests” similar to the way the Jewish people rests every seventh day.

⁵⁸ The pit that opened to swallow Korach and his cohorts (*Bamidbar* 16:32).

⁵⁹ Which provided water for Yisrael in the wilderness.

⁶⁰ With which Moshe performed the signs in Egypt (*Shemos* 4:7).

⁶¹ A small worm that is able to cut stones. The *shamir* split and shaped the stones of the Beis Hamikdash because it was forbidden to use iron tools in the construction of the Beis Hamikdash.

⁶² The forms of the letters of the *alef-beis* (Rashi)

⁶³ The instrument G-d used to miraculously engrave the *luchos*.

and the *luchos* (Tablets). Some also include harmful demons, Moshe's grave, the ram of Yitzchak, and some also include [the first] tongs [with which subsequent tongs were made].⁶⁴

ADAM'S FIRST SHABBOS

In the seventh hour on *erev Shabbos* Adam Harishon entered Gan Eden. The ministering angels extolled him as they escorted him into Gan Eden. At twilight on *erev Shabbos* he was expelled and left. The angels applied to him the verse, *As for man: in glory he shall not repose; they are likened to the silenced animals* (*Tehillim* 49:13). [The man in this verse refers to both Adam and Chavah for] it does not say, *he is likened to a silenced animal*, but *they are likened to silenced animals*.

SHABBOS SPEAKS IN ADAM'S DEFENSE

[Adam Harishon was condemned to death,] however, the Shabbos day came to his defense. Said the Shabbos, "Master of all the worlds! During the six days of Creation not one creature was destroyed. Shall You start with me? It says, *G-d blessed the seventh day and declared it holy* (*Bereishis* 2:3), is this the way I am to be sanctified and blessed?" In the merit of the Shabbos, Adam was saved from the judgment of Gehinnom.

Seeing how influential the Shabbos was, Adam said, "Not for naught did G-d bless and sanctify the Shabbos!" Thereupon he sang in honor of Shabbos, as it says, *A Psalm, a song for the day of Shabbos* (*Tehillim* 92:1).

⁶⁴ Before one makes tongs he needs other tongs to hold the red-hot metal.

ADAM HARISHON'S SHABBOS HYMN

Rabbi Yishmael says: This psalm, [although it is included in the group of psalms said by Moshe,] was originally sung by Adam Harishon, but with the passing of generations it was forgotten, until Moshe restored it, as it says, *A psalm, a song for the day of Shabbos*—for the day that will be a complete Shabbos and rest day for eternal life.

Adam said, *It is good to confess to*⁶⁵ *Hashem and to sing praise to Your name (ibid. v.2)*, teaching future generations that whoever confesses his sins, refraining from further transgression will be saved from the judgment of Gehinnom, as it says, *It is good to confess to Hashem . . . To relate Your kindness in the dawn and Your faith in the nights. To relate Your kindness in the dawn*, refers to the inhabitants of the World to Come which is bright like dawn, *and Your faith in the nights*, refers to the inhabitants of this world which is compared to the night. Let them both declare the faithfulness and kindness of the Holy One, blessed be He, which He has shown me by saving me from the judgment of Gehinnom.

MITZVOS THAT REQUIRE TEN

[Psalm 92 continues:] *Upon a ten-stringed instrument and lyre (ibid. v.4)*, teaching that every trustworthy testimony should be said by ten. The harp on which David played had ten strings. Ten men should be present at a bris milah. Ten men should participate in a funeral. Ten men must be present when a berachah is said with *Elokeinu*. A *chalitzah*⁶⁶ ceremony must be performed in the presence of ten men. A marriage must be performed in the presence of ten

⁶⁵ The word *lehodos* can be translated as to admit or confess.

⁶⁶ If a married man dies childless, the widow is to marry her dead husband's brother. This practice is known as *yibbum* (*Devarim* 25:5,6). If the dead man's brother does not wish to marry the widow, they perform the procedure known as a *chalitzah*, which means "removal," in this case, the removal of the brother-in-law's shoe. Only after the *chalitzah* ceremony has been completed is the widow free to marry someone else.

men, as it says, *He then took ten men of the elders of the city* (Ruth 4:2).

The Holy One, blessed be He, said: I cherish the thoughts of Yisrael [which they sing accompanied by] a lyre and a harp, as it says, *with singing accompanied by a harp* (Tehillim 92:4).

ADAM EXTOLS G-D

For You have gladdened me with Your deeds (ibid. v.5). Said Adam: The Holy One, blessed be He, has gladdened me by bringing me into Gan Eden and by showing me the four kingdoms of Babylonia, Persia-Media, Greece, and Edom (Rome). He showed me David son of Yishai, the future ruler. I took seventy of my years and added them to his lifespan, as it says, *May You add days to the days of the king, may his years be like all generations* (Tehillim 41:7). I sang praises to G-d for His deeds, as it says, *At the works of Your hands I sing glad songs* (ibid. 72:5).

How great are Your deeds, Hashem (ibid. v.6). Adam exalted and lauded G-d, the Most High, saying, *How great are Your deeds, Hashem*, but the profundity of Your thoughts is deeper than the deepest abyss, as it says, *exceedingly profound are Your thoughts* (ibid.).

A boor cannot know (ibid. v.7), refers to a vulgar man without understanding. He can be taught wisdom by the sages of Yisrael, as it says, *Understand, you boors among the people* (Tehillim 94:8). But a man who is [only] well-versed in secular studies will remain a fool, because he lacks knowledge of Torah, as it says, *nor can a fool understand this* (ibid. 92:6).

When the wicked bloom like grass (ibid. v.8). When the wicked proliferate like weeds across the land, and evil idolaters blossom, it is time to prepare for the days of Mashiach, for the Holy One, blessed be He, increased them in order to annihilate them in this world and the World to Come, as it says, *to destroy them till eternity* (ibid. v.8).

But You remain exalted forever, Hashem (v.9). David saw the wicked thriving like weeds across the land, and evil idolaters blossoming; therefore he did not say Halleluyah until he saw that they

would be destroyed in time to come, as it says, *Sinners will cease from the earth, and the wicked will be no more. Bless Hashem, O my soul, Halleluyah (Tehillim 104:35)*. At that time, the Holy One, blessed be He, will be King, exalted in the higher and the lower worlds, as it says, *But You remain exalted forever (ibid. 92:10)*

Your enemies shall perish (ibid. 92:10). The B'nei Yisrael said before the Holy One, Blessed be He, "Master of the World, Your enemies have placed a harsh yoke on our necks. However, we know they will be destroyed and the evildoers will be scattered like chaff in the winds, as it says, *Your enemies shall perish, dispersed shall be all doers of iniquity (ibid.)*."

You raise my horn high like that of a re'eim (ibid. v.11). Just as a re'eim's horns are longer than the horns of any other animal, and it goes right and left, so will the horns [i.e., the might] of [Mashiach], Menachem ben Amiel ben Yosef, be greater than that of any nation,⁶⁷ and he will gore towards the four corners of the earth. Moshe said about him, *His glory is like a first-born ox, and his horns are the horns of the re'eim (Devarim 33:17)*, and with him are the myriad of Ephraim and the thousands of Menasheh (*ibid.*).

Kings will take their stand against [Mashiach] to kill him, as it says, *The kings of the earth take their stand (Tehillim 2:2)*, and the Jews in Eretz Yisrael will be in great distress, but [their trust in G-d will remain as steadfast as] an ever-fresh olive tree, as it says, *I was saturated with ever-fresh oil (ibid. 92:11)*.

My eyes have seen my vigilant foes (ibid.). The Jews in Eretz Yisrael will be [the first] to see the downfall of their enemies, as it says, *My eyes have seen my vigilant foes*.

A righteous man will flourish like a date palm (ibid. v.12). Just as a date palm is beautiful to look at, with sweet and delectable fruit, so is [Mashiach] the son of David's appearance splendid and magnificent, and all his deeds are good and appealing in G-d's eyes.

Like a cedar in the Lebanon he will grow tall (ibid.). Just as a cedar is firmly anchored in the ground by an abundance of roots

⁶⁷ Text emended by Rav David Luria.

unable to be dislodged by the most violent storms, so will [Mashiach] the son of David, have done numerous good deeds for the Holy One, blessed be He. Even if many enemies attack him, they will be unable to unnerve him, as it says, *Like a cedar in the Lebanon he will grow tall.*

Planted in the House of Hashem (ibid. v.13). In time to come, the Holy One, blessed be He, will gather all the Jews from the four corners of earth. Like a gardener transplanting plants from one flowerbed [to a more fertile one], so will the Holy One, blessed be He, transfer Yisrael from a contaminated land to a pure land, as it says, *Planted in the House of Hashem.* Like a grassy meadow they will sprout and bloom in the Beis Hamikdash, as it says, *in the courtyards of G-d they will flourish (ibid. v.14).*

They will still be fruitful in old age (ibid. v.15). Just as old age confers grandeur and glory on the elderly, so will Yisrael be magnificent in the eyes of G-d [because of their good deeds].

To declare that Hashem is just (ibid. v.16). Why [does G-d allow the wicked to succeed only to destroy them in the end?] In order to proclaim, praise, and laud the power of His deeds, and to announce that He is righteous, just, and without iniquity, as it says, *My Rock in whom there is no wrong (ibid. v.16).*

CHAPTER TWENTY



THE FIRST SHABBOS, AND THE HAVDALAH BLESSING

[A]fter Adam sinned, Hashem] *drove Adam away, to work the soil from which he was taken (Bereishis 3:24).* Adam left Gan Eden, and upon his expulsion settled on Mount Moriah,

which is close to the entrance of Gan Eden. [G-d had created Adam on Mount Moriah, then] removed him from there [and brought him to Gan Eden], as it says, *Hashem, G-d, took Adam and placed him in Gan Eden (ibid. 2:15)*. Then [after he sinned,] G-d returned him to the place from where he had been taken, as it says, *To work the soil from which he was taken (ibid. 3:23)*. The *soil from which he was taken*, refers to the site of the Beis Hamikdash.

Rabbi Yehudah says: The Holy One, blessed be He, observed the first Shabbos, and Adam, the first earthly being, also observed that day. The Shabbos saved him from the evil [judgment of Gehinnom], comforting him from his anxieties, as it says, *When my anxiety was abundant within me, Your comforts cheered my soul (ibid. 84:19)*.

Rabbi Yehoshua ben Korchah says: They, [Adam and Chava,] tore leaves from the tree under which they were hiding, and sewed them together, as it says, *They sewed together fig leaves, and made themselves loin cloths (Bereishis 3:7)*. Rabbi Eliezer ben Yaakov says: The Holy One, blessed be He, made splendid garments for Adam and his helpmate from the skin that the serpent had shed, as it says, *G-d made leather garments for Adam and his wife, and He clothed them (Bereishis 3:21)*.

As it got dark on *Shabbos* afternoon, Adam thought, "Woe is me! Maybe the serpent that deceived me on *erev Shabbos* will strike me in the heel," for [G-d said to the serpent,] *and you will strike him in the heel (ibid. 3:15)*. G-d sent a pillar of fire to light up [the night] and protect him from harm. Seeing the pillar of fire, Adam became happy, and said, "Now I know that G-d is with me." Extending his hands toward the flame he said, "Blessed is Hashem who creates the illuminations of the fire."

After retracting his hands from the flame, Adam said, "Now I understand that the holy *Shabbos* is distinct from the weekdays and fire may not be ignited on *Shabbos*." Therefore, he said the Havdalah blessing, "Blessed are You, Hashem, who separates between the holy and the worldly."

HOW TO MAKE HAVDALAH

Rabbi Mana says: How [should Havdalah be performed]?

Standing before a flame, one recites the berachah over a cup of wine and [extending his hand toward the flame] says the berachah, “*Borei me’orei ha’eish*—Blessed is Hashem, who creates the illuminations of fire.” After retracting his fingers from the flame he says, “Blessed are You, Hashem, who separates between the holy and the worldly.”

If he has no wine, he extends his hand toward the flame, gazing at the white part of his nails and says, “Blessed is He who created the illuminations of fire.” On retracting his hand from the flame he says, “Blessed is He who separates between the holy and the worldly.”⁶⁸ If he has no flame, he extends his hand toward the light of the stars, which are comprised of fire, gazing at the white of his nails and says, “Blessed is He who created the illuminations of fire.” If it is cloudy [and the stars are not visible,] he should pick up a stone⁶⁹ and say, “Blessed is He who created the illuminations of fire.”

Rabbi Eliezer says: After drinking the entire cup of Havdalah wine, it is a mitzvah to pour water into the cup and drink it, to show one’s love of the mitzvah. He should daub his eyes with the leftover water. Why? Because the Sages said: The nonessential parts of a mitzvah stave off calamities.⁷⁰

Rav Tzadok says: One who neither recites the *Havdalah* beracha of “He who separates between the holy and the worldly,” on *Motza’ei Shabbos* nor listens to someone else’s *Havdalah* will never be blessed with success. However, one who listens to someone else’s *Havdalah* or makes *Havdalah* himself, is treasured by the

⁶⁸ The Tur Shulchan Aruch (Ohr Hachaim 196) after quoting the words of Pirkei D’rebbe Eliezer, concludes that our custom is not to recite the beracha of *havdalah*—He who separates between the holy and the worldly—without a cup.

⁶⁹ Since fire can be produced by striking two stones against each other.

⁷⁰ *Sukkah* 38a, thus daubing one’s eyes, which is not an essential part of the mitzvah, may prevent eye disease.

Holy One, blessed be He, as it says, *I have separated you from among the nations to be Mine* (Vayikra 20:26), and, *You shall be My special treasure* (Shemos 19:5).

ADAM DOES TESHUVAH

On [Adam's first] Sunday he entered the Upper River Gichon⁷¹ until the water reached his neck. He fasted and afflicted himself there for forty-nine days, whereupon his skin became perforated like a sieve.

Said Adam to the Holy One, blessed be He, "Master of all the worlds! Please remove my sin and accept my *teshuvah*, so future generations learn that one can do *teshuvah*, and You accept the *teshuvah* of penitents." What did the Holy One, blessed be He, do? He extended His right hand, removing Adam's sin and accepting his *teshuvah*, as it says, *My sin I make known to you, my iniquity I do not hide. I said, "I will confess my transgression to Hashem, and You have always forgiven my iniquitous sin, Selah"* (Tehillim 32:5) – *Selah*, means in this world and the next.

ADAM EXCAVATES ME'ARAS HAMACHPELAH

Adam applied to himself the following passage, *I knew that You would bring me to Death, to the destination of all life* (Iyov 32:5). Therefore he said, "While I am still alive, I will build myself a tomb off of Mount Moriah, where I will be laid to rest." Accordingly, he hewed a tomb for himself.

Adam said, "Just as the Tablets [of the Ten Commandments] that were written by the finger of the Holy One, blessed be He, caused the waters of the Yarden to split (Yehoshua 3:17), my body and bones which were formed by G-d's hands and which [were

⁷¹ This is the spring of Shiloach in Yerushalayim, not the River Gichon mentioned in Bereishis 2:13 (Rashi Berachos 10a).

brought to life] by the breath of His mouth, will [have miraculous powers and] become an object of idol worship after my death. [To preclude this,] I will excavate my burial site both below and inside the Cave. [Since there are two chambers,] the cave was called the Cave of Machpelah—the doubled cave.

[The cave] is also called the Cave of Machpelah—the doubled cave—because of the couples buried there: Adam and Chavah, Avraham and Sarah, Yitzchak and Rivkah, Yaakov and Leah. [The town] is also called *Kiryas Arba*, “City of Four,” because of the four couples that are buried there. Speaking of them the prophet says, *He will come in peace; they will rest on their resting places—he who walks in his integrity* (*Yeshayah* 57:2).

CHAPTER TWENTY - ONE



CHAVAH'S SONS

But of the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden . . . (*Bereishis* 3:2). Rabbi Ze'ira says: The tree mentioned in this verse represents man, as it says, *Man is like the tree of the field* (*Devarim* 20:19).

The phrase, *in the middle of the garden* is a euphemism describing the internal organs of the female body, for *the garden* symbolizes woman, as it says, *A garden locked is My sister, My bride* (*Shir Hashirim* 4:12)—just as a seed planted in the earth germinates and sprouts, so does a woman conceive from her husband's seed and gives birth.

The serpent had relations with Chavah, and she conceived Kayin. Afterwards she [had marital relations with Adam and] con-

ceived Hevel, as it says, *Adam knew his wife Chavah* (*Bereishis* 4:1). What does it mean *Adam knew*? He knew that she was pregnant. Because she realized [the serpent] was not an earthly creature, but rather [Satan,] a heavenly being, she said [when naming Kayin,] *I have gained a man with G-d* (*ibid*).

Rabbi Yishmael said: Sheis,⁷² [who was conceived from Adam] is the forebear of all generations of *tzaddikim*; Kayin is the ancestor of all the wicked generations who rebel and revolt against Heaven, saying, "We do not need Your raindrops," as it says, *They said to G-d, "Go away from us!"* (*Iyov* 21:14).

KAYIN AND HEVEL MARRY THEIR TWIN SISTERS

Rabbi Miyashi says: Kayin and Hevel, were each born with a twin sister [whom they married]. Rabbi Yishmael raised an objection: [How can a man marry his sister?] After all, it says, *If a man takes his sister . . . chesed hu—it is a disgrace*⁷³ (*Vayikra* 20:17)! [Rabbi Miyashi] replied: Since there were no other women in the world for them to marry, it was sanctioned, [and the word *chesed* in the verse should not be interpreted *it is a disgrace*, rather it should be interpreted *it is a kindness*.] This is the meaning of the verse, *The world is built on chesed [kindness]* (*Tehillim* 89:3). Before the Giving of the Torah the world was built on *chesed* (kindness) [permitting this relationship].

KAYIN AND HEVEL BRING OFFERINGS

Rabbi Yose said: Kayin and Hevel were twins, for it says, *She conceived and gave birth to Kayin* (*Bereishis* 4:1), and immediately she gave birth again, as the next verse says, *She continued to give birth*

⁷² Text emended by *Biur Rav David Luria*.

⁷³ The word *chesed* has two meanings: "kindness" and "disgrace."

to his brother Hevel. Kayin chose to cultivate the soil and raise crops, whereas Hevel became a shepherd. [Kayin] provided Hevel with food from his produce, and [Hevel] supplied Kayin with food from his herd.

On the night of Pesach, Adam said to his sons, “In time to come, Yisrael will offer the Pesach sacrifice. You too, should bring an offering to your Creator.” Kayin offered shoddy roasted flax seeds, while Hevel offered from the firstborn of his flock, unshorn sheep [which included their wool]. Kayin’s offering was rejected, whereas Hevel’s offering was accepted favorably, as it says, *G-d paid heed to Hevel and his offering (ibid. v.4).*

SHAATNEZ, A FORBIDDEN MIXTURE

Rabbi Yehoshua ben Korcha says: The Holy One, blessed be He, said, “The [flax] offering of Kayin and [the wool offering of] Hevel shall never be combined.” Therefore they may not, G-d forbid, be blended [and worn] in the fabric of a garment, as it says, *Do not wear a forbidden mixture, shaatnez, where wool and linen⁷⁴ are together [in a single garment] (Devarim 22:11).* You may not even drape [such a garment] over your shoulder, for it says, *A garment of a forbidden mixture, of shaatnez, is not to go on you (Vayikra 19:19).*

KAYIN KILLS HEVEL

Rabbi Tzadok says: Kayin’s heart was filled with envy and hatred because Hevel’s offering was favorably accepted. [His jealousy was also provoked] because [Hevel’s] twin sister and wife was a woman of exceptional beauty. [Kayin said,] “I will kill my brother Hevel and marry his wife,” as it says, *Kayin said to his brother Hevel . . . But*

⁷⁴ Wool, comes from sheep; linen comes from flax fibers.

then it was when they were out in the field that Kayin rose up against his brother Hevel and killed him (Bereishis 4:8)—The word *field* implies [they were arguing about] a woman, [for a woman] is compared to a field, as it says, *For man is like a tree in the field (Devarim 20:19)*. Kayin hurled a stone at Hevel's forehead, killing him, as it says, *Kayin rose up against his brother Hevel and killed him (Bereishis 4:8)*.

Rabbi Yochanan said: Kayin did not realize that G-d knows all hidden things. He dug [a grave] and hid his brother's body in the earth.

The Holy One, blessed be He, asked him, "Where is your brother Hevel?"

Replied Kayin, "Master of the universe! You made me keeper of fields and vineyards, but you did not appoint me as my brother's keeper," as it says, *Am I my brother's keeper? (ibid. v.9)*.

The Holy One, blessed be He, said, "Will you murder and also inherit?⁷⁵ *The voice of your brother's blood is screaming to Me (Bereishis 4:10)*." Hearing this, Kayin was startled [and could not respond]. [G-d] cursed him for viciously killing his brother, condemning him to wander in the world.

KAYIN DOES TESHUVAH

Replied Kayin, *Is my sin then too great to forgive? Can it not be atoned at all? (ibid. v.13)*. This statement was considered *teshuvah*. Kayin continued, "[I am afraid] that some day a *tzaddik* may kill me by uttering Your ineffable Name."⁷⁶

What did G-d do? He took one of the twenty-two letters of the Torah and inscribed it on Kayin's arm, so no one would kill him, as it says, *G-d placed a mark on Kayin so that whoever would find*

⁷⁵ Text emended as in 1 *Melachim* 21:19 (*Biur Rav David Luria*).

⁷⁶ Ramban in his commentary on the Torah says that Moshe was the reincarnation of Hevel, and the Egyptian that Moshe killed by uttering the ineffable Name was the reincarnation of Kayin. Thus in his next life his premonition came true (*Biur R. David Luria*).

him would not kill him (ibid. v.15).

THE RAVEN'S GOOD DEED

The guard dog of Hevel's flock now protected his corpse from the beasts of the field and the predatory birds. Adam and his wife cried over [Hevel's death] and bewailed him. They did not know what to do with the corpse, having never witnessed a burial. Just then, a raven whose companion had died, dug a hole in the earth in front of them and buried the dead bird.

Said Adam, "I will do what the raven did." He dug a grave and buried Hevel's remains. The Holy One, blessed be He, rewarded the ravens in this world. What is their reward? At birth, their young look white. Thinking they are young snakes, the mother raven abandons them, but the Holy One, blessed be He, feeds them abundantly. Furthermore, when young ravens cry out for rain, the Holy One, blessed be He, answers their cry, as it says. *He gives to an animal its food, to young ravens that cry out (Tehillim 147:9).*

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO



FALLEN ANGELS

Adam lived 130 years, and he had a son in his likeness and form (Bereishis 5:3). From this we learn that Kayin, [who was born on

⁷⁷ The expression *He had a son in his likeness and form* is not used in connection with Kayin's birth; it says there merely, *She conceived and gave birth to Kayin (4:1).*

the first day of creation], was not fathered by Adam [but by the Serpent]. He was not in Adam's likeness and form,⁷⁷ nor did he behave like his brother Hevel. Eventually, Sheis, who looked like Adam and behaved like his brother Hevel, was born to Adam, as it says, *[Adam] had a son in his likeness and form*.

Rabbi Yishmael says: Sheis is the father of all mankind and of all the generations of tzaddikim. Kayin is the progenitor of all the generations of evildoers and sinners who rebel against G-d, saying, "We don't need Your rain nor do we need to know Your ways," as it says, *They said to G-d, "Go away from us! We have no desire to know Your ways"* (Iyov 21:14).

KAYIN'S DEPRAVED OFFSPRING

Rabbi Meir says: The offspring of Kayin—both men and women—walked naked like animals. They defiled themselves with all kinds of incestuous behavior—a man having sexual contact with his mother, daughter, and sister-in-law, publicly and openly. They were driven by their evil impulse and lewd thoughts, as it says, *G-d saw that man's wickedness on earth was increasing* (Bereishis 6:5).

FALLEN ANGELS

Rebbi says: When the angels who had fallen from their place of holiness in heaven, saw the daughters of Kayin walking naked and making up their eyes like prostitutes, they strayed, taking some of them as wives, as it says, *The sons of G-d saw that the daughters of man were good, and they took themselves wives from whomever they chose* (Bereishis 6:2).

Rabbi Yehoshua ben Korcha says: The angels are flaming fires, as it says, *the flaming fires are His attendants* (Tehillim 104:4). Can fire have relations with a human without consuming his body? When they fell from their holiness in heaven, they became clothed

in physical matter looking and acting like human beings, as it says, *My flesh is clothed with maggots and clumps of earth* (Iyov 7:5).

Rabbi Tzadok says: The fallen angels begat the giants who robbed and committed violence and murder, as it says [about the giants], *While we were there we saw the titans* (Bamidbar 13:33), and it says [about the fallen angels], *The titans were on the earth* (Bereishis 6:4).

Rabbi Yehoshua ben Korcha said: Yisrael are called “children of G-d” as it says, *You are children of Hashem your G-d* (Devarim 14:1). Angels are also called “children of G-d,” as it says, *When the morning stars sang in unison and all the children of G-d shouted* (Iyov 38:7). The fallen angels were called “children of G-d” only as long as they remained in their place of holiness, as it says, *And only after [they lost the title] of “the children of G-d” would they consort with the daughters of man and they bore them children* (Bereishis 6:4).

Rabbi Levi says: They fathered children, multiplying like big swarming creatures, giving birth to six at a time. [The new-born] would stand upright, speak the holy tongue, and dance before them, as it says, *They send out their young ones [carefree] as sheep* (Iyov 21:11).

NOACH’S ADMONITION

Noach said to them, “Repent of your evil ways and deeds, so the flood will not engulf you, destroying mankind.”

They replied, “We will stop having children.” What did they do? When having intercourse with their wives, they let their seed go to waste on the ground, to avoid having children, as it says, *G-d saw the world and it was corrupted; all flesh had perverted its way on earth* (Bereishis 6:12).

They said, “We are so tall that if He brings the waters of the flood upon us, it will barely reach our shoulders; and if He raises the waters of the deep on us, the soles of our feet will shut the deep wells.” What did they do? They spread the soles of their feet sealing all the deep wells. What did the Holy One, blessed be He, do? He

brought the waters of the deep to a boil, scalding their flesh and stripping their skin, as it says, *When they are scorched they shrivel up, in the heat they depart abruptly from their place* (Iyov 6:17).

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

NOACH AND THE FLOOD

A*nd this is how you shall construct it* (Bereishis 6:15). [From the words *and this*,] Rabbi Shemayah taught, that the Holy One, blessed be He, pointed with His finger saying to Noach, “The ark shall be made exactly like this. 150 stalls shall be constructed along the right side of the ark, and an additional 150 stalls along the left side of the ark. 33 stalls shall be placed along the width in the front and an additional 33 stalls in the back. Ten compartments in the middle shall serve as storage chambers for food. Five ducts with shut-off valves for water shall be placed on the right side and five on the left side. The lower, second and third decks shall all be built according to this layout. The bottom deck will house individual stalls for domestic and wild animals; cages for all species of birds will be on the second deck; and coops for swarming and creeping animals, and the living quarters for people will be on the third deck.”

Because [there were 365 compartments on each floor] we can infer that there are 365⁷⁸ [primary] species of domestic and wild animals; 365 [primary] species of birds, and 365 [primary] species of creeping and swarming animals in the world, as it says, *Make a first, second, and third deck* (Bereishis 6:16).

⁷⁸ Text emended by RD”L

THE ANIMALS ENTER THE ARK

Rabbi Tanchuma says: It took Noah 52 years to build the ark, giving the people time to repent from their evil ways and deeds.

Until the advent of the flood, unclean animals outnumbered clean ones. The Holy One, blessed be He, wishing to increase the number of clean animals and diminish the number of unclean ones, told Noah to take seven pairs of every clean animal into the ark. Replied Noah, “Master of the universe! How can I possibly gather them all into the ark!” Thereupon the angels in charge of each species gathered them, bringing along food for them to eat. Since they came of their own accord, the verse says, *They came to Noah into the ark (ibid. 7:15)*, rather than, *Noah brought the animals*.

Rabbi Mana says: When all the animals were in the ark, the Holy One, blessed be He, Himself, closed and sealed the ark’s door, as it says, *G-d then sealed him inside (ibid. v.16)*.

There was a luminous stone hanging in the ark which shone like a bright lamp providing light for all the creatures, as it says, *Make a light for the ark (ibid. 5:16)*.

THE FLOOD DESCENDS

Rabbi Tzadok says: On the tenth of Marcheshvan the creatures entered the ark. On the 17th of that month, masculine floodwaters descended on the earth, while feminine waters of the deep well-springs rose simultaneously to the surface. The two waters joined, surging to destroy the world, as it says, *the waters greatly swelled on the earth (ibid 7:19)*. All living creatures on earth were obliterated, as it says, *[The flood] thus obliterated every organism that had been on the face of the land (ibid. v.23)*. However, Noah and all that were with him in the ark survived, as it says, *Only Noah and those that were with him in the ark survived (ibid.)*. Og, king of Bashan also survived by sitting on the rungs of one of the ladders [outside] the ark. He swore to Noah and his sons that he would forever be

their slave [if they sustained him.] What did Noach do? He drilled a hole into the side of the ark and handed Og food every day, so he was able to survive, as it says, *Of all the Refa'im giants, only Og, king of Bashan, survived* (Devarim 3:11). Also in Eretz Yisrael no rain fell, as it says [about Eretz Yisrael], *Son of man, say to her: You are a land that has not been cleansed, that has not been rained upon on the day of fury* (Yechezkel 22:24), however water from the surrounding lands did flow into Eretz Yisrael.

THE RAVEN AND THE DOVE

Noach sent out the raven to find out what happened to the world. It flew away, and finding a carcass on one of the mountain peaks ate it without reporting to Noach. Noach then sent out the dove, who carried out its mission, as it says, *The dove returned to him toward evening, and there was a freshly-plucked olive leaf in its beak* (ibid. 8:11). Why did he bring an olive leaf? The dove said to the Holy One, blessed be He, “Master of the universe! I would rather my food taste bitter as an olive leaf, yet be provided by You, than taste sweet and be provided by mortals.” From here we learn that sending a message with a wicked person is like sending it with a fool, and sending a message with a virtuous person is like sending a message with a trustworthy agent.

LIVING IN THE ARK

Rabbi Tzadok says: The creatures were in the ark for twelve months. All that time Noach stood and prayed to the Holy One, blessed be He, saying, “Master of the universe! Release me from this confinement for I am disgusted with the smell of lions, bears, and panthers. The righteous will coronate You with the crown of majesty for releasing me from this confinement, as it says, *Release my soul from confinement to acknowledge Your Name. The righteous*

will crown themselves with me, when You bestow kindness on me (Tehillim 142:6)."

Rabbi Levitas of Yavneh says: Upon entering the ark, Noah separated males from females, as it says, *Noach, along with his sons, his wife, and his sons' wives came into the ark ahead of the waters of the flood (Bereishis 7:7)*. The males were on one side, and females were on the other side. However, upon leaving the ark he placed the males alongside the females and husband and wife were together, as it says, *Leave the ark—you, along with your wife, your sons and your sons' wives (ibid. 8:15)*.

G-d blessed them to be fruitful and multiply on earth, as it says, *G-d blessed Noach and his children saying, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth (ibid. 9:1)*.

CANAAN IS CURSED

Noach found a vine bearing clusters of grapes that had been driven out of Gan Eden.⁷⁹ He ate the fruit, and craving more, he planted a vineyard. On that very day the vines bore fruit, as it says, *On the day you were planted you flourished (Yeshayah 17:11)*. After drinking from its wine he uncovered himself in the tent. Canaan [the son of Cham] entered, and seeing his [grand]father lying naked, he tied a string around his *bris milah*, making him impotent.⁸⁰ Then he left the tent and told his father Cham, who entered and also saw his father naked. Disregarding the mitzvah of honoring one's father he ridiculed his father to his brothers. His brothers scolded him, and taking their father's cloak, they walked backwards covering their fa-

⁷⁹ The *Zohar* 73a explains that Noach sinned with wine from grapes just as Adam Harishon sinned with wine, following the opinion that the forbidden fruit of the Tree of Knowledge was a cluster of grapes. This is alluded to in the verse, *Their grapes are poison grapes; their grape clusters are bitterness to them (Devarim 32:32)*.

⁸⁰ Noach wanted to have a fourth son and Canaan prevented this from happening (*Rashi* on *Bereishis* 9:25)

ther with it, as it says, *Shem and Yefes took the cloak, and walking backwards they covered their father's nakedness* (Bereishis 9:23). When Noach awoke from his wine-induced sleep, and realized what his youngest son had done to him, he cursed him, as it says, *Cursed is Canaan!* (*ibid.* v.25).

THANKSGIVING OFFERINGS

Noach sat down and reflected: The Holy One, blessed be He, has saved me from the waters of the flood, releasing me from this confinement. Should I not offer [thanksgiving] sacrifices and burnt offerings? Therefore he gathered from the kosher animals, oxen, sheep, and goats, and from the kosher fowl, turtle-doves and young pigeons, rebuilt the first altar on which Kayin and Hevel had brought their sacrifices, and offered four burnt offerings [of each species], as it says, *Noach built an altar to G-d, and he sacrificed completely-burned offerings on the altar* (*ibid.* 8:20). The appeasing aroma rose up to the Holy One, blessed be He, as it says, *G-d smelled the appeasing fragrance* (*ibid.* v.21).

THE RAINBOW

What did G-d do? He stretched forth His right hand and swore never to bring a flood upon the world again, as it says, *For like the waters of Noach this shall be to Me: Just as I swore that the waters of Noach would never again pass over the earth . . .* (Yeshayah 54:9). He placed the rainbow as a sign of the oath of the covenant between Him and the earth, as it says, *I have placed My rainbow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and the earth* (*ibid.* 9:13).

The Sages also ordained that the oath of Noach be remembered every day [in the *Shema*], as it says, *In order to prolong your days and the days of your children upon the land that Hashem has sworn*

to your forefathers to give them like [He has sworn about] the days of heaven upon the earth (Devarim 11:21).

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR



THE TOWER OF BAVEL

Gd blessed Noach and his children, as it says, *G-d blessed Noach and his children (Bereishis 9:1)*. Each of them received a specific gift; additionally the entire earth was bequeathed as their inheritance. He blessed Shem with beautiful olive-skinned children, giving them the inhabited territory [of the earth] as a heritage. He blessed Cham with raven-like, dark-skinned children, giving them the coastal areas as a heritage. He blessed Yefes with beautiful fair-skinned children, giving them regions of desert and [fertile] farmland as a heritage.

THE TOWER OF BAVEL

Rabbi Ilai says: They proliferated and multiplied like big swarming insects, giving birth to six children from a single pregnancy. They were one nation, united in spirit, all speaking the same language, as it says, *The entire earth had one language and one culture (Bereishis 11:1)*. They disdained the desirable land [of Eretz Yisrael], as it

says, *When [the people] migrated from the east (ibid. 11:2). They moved to the land of Shinar, settling on its vast area of open level land, as it says, They found a valley in the land of Shinar, and they settled there (ibid.).*

Rabbi Akiva says: They abandoned the Kingdom of Heaven taking Nimrod as their king. He was a slave and the son of a slave, for all the descendants of Cham are slaves. Woe to a land that is ruled by a slave, as it says, *Because of three things the earth trembles: because of a slave who reigns . . . (Mishlei 30:22).*

Rabbi Chanina says: Nimrod was a powerful dictator, as it says, *Chush was the father of Nimrod, who was the first mighty man on earth (Bereishis 10:9).*

Rabbi Yehudah says: G-d made a coat for Adam and his wife which was taken into the ark; when they left the ark, Cham the son of Noach took it giving it as an inheritance to Nimrod. When Nimrod wore it, all the domestic animals, wild animals, and fowl bowed before him. Thinking he had enormous power, the people crowned him as their king, as it says, *There is thus a saying, "Like Nimrod, a mighty hunter before G-d" (Bereishis 10:11).*

Said Nimrod to his people, "Come now! Let us build ourselves a big city where we will live; we will not be scattered over the face of the earth like the previous generations. Furthermore, let us build a tall tower in the center and go up to heaven, for G-d's power is only in heaven.⁸¹ Let us make ourselves a great name on earth, as it says, *Let us make ourselves a name (ibid. 11:4).*

Rabbi Pinchas says: [Since Shinar is situated in a plain,] there were no stones with which to build the city and the tower. What did they do? They formed bricks, firing them as potters make earthenware, eventually building a seventy *mil*-high tower with stairways on its east and west sides. The laborers used the eastern stairway to carry the bricks up, and the western stairway to go down. If a laborer fell down and was killed nobody cared, but when a brick fell down they sat and groaned, "Woe is us! How can this loss

⁸¹ Text emended by *Radal*.

be replaced!”

When Avram, son of Terach, passed the construction site and saw them building the city he cursed them with G-d's name, saying, *Consume, O L-rd, and confuse their tongue* (*Tehillim* 55:10). But they disdained his words, dismissing them like a discarded stone. But [Avram was an outstanding man], a superior stone which deserves to be the cornerstone of a structure! He is referred to in the verse, *The stone the builders despised has become the cornerstone* (*Tehillim* 118:22).

G-D AND HIS SEVENTY ANGELS DESCEND

Rabbi Shimon says: The Holy One, blessed be He, summoned the seventy angels that surround His Throne, telling them, *Let us confuse their speech*. How do we know the Holy One, blessed be He, summoned them? It says, *Come now, let us descend and confuse their speech* (*Bereishis* 10:7). It does not say, *I will descend*, but, *Let us descend*.

How do we know He cast lots [to divide the nations amongst the angels]? It says, *When the Most High gave nations their heritage* (*Devarim* 32:8). G-d's lot fell on Avraham and his descendants, for it says, *But His own nation remained Hashem's portion, Yaakov was the lot of His heritage* (*ibid.* v.9). Said the Holy One, blessed be He, “My lot fell on the one My soul desired,” as it says, *Lots have fallen to Me in pleasant places* (*Tehillim* 16:6).

The Holy One, blessed be He, and the seventy angels that surround the Throne of Glory descended and confused the speech of [the people, dividing them] into seventy states and languages, each becoming a separate nation with its own script and language. He appointed a guardian angel for each nation, however, Yisrael became G-d's portion and lot. Thus it says, *His own nation remained Hashem's portion* (*Devarim* 32:9). How do we know that the Holy

⁸² The first descent was after the transgression when G-d spoke to Adam and Chavah in Gan Eden (*Bereishis* 3:8). See beginning of Chapter Fourteen.

One, blessed be He, descended? It says, *Hashem descended to see the city and the tower (ibid. 11:5)*. This was G-d's second descent.⁸²

When the people tried speaking to each other in the holy tongue, [which had been their common language before their speech was confounded,] they could not understand one another. What did they do? They took their swords in hand and fought each other to destruction, so that half the world population perished. In the wake of this event, G-d scattered them over the face of the earth, as it says, *So Hashem scattered them from there over the face of all the world, and they had to stop building the city (ibid. 11:8)*.

EISAV SEIZES ADAM'S GARMENT

When Eisav, Yaakov's brother, saw Nimrod wearing the garments that the Holy One, blessed be He, had made for Adam and Chavah, he ardently desired them, and killing [Nimrod] took the garments. How do we know he fervently desired them? Because it says, *Rivkah took her older son's desired garments (ibid. 27:15)*. When wore them, he, [like Nimrod], became a mighty hunter,⁸³ as it says, *Eisav became a skilled hunter (ibid. 25:27)*. When Yaakov left his father [after receiving the blessings,] he said, "The wicked Eisav is not worthy to wear these garments." Therefore he dug a hole and buried them, as it says, *Hidden in the ground is his rope, his snare is on the path (Iyov 18:10)*.⁸⁴

⁸³ Emendation by *Radal*.

⁸⁴ "His snare is on the path" refers to the garments with which he hunted and trapped.

⁸⁵ See the beginning of chapter 14.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

THE DESTRUCTION OF SEDOM

The third descent⁸⁵ took place when the Holy One, blessed be He, went down to Sedom, as it says, *I will descend and see* (*Bereishis* 18:21). The Holy One, blessed be He, said, “Let Me inform My beloved Avraham of the momentous act which I will perform in my world,” as it says, *Shall I hide from Avraham what I am going to do?* (*ibid.* v.17).

Rabbi Chanina says: The Holy One, blessed be He, appeared to Avraham with three angels, as it says, *[Avraham] lifted his eyes and saw three men* (*ibid.* 18:2). One of them announced Sarah’s pregnancy, as it says, *I will return to you this time next year, and your wife Sarah will have a son* (*ibid.* v.10). One reported the debauchery of Sedom and Amorah, as it says, *G-d said: The cry of Sedom is so great, and their sin is so very grave* (*ibid.* v.20). This is the basis of the saying: If one must convey a disagreeable message, he should preface it with good news, only afterwards relating the unpleasant story. From what source is this derived? From the Holy One, blessed be He, Who first announced to Avraham the pregnancy of his wife Sarah, then related the repugnant deeds of Sedom.

AVRAHAM INTERCEDES FOR SEDOM

[Avraham] implored and beseeched G-d for his nephew Lot, saying, “Master of the universe! Shall the righteous one die like the evildoer?” as it says, *Will you actually wipe out the innocent together with the guilty?* (*ibid.* 18:23). Replied the Holy One, blessed be He, “Avraham! By your life; in the merit of fifty righteous men I

will forgive Sedom," as it says, *If I find fifty righteous men in Sedom, I will forgive the sins [of the entire city]* (*ibid.* 10:26). This gives us the saying, "The whole world endures in the merit of fifty tzaddikim." Avraham continued to beg and implore G-d until he came down to ten tzaddikim. Based on this the Sages said: If a town has ten tzaddikim it will be saved in their merit, as it says, *I will not destroy for the sake of the ten* (*ibid.* 10:32).

THE SELFISHNESS AND GREED OF SEDOM

Rabbi Ze'ira says: The people of Sedom became exceedingly wealthy from the good and fertile land on which they lived, which provided all the basic commodities. Additionally, gold deposits were abundant there, as it says: *It was a place where gold is refined . . . and it has dust of gold* (*Iyov* 25:1,6).⁸⁶ When a man needed vegetables he told his servant, "Gather me an *issur's* worth of vegetables." The servant picking the vegetables would find gold under the produce, as it says, *It had dust of gold* (*Iyov* 25:6). [Sedom] was also rich in silver, as it says, *For there is a source for silver* (*ibid.* 25:1). It yielded precious stones and pearls, as it says, *It was a place whose stones were sapphires* (*ibid.* 25:6). It provided ample food, as it says, *It is a land where food once grew* (*ibid.* v.5). But instead of placing their trust in their Creator they relied on their abundant riches. Great affluence causes the wealthy to lose their fear of heaven, for they rely on their possessions.

Rabbi Yehoshua ben Korcha says: By refusing to provide food for visitors and strangers they showed contempt for the honor of their Creator. They cut down the branches of the [ownerless] fruit trees so no outsider—not even birds—should enjoy [the fruit], as it says, *[on] a route not known to the buzzard, [that] the vulture's eye has not seen* (*Iyov* 28:7).

⁸⁶ Text emended by Radal.

Rabbi Nesanel says: Their appointed judges were compelled to render false judgments. Every visitor and stranger who entered Sedom was oppressed by their crooked judgment and forced to leave the town naked, as it says, *They have oppressed the stranger without justice* (*Yechezkel* 22:29).

The [people of Sedom] were rich in the produce of the land, living in security and peaceful serenity, without fear of attack from the surrounding countries. Despite their wealth, they did not lift their hand to give a crust of bread to the poor and destitute, as it says, *Behold, this was the sin of Sedom your sister* (*ibid.* 16:49).

Rabbi Yehudah says: They proclaimed in Sedom, “Whoever lifts his hand to give a slice of bread to the poor and destitute will be burned at the stake.”

KIND-HEARTED PELOTIS

Pelotis, Lot’s daughter, who was married to one of the prominent citizens of Sedom, spotted a wretchedly poor man and felt sorry for him. What did she do? She hid food in her water pitcher giving it to the poor man on her daily trip to draw water. The people of Sedom wondered how the pauper survived. When they found out, they took Pelotis to be burned at the stake.

She prayed, “G-d of the world! Enact my judgment and avenge my sentence against the people of Sedom.” Her outcry rose to the Throne of Glory. Said the Holy One, blessed be He, *I will descend and see whether they have done everything implied by her outcry that is coming before Me. If not, I will know* (*Bereishis* 18:20). [In effect, G-d said,] If the people of Sedom are indeed guilty of this young woman’s accusation, I will destroy its very foundations, turning the city upside down, as it says, *everything implied by her outcry*. Note: It does not say, *everything implied by their outcry*, but *by her outcry*, [the outcry of Pelotis].

[The exceptional kindness displayed by Lot’s daughter Pelotis] is explained in the verse, *One who walks with the wise will grow wise* (*Mishlei* 13:20). To what can this be compared? To one who enters

a perfumery. Although he does not do any business there, the pleasant smell will linger on his clothes. So too, one who keeps company with tzaddikim learns from their words, adopting their good deeds. [Pelotis learned to do kindness from her father Lot, who was influenced by his uncle, the righteous Avraham.]

[The verse continues,] *But the companion of fools will be broken.* To what can this be compared? To one who enters a tannery; the foul odor will accompany him all day. So too, one who associates with the wicked, learns from their evil ways and deeds.

LOT AND THE TWO ANGELS

One who walks with the wise will grow wise, can also be applied to Lot who accompanied Avraham learning from his good deeds and ways. What did Avraham do? He established a guest-house on the outskirts of Charan, inviting all passing travelers, and offering them food and drink. He then told them, "There is one G-d in the world." When Lot first settled in Sedom, he did the same thing. But when the people of Sedom decreed, "Whoever lifts his hand to give a slice of bread to a poor man will be burned alive," he became afraid, only inviting guests at night.

Lot thought the two angels⁸⁷ were passing strangers and ran to welcome them, as it says, *The two angels came to Sedom in the evening while Lot was sitting at the city gate . . . Lot saw them and got up to greet them* (*Bereishis* 19:1). Why was Lot sitting at the city gate? On that day [the people of Sedom] had appointed him [as Chief Justice]. He invited⁸⁸ [the angels] saying, "Please spend the night in my house; eat and drink and continue on your way in peace." When they did not accept his invitation, Lot grabbed them by their hands, forcing them into his house, as it says, *[Lot] kept urging them* (*ibid.* 19:3).

⁸⁷ These were two of the three angels who had visited Avraham (18:2).

⁸⁸ Text emended by Radal.

⁸⁹ Saying, *Erase me now from the book that You have written* (*Shemos* 32:32).

SEDOM IS LAID WASTE

A boy spotted [the visitors] and told the people of Sedom. They gathered in front of Lot's house to apply their customary treatment [to the guests]. They said to Lot, "*Where are the strangers who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us so that we may know them and deal with them in our customary manner.*" What did Lot do? Just as Moshe was ready to offer his life for the Jewish people,⁸⁹ so too, did Lot offer his life [for his guests by confronting the people of Sedom]. He brought forth his two daughters instead of the two angels, as it says, *See now, I have two daughters who have never known a man. . . Do as you please with them (ibid. 19:8).* But the crowd did not accept the offer. What did the angels do to them? They struck them with blindness until dawn. As dawn was breaking [the angels] repaid Lot for forcing them to come into his house, for now they forced him, his wife, and his two daughters [to leave Sedom,] leading them outside and telling them, "Do not look back! for the *Shechinah* of the Holy One, blessed be He, has descended to rain down sulphur and fire on Sedom and Amorah."

Lot's wife, Idis, having pity on her married daughters in Sedom, looked back to see whether they were following her. She beheld the *Shechinah* behind her, and was turned into a pillar of salt. The pillar stands there to this day; oxen lap on its salt every day so that it is reduced until its feet, however each morning it grows back, as it says, *[Lot's] wife looked behind him, and she became a pillar of salt (ibid. 19:26).*

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

TEN TRIALS OF AVRAHAM

Our forefather Avraham was tested with ten trials, and withstood them all (*Avos* 5:4). Because [G-d] foresaw [Avraham's] descendants testing the Holy One, blessed be He, with ten trials (*Bamidbar* 14:23), He tested [Avraham] with ten trials so that his merit should be an antidote for their sins.

HIDDEN IN A CAVE

The first trial: Because [soothsayers saw a star rise] when our Father Avraham was born [they advised] Nimrod to kill him. He was hidden in a cave, seeing neither the sun nor the moon for thirteen years. When he emerged from the cave he spoke the holy tongue, despised the *asheirah* trees,⁹⁰ and detested graven images. He trusted in G-d's protection and said, *Hashem, Master of Legions, praise-worthy is the person who trusts in You* (*Tehillim* 84:13).

CAST INTO THE FIERY FURNACE

The second test: For ten years he was imprisoned, spending three years in a dungeon in Kusa and seven years in a dungeon in Kardu. Some say he was incarcerated for seven years in Kusa, and three years in Kardu. After ten years he was taken out of the dungeon and cast into a fiery furnace. The King of Glory stretched out His

⁹⁰. Trees that are worshipped as idols.

right hand, saving him from the blazing fire, as it says, *I am G-d who took you out of the furnace of Kasdim (Bereishis 15:7).*

WANDERINGS

The third trial: G-d made him wander far from his father's house, bringing him to Charan where his father Terach and his mother Amtalai later died.

Wandering is a trial harder to endure than any other hardship. How do we know G-d told him to wander? It says, *G-d said to Avram, "Go away from your land . . ."* (Bereishis 12:1).

FAMINE IN CANAAN

The fourth trial: Since the creation of heaven and earth, there had never been a famine. In order to test [Avraham] and cause him to go down to Egypt, there was a famine in the land. *Avram headed south to Egypt to stay there for a while (ibid. 12:10).* [The famine was] only in the Land of Canaan.

SARAH ABDUCTED

The fifth trial: Sarah was taken to be Pharaoh's wife. Can any man watch his wife's abduction without rending his clothes in grief? [Yet it does not say Avraham cried out to G-d because of her. Avraham knew] it was G-d's plan to test him, and Pharaoh would not come near her.

Rabbi Tarfon says: The night our Mother Sarah was abducted was the night of Pesach. The Holy One, blessed be He, struck Pharaoh and his household with severe plagues, just as in time to come, Egypt would be afflicted with severe plagues, as it says, *Hashem struck Pharaoh with severe plagues (ibid. 13:17).*

PHARAOH'S GIFTS

Rabbi Yehoshua ben Korcha says: Out of his love for [Sarah], Pharaoh gave her a *kesubah* (marriage contract) in which he transferred all his assets of silver, gold, slaves, and property to her. He consigned the Land of Goshen to her as a possession. Yisrael eventually settled in the Land of Goshen since it belonged to Sarah our Mother. Pharaoh also gave her his daughter Hagar as a handmaid. How do we know Hagar was her handmaid? Because it says, *Avram's wife Sarai had not borne him any children. She had an Egyptian handmaid by the name of Hagar (ibid. 16:1).*

Pharaoh was mystified and confused since he was unable to come near Sarah. Early in the morning he told Avraham, "Here is your wife, including the documents certifying her ownership of the gifts. Take her and go! Don't stay in this country any longer," as it says, *Here is your wife; take her and go! (ibid. 12:19).* The next verse says, *Pharaoh gave men orders regarding [Avram], and they sent him on his way.*

SARAH AND AVIMELECH

After taking Sarah, Avimelech gave Avraham the same type of gifts Pharaoh gave to Sarah, as it says, *Avimelech took sheep, cattle, and male and female slaves, and he gave [them] to Avraham (ibid. 19:14).*

[When Avraham left Egypt, the Holy One, blessed be He,] directed him to the Land of Canaan by way of the Land of Pelishtim.⁹¹

The ensuing events were envisioned by the Holy One, blessed be He. All the female members of Avimelech's household were in-

⁹¹. Emendation by Maharzav (Rabbi Zev Wolf Einhorn of Horodno).

fertile—even the insects in the palace were sterile. Thereupon Avimelech sent agents to snatch Sarah, thinking to father children with her. But the angel Michael descended and drew his sword to kill him.

Said Avimelech, “Is it lawful to kill me for something I did not know?” As it says, [*Avimelech said:*] “O Lord, Will You even kill an innocent nation? Didn’t [*Avraham*] tell me that she was his sister?”

G-d said to him in a dream, “Return the man’s wife, for he is a prophet” (*Bereishis* 20:4,5,7), and [since he is a prophet he surely did not intend to lead you to sin. Rather, he inferred from the questions put to him, that his life was in danger,] for a stranger coming to a city is [usually] asked about his food and drink rather than his wife.

He will pray for you, and you will live (ibid. 20:7). Avraham stood in prayer before the Holy One, blessed be He, saying, “Master of all the Worlds! You created man to proliferate in the world. May Avimelech and his household be fruitful and multiply.” G-d granted his plea, as it says, *Avraham prayed to G-d, and G-d healed Avimelech, his wife and his handmaids, so they were able to have children (ibid. 20:17).*

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN



AVRAHAM’S WAR WITH THE KINGS

The sixth trial: Amrafel and his allied kings [with their legions] came to kill Avraham, saying, “Let’s begin with [Avraham’s] nephew [Lot], and afterwards attack [Avraham].” They first seized all the goods of Sedom and Amorah, then they

captured Lot and his possessions, as it says, *They seized all the goods of Sedom and Amorah. Also Avram's nephew Lot and his possessions were taken when they left* (Bereishis 14:11.12).

[The angel] Michael reported everything to Avraham, as it says, *The fugitive came and told Avram the Hebrew* (ibid. 14:13). *The fugitive* is Michael, the guardian angel of the world, who is called the *master of wings*, as it says, *For a master of wings carries the sound* (Koheles 10:20). Why is Michael called *the fugitive*? Because when the Holy One, blessed be He, banished Samael [Satan] and his company from the realm of holiness [after he caused Adam to sin,] Satan grabbed the wing of Michael to make him fall as well, but the Holy One, blessed be He, released him from [Samael's] grip. Therefore he is called *the fugitive*. Speaking of [Michael], Yechezkel says, *A fugitive came to me from Yerushalayim, saying, "The city has been conquered"* (Yechezkel 33:21).

AVRAHAM DEFEATS THE INVADERS

With his three disciples and his servant Eliezer, Avraham pursued the invaders until Dan, also known as Pamayos (Banias), as it says, *He pursued them as far as Dan* (Bereishis 14:14). The *tzaddik* [Avraham] tarried [in Dan], for he was told, "Avraham! Know that in time to come your descendants will worship idols in this place," as it says, *[Yeravam] placed one [golden calf] in Bethel and the other in Dan* (1 Melachim 12:29). Leaving his disciples and the men [of his allies] there, he continued with [only] his servant Eliezer. The numeric value of the name Eliezer is 318⁹², and he is referred to in the verse, *He armed his disciples who had been born in his house, three hundred and eighteen* (14:14). He pursued them until north of Damesek, as it says, *He divided [his forces] against them [and attacked] that night* (14:15).

Shemuel Hakatan [interprets the abovementioned verse, *He di-*

⁹². Alef=1; lamed=30; yud=10; ayin=70; zayin=7; reish=200. 1+30+10+70+7+200=318.

vided for them that night, differently,] saying: This night was chosen to [be special] from the beginning. On this night the first-born of Egypt were killed, and on this night Avraham defeated the kings. In reference to this it says, *The night was divided for them*, for in the first half of the night Avraham defeated the kings; about the second half it says, *It was at midnight, and G-d killed every first-born in Egypt* (*Shemos* 12:29).

Hillel the Elder says: Avraham took all the property of Sedom [that had been captured by the kings,] and returned it in perfect order, with nothing missing, as it says, *Avram brought back all the property* (14:16). Avraham was worried, saying to himself, “Perhaps there was a righteous man among the masses of soldiers that I killed.” The Holy One, blessed be He, told him, *Fear not, Avram* (*ibid.* 15:1). About him the verse says, *He pursued them and emerged unhurt, on a path where his feet had never gone* (*Yeshayah* 41:3), meaning his feet were not soiled in this matter, [for he did not kill a righteous man].

AVRAHAM TITHES

Rabbi Yehoshua ben Korcha says: Avraham was the first person in the world to tithe. He tithed the property of Sedom and Amorah and of his nephew Lot, donating both to Sheim, son of Noach, as it says, *Avram gave him a tenth of everything* (*ibid.* 14:20).

Sheim, son of Noach greeted [Avraham], and was amazed seeing all the goods he returned after winning the stunning victory. He lauded, praised, and glorified his Creator, saying, *Blessed be G-d Most High who delivered your enemies into your hand* (*ibid.* 14:20).

Avraham prayed to the Holy One, blessed be He, saying, “Master of all Worlds! This [victory] was not my doing. It was through the power of Your right Hand that I achieved it. For You are my shield in this world and the World to Come, as it says, *But You, Hashem, are a shield for me*—in this world, for my soul, and the One who raises my head—in the World to Come (*Tehillim* 3:4). The angels exclaimed and said, “Blessed are You, Hashem, shield of Avraham.”

CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

THE COVENANT BETWEEN THE PARTS

The seventh trial: *After these events, G-d's word came to Avram in a vision, saying, "Fear not Abram . . ." (Bereishis 15:1).* G-d appeared to all prophets in a night vision, but He appeared to Avraham in a vision and in a plain-sight vision. How do we know He appeared to Avraham in a vision? It says, *G-d's word came to Avram in a vision saying, "Fear not Abram. I am your shield* in this world, and, *Your reward is very great,* in the World to Come. [G-d] said, "Avram! Fear not, for wherever you go, My right Hand protects you like armor deflecting adversity. You will receive a great reward in this world and in the next, as it says, *Your reward is very great.*

And how do we know [G-d appeared to Avraham] in a plain-sight vision? Because it says, *Hashem appeared to him (ibid. 18:1),* [and *appeared* refers to a plain-sight vision].

Rabbi Yehudah says: The night on which the Holy One, blessed be He, revealed Himself to Avraham was the night of Pesach. He took him outside and said, "Are you able to count the legions [of stars] in the sky?"

Replied Avraham, "Is there a [finite] number for Your legions?"

G-d answered: "[No, they are too numerous to count.] So too, your descendants will be too numerous to count." As it says, *G-d said to him: "That is how numerous your descendants will be" (ibid. 15:5).*

⁹³. *Daniel* 2:40. Our present-day *galus* that began with the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash by the Roman Empire (*Edom*).

THE FOUR KINGDOMS

Rabbi Akiva said: At the “Covenant Between the Parts” the Holy One, blessed be He, showed Avraham the rise and fall of the great empires, as it says, *[G-d] said to him: “Bring for Me three calves, three goats, three rams, a tor – a turtle-dove, and a young pigeon”* (*ibid.* 15:9).

The three calves signify “the Fourth Kingdom”⁹³ which is the kingdom of Edom (the Roman empire), that resembles a fat calf. The three goats represent the Greek empire, as it says, *The he-goat grew greatly* (*Daniel* 8:8). The three rams allude to the kingdom of Persia-Medea. The *tor* denotes the people of Yishmael (Arabs). The word *tor* must be translated according to its Aramaic reading where *tor* means an ox, rather than according to the Hebrew reading of turtle-dove. When the oxen mate the valleys are ground to dust.

The young dove symbolizes Yisrael which is compared to a dove, as it says, *O My dove, in the cranny of the rocks* (*Shir Hashirim* 2:14), and, *Only one is My dove, My perfect one* (*ibid.* 6:9).

Rabbi Acha bar Yaakov says: [Do not translate, *eglah meshuleshes* to mean “three calves”,] rather [translate *eglah meshuleshes* to mean a] strong calf, because [the word *meshulash* also means strong, as] in the verse, *A meshulash—strong—cord is not easily severed* (*Kohes* 4:12).

Rabbi Mesharshiya says: *Meshuleshes* should be interpreted to mean three times, because the empires will rule over Eretz Yisrael three times. The first time each empire will rule alone; the second time two empires [will rule together]; the third time the three empires will band together to make war against [Mashiach] the son of David, as it says, *The kings of the world will take their stand and the princes conspire secretly against Hashem and His anointed* (*Tehillim* 2:2).

AVRAHAM WEAKENS THE KINGDOMS

Rabbi Yehoshua says: With his sword, Avraham cut each [animal] into half thereby sapping the strength of [the empires], as it says, *He split them in half* (*Bereishis* 1:10). Had Avraham not split them, the world would not have been able to endure. He placed one half opposite the other, as it says, *He placed each piece opposite its counterpart* (*ibid.* 15:10). However, he kept alive the young dove [which represents Yisrael,] as it says, *The bird he did not split* (*ibid.*). From here we derive that whenever the Torah mentions the word *bird* it denotes a dove.

THE COMING OF MASHIACH

Birds of prey descended on the carcasses in order to rip them apart and destroy them. *Birds of prey* allude to [Mashiach] the son of David who is compared to a bird of prey, as it says, *Has My heritage become for Me like a bloodstained bird of prey* (*Yirmeyah* 12:0).

Avraham chased the birds [from the carcasses] from sunrise until sunset, [alluding to the fact that Mashiach will be unable to destroy the empires until the end of the day.] Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah says: This teaches that the reign of the four kingdoms will not last longer than one day of G-d's days.⁹⁴

Rabbi Elazar ben Arach said to him, "You are absolutely right, for it says, *He made me desolate; sick throughout the day* (*Eichah* 1:13). However in the last two hours [of the day we will be relieved from our desolation]. Just as the sun begins setting in the west during the last two hours of the day waning in strength and dimming in radiance, so too, the son of David [Mashiach] will sprout before the onset of twilight, as it say, *It will happen toward evening time that there will be light* (*Zechariah* 14:7).

Avraham prayed to the Holy One, blessed be He, that these four

⁹⁴. One of G-d's days equals a thousand years, as it says, *For a thousand years in your eyes are but a bygone day* (*Tehillim* 90:4).

kingdoms not enslave his descendants. He fell into a deep sleep, as it says, *A deep slumber fell upon Avram (Bereishis 15:12)*. Is it possible for a man to pray while he is asleep? From here we learn that Avraham was overcome with sleep since he was exhausted by the fervor with which he had prayed. [He pleaded] that his descendants be able to endure [the rule of] the four kingdoms, as it says, *And behold—a dread! great darkness fell upon him (ibid.)*

A dread, alludes to the “fourth kingdom [Edom-Rome],” as it says, *After this I was watching in night visions, and behold! a fourth beast, exceedingly terrifying, awesome and strong (Daniel 7:7)*.

Darkness, alludes to the kingdom of Greece which darkened the eyes of Yisrael [by forbidding them to observe] the mitzvos of the Torah.

Great, alludes to the kingdom of Persia-Medea, whose wealth was so great, they sold Yisrael for nothing.

Fell, alludes to the kingdom of Babylonia, for the crown of Yisrael fell into their hands.

Upon him, alludes to the children of Yishmael [the Arab nations]. With their [downfall] the son of David [Mashiach] will sprout, as it says, *There I shall cause pride⁹⁵ to sprout for David, I have prepared a lamp for My anointed. His enemies I will clothe with shame, but upon him his crown will shine (Tehillim 132:18)*.

Rabbi Azaryah says: These kingdoms were created only to be firewood for Gehinnom, as it says, *Behold—A smoking furnace and a fiery torch passed between the halves [of the animals] (Bereishis 15:17)*. The words *furnace* and *torch* refer to Gehinnom, as it says, *[Hashem] who has a fire in Tzion and a furnace in Yerushalayim (Yeshayah 31:9)*.

⁹⁵. The power of kingship.

CHAPTER TWENTY - NINE

THE COVENANT OF MILAH

The eighth trial: *When Avram was 99 years old (Bereishis 17:1), The Holy One, blessed be He, said to him, Walk before Me, and be perfect (ibid.).* Until now you were imperfect; circumcise your foreskin and you will become perfect as you walk before Me. The foreskin is the greatest blemish, the most defiled of all organs, as it says, *O Yerusshalayim, the holy city, for uncircumcised and defiled people will no longer enter you (Yeshayah 52:1).* By circumcising yourself, you walk before Me in perfection.

AVRAHAM'S MILAH WAS ON YOM KIPPUR

Rabban Gamliel says: [Avraham] asked Sheim son of Noach to perform the *milah* on him and on his son Yishmael, as it says, *On that very day, Avraham and his son were circumcised (Bereishis 17:26).* The clause, *on this very day* [be'etzem], implies at noon, when [the heat of] the sun is at its peak [itzumo]. The expression *be'etzem* is also used in connection with Yom Kippur, as it says, *Do not do any work [be'etzem] on this very day, for it is the Day of Atonement (Vayikra 23:28).* Drawing an analogy between the two passages in which the word *be'etzem* is used, we conclude that Avraham underwent *milah* on Yom Kippur. Every year, [on Yom Kippur] the Holy One, blessed be He, views the blood of Avraham's *milah* and forgives all our transgressions, as it says, *For on his day He shall provide atonement for you to cleanse you from all your sins (Vayikra 16:30).*

⁹⁶. *I say to you* is in the present tense, because G-d sees the blood of Avraham's *milah* and grants life in his merit.

Avraham's blood was [absorbed in the earth] in the place he underwent *milah*, and the Altar [of the Beis Hamikdash] was built there. Therefore it says, *[The kohen] shall pour out its [remaining] blood on the base of the Altar* (Vayikra 4:34), and, *And I say*⁹⁶ *to you, "In your blood you shall live! and I say to you, "In your blood you shall live!"* (Yechezkel 16:6).

Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa says: On the third day after *milah* the pain is most acute, as it says, *On the third day, when the people were in agony* (Bereishis 34:25). Therefore the Sages ruled: If the third day after *milah* falls on Shabbos, it is permitted to wash the infant [even with water that was heated on Shabbos] because all labors needed [for the *milah*] are permitted on Shabbos.

A DAY OF INTENSE HEAT

Rabban Gamliel, son of Rabbi Yehudah Hanasi says: On the third day after his *milah*, Avraham was in great pain. This was a test [to determine if he would complain about G-d's commandment to undergo *milah*]. What did the Holy One, blessed be He, do? He pierced a hole into Gehinnom, causing as great a heat [to descend on the earth] as on the day when the wicked will be punished. [Abraham] sat at the entrance of his tent [to cool off] in the wind, as it says, *He was sitting at the entrance of his tent in the hottest part of the day* (Bereishis 18:1).

Said the Holy One, blessed be He, to the ministering angels, "Let us visit the sick, for doing acts of kindness is very important to Me." The angels immediately went down and visited Avraham.

[G-d said to the angels,] "See how powerful *milah* is. Before Avraham underwent *milah*, [he was so awestruck by My Presence that] he threw himself on his face, and only then did I speak to him, as it says, *Avraham threw himself on his face* (*ibid.* 17:17). Now that he has undergone *milah*, he is sitting and I am standing,

⁹⁷. Meaning: Remove the barriers that keep you from the truth (Ramban).

as it says, *He was sitting at the entrance of his tent (ibid. 18:1)*, and, *He lifted his eyes and he saw three men standing over him (ibid. 18:2)*.

FIVE BARRIERS

Rabbi Ze'ira says: There are five barriers in the world; four of them are in man, and one is in trees. What are the four barriers in man? There is the barrier of the ear, as it says, *Behold their ear is blocked, and they are unable to hear (Yirmeyah 6:10)*. There is the barrier of the lips, as it says, *I have a blockage of the lips (Shemos 6:12)*. There is the barrier of the heart, as it says, *You shall cut away the barrier of your heart (Devarim 10:16)*.⁹⁷ And there is the [barrier of the flesh] which is the foreskin, as it says, *The uncircumcised male foreskin that has not been circumcised (Bereishis 17:14)*, and, *For all the nations are uncircumcised, and the House of Yisrael is of uncircumcised heart (Yirmeyah 9:25)*. The uncircumcised heart prevents a person from doing the will of his Creator. In time to come, the Holy One blessed be He, will cut away the barrier of the heart of [Yisrael] and they will no longer stiffen their neck before their Creator, as it says, *I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh (Yechezkel 36:26)*, and, *You shall cut away the barrier of your heart (Devarim 10:16)*.

FORBIDDEN FRUIT TREES⁹⁸

There is a barrier blocking the trees, as it says, *When you come to the*

⁹⁸. The fruits of the first three years of a newly planted tree are *orlah* and forbidden; those of the fourth year are holy and must be eaten in Yerushalayim.

⁹⁹. There are opinions that only the fruit of the vine must be eaten in Yerushalayim in the fourth year, however all fruit-bearing trees are included in the prohibition not to eat its fruit for the first three years.

[promised] land and you plant any tree bearing [edible] fruit, you shall remove the barrier of its fruit [treating its fruit as forbidden] (Vayikra 19:23).

Rabbi Zerika says: The tree mentioned in this verse refers exclusively to the vine.⁹⁹ If the laws of *orlah* are not observed, its fruit will shrivel and become unsightly, and its wine may not be used as a wine-libation on the Altar. But if the laws of *orlah* are observed, its fruit will be beautiful and its wine will be preferred as a wine-libation on the Altar.

The same is true of our Father Avraham. [Yishmael,] the son who was born before Avraham had undergone *milah*, behaved badly and was not acceptable as an offering on the Altar. But [Yitzchak], the son who was born after he was circumcised, behaved admirably, and [was fit to be brought on the Altar] just as wine is used for a libation on the Altar, as it says, *The wine for the libation . . . (Bamidbar 15:7).*

CIRCUMCISION OF NON-JEWS

Rabbi Yochanan says: All non-Jews who enter into the Jewish community are circumcised of their own free will and with the fear of heaven [in their hearts]. Nevertheless, we cannot be sure they will not backslide until after seven generations.

Slaves can be circumcised forcibly, and [their conversion] can never be trusted. Indeed, neither the servants that were circumcised with Avraham nor their descendants remained Jewish. How do we know they were circumcised? It says, *All the men of the household, both home born and bought for cash from a stranger, were circumcised with him (Bereishis 17:27).*

Why were they circumcised? For the sake of purity; in order not to defile their master's food and drink, for eating with a slave is compared to eating with a dog, since neither are circumcised. Touching a slave is like touching a corpse, and bathing with a slave is like bathing with a leper, since slaves—whether dead or alive—are like a carcass in the field, and their prayers do not rise to the

Holy One, blessed be He. It says about them, *The dead cannot praise G-d* (*Tehillim* 115:17). But the prayers of B'nei Yisrael who are circumcised, come before the Holy One, blessed be He. About [Yisrael] it says, *But we will bless G-d, from this time and forever, Hallelu-kah!* (*ibid.*).

THE ETERNAL DECREE OF MILAH

Rebbi says: Yitzchak performed *milah* on Yaakov, but Eisav rejected *milah* just as he rejected the birthright, as it says, *Eisav rejected the birthright* (*Bereishis* 25:34). Yaakov cherished [the mitzvah of] *milah*, circumcising his sons and grandsons. How do we know Yaakov's sons were circumcised? Because [Chamor said to the people of Shechem about Yaakov's sons,] *But it is only if their terms are met that these men will consent to live with us and become one nation: Every male among us must first be circumcised, just as they are circumcised* (*ibid.* 34:22). The sons of Yaakov circumcised their sons, establishing [*milah*] as an eternal decree. [This lasted] until Pharaoh came to power and issued harsh decrees, forbidding [the Jews] to perform *milah*.

THE BLOOD OF MILAH AND PESACH

On the day they left Egypt, all Jews—young and old—underwent *milah*, as it says, *All the people that went forth [from Egypt] were circumcised* (*Yehoshua* 5:5). They took the blood of *milah* and the blood of the *Pesach* offering, placing it on the beam above the door of their houses. When the Holy One, blessed be He, passed through to strike Egypt and saw the blood of *milah* and the blood of *Pesach*, He was filled with compassion for Yisrael, as it says, *Then*

¹⁰⁰. *Tosafos* in *Shabbos* 130a explain that the word *higameil* ("he was weaned") is a contraction of *hei—gimel*, 5+3, alluding to the *milah* on the eighth day.

I passed you, and saw you wallowing in your blood, and I said to you: "In your blood you shall live." I said to you: "In your blood you shall live!" (Yechezkel 16:6).

Rabbi Eliezer said: Why does the verse repeat the phrase, "*In your blood you shall live!*"? Said The Holy One, blessed be He, "In the merit of the two bloods of *bris milah* and *Pesach* I delivered you from Egypt, and with those merits I will set you free at the end of the Fourth Kingdom." Therefore it says twice, *In your blood you shall live!*

A JOYOUS FEAST AT A BRIS MILAH

Rabbi Yishmael says: Whenever Avraham was given a command, he did not delay [in performing it]. Therefore he performed the *milah* on Yitzchak as soon as he was eight days old, as it says, *When his son Yitzchak was eight days old he circumcised him, as G-d had commanded him* (Bereishis 21:4). Because he considered this as if he brought an offering on the altar, he celebrated the *bris* with a feast as it says, *Avraham made a great feast on the day that Yitzchak was weaned* (*ibid.* 21:8).¹⁰⁰ The Sages have ordained that a person make a joyous feast as Avraham did, on the day he merits to circumcise his son.

¹⁰¹. The mitzvah of *milah* has three components: 1. *chittuch*—removal of the *orlah* (foreskin); 2. *p'riah*—uncovering the male organ by pulling back the outer membrane; 3. *metztzah*—drawing blood from the wound.

¹⁰². Since *p'riah* is more painful and causes additional blood loss it was omitted during the wandering in the wilderness.

¹⁰³. Since the *p'riah* was not done, the foreskin grew back.

CIRCUMCISION IN THE DESERT

There are three kinds of affliction: The affliction of fasting, of imprisonment, and of travel. How do we know fasting is an affliction? It says, *I afflicted myself with fasting* (*Tehillim* 35:13). How do we know imprisonment is an affliction? It says, *They afflicted his leg with fetters* (*ibid.* 105:18). How do we know travel is a source of affliction? It says, *He has afflicted my strength on the way* (*ibid.* 102:24).

Because of the affliction of travel, our forefathers did not circumcise their children [while wandering through the wilderness,] as it says, *Since they did not circumcise [their children] on the way* (*Yehoshua* 5:7).

Rabbi Yishmael says: Is it conceivable that B'nei Yisrael heard the Voice of the Holy One, blessed be He, on Mount Sinai, as He gave them the Torah, while they were uncircumcised? G-d forbid! Surely they performed *milah*,¹⁰¹ but they only removed the *orlah* (foreskin), omitting the *p'riah*,¹⁰² and [we have a rule:] If one performed *milah* but omitted *p'riah*, it is as though he had not done the *milah*. When the Jews entered Eretz Yisrael, the Holy One, blessed be He, said to Yehoshua, "Don't you know B'nei Yisrael were not circumcised properly? *Circumcise B'nei Yisrael again, a second time.*" (*Yehoshua* 5:2).¹⁰³ He gathered all the foreskins and piled them up making a hill, as it says, *[Yehoshua] circumcised the Children of Yisrael at Giv'as Ha'aralos [the Hill of the Foreskins]* (*ibid.* 5:3).

¹⁰⁴. After the death of King Shlomoh, the ten northern tribes revolted against the Davidic line, choosing Yeravam ben Nevat of the tribe Efraim as king and establishing the Kingdom of Yisrael (1 *Melachim* 11-14). The tribes of Yehudah and Binyamin formed the Kingdom of Yehudah with Yerushalayim as its capital.

COVERING THE ORLAH WITH DUST

[As they wandered through the wilderness the Jews performed *milah* without *p'riah*,] covering the foreskins and blood with desert sand. When Bilam, the sorcerer, saw the desert full of the foreskins of Yisrael, he exclaimed, “How can anyone overcome the merit of the blood of *bris milah* that is covered with dust, as it says, *Who can count the dust of Yaakov* (*Bamidbar* 23:10).”

Another reason [for the custom of covering the *orlah* with dust] is that Yisrael is compared to dust, as it says, *Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth* (*Bereishis* 28:14).

ELIAHU ATTENDS EVERY BRIS MILAH

[Beginning in the days of Yehoshua,] the Jews circumcised their children, until Eretz Yisrael was divided into two kingdoms,¹⁰⁴ at which time the Kingdom of Efraim (Yisrael) neglected *milah* (1 *Melachim* 19:10). Eliyahu Hanavi, acting with great zeal [against sinners who neglected *milah*,] commanded the heavens to hold back rain and dew from falling on the earth. When [King Achav's wife] Izevel heard this, she wanted to kill him. Eliyahu prayed to the Holy One, blessed be He, [wishing to die]. The Holy

¹⁰⁵. Emendation according to Radal.

One, blessed be He, told him: Are you better than your forefathers? Eisav wanted to kill Yaakov, as it says, *Eisav said to himself: The days of mourning for my father will be here soon. I will then be able to kill my brother Yaakov* (Bereishis 27:41), and Yaakov ran away and escaped, as it says, *Yaakov fled to the field of Aram* (Hoshea 12:13). Pharaoh tried to kill Moshe, and Moshe fled and escaped, as it says, *Moshe fled from Pharaoh* (Shemos 2:15). Shaul tried to kill David, and he fled and escaped, as it says, *David ran away, and he escaped that night* (1 Shemuel 19:10). [These examples] teach you that one who runs for his life will get away.

Thereupon Eliyahu ran away from Eretz Yisrael and escaped, as it says, *He arose and ate and drank. He then walked on the strength of that meal for forty days and forty nights* (1 Melachim 19:8). The Holy One, blessed be He, appeared to him, saying, *Why are you here, Eliyahu?* (*ibid.* v.9). To which Eliyahu responded: *"I have acted with great zeal for Hashem* (v.10). Replied G-d, "You always find something to gripe about! In Shittim, when there was immorality, you complained, as it says, *Pinchas, [who was Eliyahu,] a son of Elazar . . . zealously took up My cause* (*ibid.* v.11). Now you are complaining again [that the people are not sufficiently zealous in observing the mitzvah of *milah*]. By your life! You will attend every *bris milah* that is made in Yisrael, and you will see for yourself [that the Jews are committed to doing the great mitzvah of *milah*.]"

Thus, the Sages enacted that a special chair, is set aside for the spirit of Eliyahu Hanavi [at every *bris*]. He is called the "Angel of the *Bris*," as it says, *The angel of the Covenant [i.e., Eliyahu] for whom you yearn, behold, he comes* (Malachi 3:1).

O G-d of Yisrael! Please hurry and bring Eliyahu and Mashiach¹⁰⁵

CHAPTER THIRTY

THE BANISHMENT OF YISHMAEL

The ninth test: Yishmael was born “with a bow [in his hands]” and grew to be an accomplished archer, as it says, *He became an expert archer (Bereishis 31:20)*. He was in the habit of carrying a bow and arrow to shoot birds. One day, seeing Yitzchak sitting alone, he aimed an arrow at him trying to kill him. Sarah saw and told Avraham, “Yishmael did this to Yitzchak. Therefore, bequeath all that the Holy One, blessed be He, has sworn to give to you and your descendants to Yitzchak. By your life! The son of this maidservant shall not share the inheritance with my son Yitzchak,” as it says, *Drive away this maidservant with her son, . . . (Bereishis 21:10)*.

Sarah continued, “Write a *get* (divorce document) sending this maidservant away from me, [and sending Yishmael away] from my son, from this world and the next.

Of all the hardships that befell Avraham, this troubled and distressed him the most, as it says, *The matter greatly distressed Avraham regarding his son (ibid. v.11)*.

Rabbi Yehudah says: That night, the Holy One, blessed be He, appeared to our Father Avraham, saying, “Don’t you know that Sarah was destined to be your wife even before she was born? She is your companion and the wife of your youth. Sarah is not called your maidservant, as it says, *Still, your wife Sarah will give birth to a son (ibid. 17:19)*. Hagar is not called your wife but your maidser-

¹⁰⁶. The word *vateisa* has the same root as *tatu'im*, “deception.”

¹⁰⁷. One of the ten things that were created at the twilight of Shabbos eve is “the mouth of the well” (*Avos* 5:8). This was the *Well of Miriam* that provided water to B’nei Yisrael during their wandering through the wilderness.

vant. Sarah's instructions are true and correct. Don't be distressed because of the boy and your maidservant, as it says, *G-d said to Abraham: 'Do not be distressed about the youth and your maidservant' (ibid. 21:12).*"

Avraham arose early in the morning, wrote a divorce document for [Hagar] and handed it to her, sending her away from him and from his son Yitzchak, in this world and in the World to Come, as it says, *Avraham got up early in the morning. He took bread and a skin of water, and gave it to Hagar (ibid. 21:14).* He divorced her with a divorce document. He tied a water barrel to her loins so it dragged behind her, indicating that she was a maidservant. [The barrel would also leave a trail in the sand,] so Avraham could find Yishmael to visit him.

YISHMAEL IS SAVED

In the merit of Avraham the water in the skin did not diminish. But when [Hagar] reached the desert she reverted to the idol worship of her father's house. At that moment the water in the skin ran out, and *she cast off the boy beneath one of the bushes (ibid. 21:15).*

Yishmael was 24 years old when he left Avraham's house, and Yitzchak was ten years old.

She left vateisa—and roamed aimlessly—in the desert of Be'er-Sheva (21:14). The word *vateisa* denotes "idol worship," as it says, *[Idols] are vanity, the work of tatu'im—deception*¹⁰⁶ (*Yirmeyah* 10:15). As Yishmael's life ebbed with thirst, he threw himself beneath some desert thorn-bushes, saying, "Master of the Worlds! If it is Your will, give me water to quench my thirst so I do not die of dehydration, because dying of thirst is the worst kind of death."

The Holy One, blessed be He, heard his prayer, as it says, *G-d heard the boy weeping (Bereishis 21:17)*, and, *G-d has heard the voice of the boy there where he was (ibid.).* [Suddenly] the wellspring cre-

¹⁰⁸. He compared Yishmael's wife to a doorpost and threshold, for a wife is always at home to welcome guests.

ated during twilight [on the eve of the Shabbos of Creation]¹⁰⁷ gushed forth for them. They drank and filled the skin with water, as it says, *G-d opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water* (21:19). Leaving the well, they traveled across the entire [Be'er Sheva desert] until they reached the Paran Desert where they found sources of water, and settled there, as it says, *He settled in the Paran Desert* (21:21). Yishmael married a woman from Arvos Moav by the name of Eifah.

AVRAHAM VISITS YISHMAEL

After three years, Avraham went to visit his son Yishmael. He swore to Sarah that he would not alight from the camel [nor enter] Yishmael's house. Arriving at midday, Avraham found Yishmael's wife. "Where is Yishmael?" he asked.

"He went to the desert with his mother to pick dates and fruit," she replied.

"Please let me have some bread and water, for I am exhausted from my long journey," Avraham requested.

"We have neither bread nor water," she replied.

Said Avraham, "When Yishmael comes home, please tell him that an old man from the Land of Canaan came to see him. Tell him the old man said that the doorpost and threshold of this house are flimsy and not fitting for him."¹⁰⁸

When Yishmael returned she told him. [Understanding the hint,] he divorced her. His mother then found him a wife from her father [Pharaoh's] palace, named Fatomah.

After three years, Avraham called on his son Yishmael once more. Again he swore to Sarah that he would neither alight from the camel [nor enter] Yishmael's house. Arriving at noon, he found

¹⁰⁹. Hagar did *teshuvah*. She was given the name Keturah because her deeds were as beautiful as incense (*ketores*), and because she remained chaste [*keturah* is Aramaic for restrained] from the time she was separated from Avraham (*Rashi*).

¹¹⁰. Text emended by Radal.

Yishmael's [second] wife.

"Where is Yishmael?" he asked.

"He went with his mother to feed the camels in the desert," she replied.

"Please let me have some bread and water, because I am drained from my long journey," Avraham requested.

She [graciously] brought [the food] outside. Avraham prayed for his son, and Yishmael's house became full of all good things, according to the blessings [that are written in the Torah, *I have blessed him, and I will make him fruitful* (*Bereishis* 17:20).]

When Yishmael came home, his wife told him [about the old man's visit, adding that she had served him food, and he had given them a blessing]. Yishmael concluded that his father still felt merciful toward him, as it says, *As a father is merciful toward his children* (*Tehillim* 103:13).

AVRAHAM'S DESCENDANTS

After Sarah's death, Avraham remarried Hagar, as it says, *Avraham again took a wife whose name was Keturah* (*Bereishis* 25:1).¹⁰⁹ Why does it say, *again*? Because she had previously been his wife, and he was intimate with her again. She was named Keturah, because [*ki-tores* means fragrant spices, and] she smelled from various pleasing fragrances.

Another explanation: She was named Keturah because her deeds were as pleasing¹¹⁰ as fragrant incense brought on the altar.

She bore him six sons, as it says, *She bore him, Zimran, Yaksban, Medan, Midian, Yishbak, and Shuach* (*Bereishis* 25:1). Avraham sent them away from his son Yitzchak by means of a legal document, like a woman who is divorced from her husband, in this world and in the next, as it says, *To the sons of the concubines that he had taken, Avraham gave gifts; he then sent them away from his son*

¹¹¹. A formidable ancient empire that spanned what is now the countries of Syria, Turkey, Iraq, and Iran.

Yitzhak to the land of Kedem (ibid. 25:6). The descendants of Keturah and Yishmael joined to become the *B'nei Keidar*, [for *Keidar* was a son of Yishmael, and they are also called children of *Kedem*,] as it says, *Concerning Keidar and the kingdom of Chatzor, . . . So says Hashem, "Let us arise and go to Keider and despoil the B'nei Kedem (Yirmeyah 49:28). . .*

The verse says, *Chever Hakeini had become separated from the [children of] Kayin (Shofetim 4:11).* Didn't all the descendants of Kayin perish in the Flood? Since they lived in the territory of Kayin they are called *B'nei Kayin*, as it says, *But when the time comes to destroy [the children of] Kayin, till where will Assyria take you captive? (Bamidbar 24:22).* Assyria [*Asbur*]¹¹¹ was conquered and colonized by the descendants of Yishmael.

Bilam said: The Holy One, blessed be He, created seventy nations, but He only attached His name [*E-I*] to Yisrael and Yishmael. Alas! Who can survive the era of [Yishmael's supremacy]! as it says, *Alas! Who can survive [the reign of Yishmael] the one to whom [G-d] attached [His Name] E-I (Bamidbar 24:23).*

FIFTEEN THINGS

Rabbi Yishmael says: The descendants of Yishmael will do fifteen things [when they conquer] Eretz Yisrael at the end of time:

1. They will measure the land [to appraise the amount of property tax the owner must pay].
2. They will turn cemeteries into garbage dumps and resting places for sheep [in order to humiliate and offend the people].
3. They will force [the people] to prepare construction sites [for government buildings] on [remote] mountain peaks.

¹¹². The verse refers to the descendants of Yishmael, because the previous verse mentions, *Those who dwell in the land of Teima*, and, *all the glory of Keidar will be ended* (v.16). *Teima* and *Keidar* are two of the twelve son of Yishmael, see *Bereishis* 25:16).

¹¹³. The word *deruchab* is related to *derech*, and *derech* is often associated with the sea, as in, *Who made a way [derech] through the Sea (Yeshayah 43:16).*

4. Corruption will increase.
5. Upright people will be persecuted.
6. Observance of the laws [of the Torah] will be prohibited.
7. Iniquity will increase in Yisrael, [for the Jews will be compelled to transgress the laws of the Torah].
8. Silk will be adulterated with wool.
9. Paper and pen will wither, [making it impossible to record the lies, bribery, and violence that abound].
10. The currency will be invalidated [causing huge losses to the holders of cash].
11. Devastated cities will be rebuilt.
12. Roads will be cleared.
13. They will plant gardens and fruit groves.
14. They will reconstruct the breaches in the walls of the Beis Hamikdash.
15. They will erect a [Moslem] house [of worship] on the site of the Sanctuary [of the Beis Hamikdash].

THE COMING OF MASHIACH

In the end, two brothers will rule [over the Arab nations descendants of Yishmael.]. During their reign the offspring of David [Mashiach] will emerge, as it says, *Then in the days of these kingdoms, the G-d of Heaven will establish a kingdom that will never be destroyed nor will its sovereignty be left to people; it will crumble and consume all these kingdoms, and it will stand forever (Daniel 2:44).*

Rabbi Yishmael said further: In the end of days, the Arab descendants of Yishmael will start three tumultuous wars in the world, as it says, *They will wander because of swords*, (*Yeshayah* 21:15), and *swords* clearly means war.¹¹² One of [the wars] will be fought in the forest of Arabia, as it says [in the chapter called, *A prophecy concerning Arabia*]: *Because of the outstretched sword*

¹¹⁴. Edom is Eisav (*Bereishis* 25:30), the progenitor of the Roman empire.

(*ibid.*). One of them will be fought on the sea, as it says, *Because of the drawn bow* [deruchah] (*ibid.*).¹¹³ The third war will be more fierce than the first two. It will be fought in the big city in Rome, as it says, *Who is this coming from Edom,*¹¹⁴ *with sullied garments from Botzra? The One who is majestic in His raiment, girded with His abundant strength? It is I, Who speaks with righteousness, abundantly able to save* (*ibid.* 63:1).

CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE



THE AKEIDAH

The tenth trial: *After these events, G-d tested Avraham* (*Bereishis* 22:1), [asking him to offer Yitzchok as a sacrifice. G-d] tested Avraham to determine what is in his heart, whether he would be able to resist [the *yetzer hara*] and observe all the mitzvot of the Torah, as it says, *All this is because Avraham obeyed My voice, and observed My safeguards, My commandments, My decrees, and My Torahs* (*ibid.* 26:5).

Yishmael left [his home in] the desert to visit his father Avraham.

Rabbi Yehudah says: It was precisely on the night [of this visit] that the Holy One, blessed be He, appeared to Avraham telling him, *Take your son, the only one, the one you love—Yitzchak—and go away to the Moriah area. Bring him as a burnt-offering on one of the mountains that I will designate to you?* (*Bereishis* 22:2).

Because Avraham pitied Yitzchak, he said to the Holy One,

¹¹⁵. Which spoke to Bilam (*Bamidbar* 22:28).

blessed be He, “Master of all the Worlds! Which son do You mean, the son who was born before [You ordained] *milah*, or the son who had *milah* [on the eighth day:]?”

Replied [G-d]: *The only one*

Avraham countered, “This one is the only son of his mother, and that one is the only son of his mother.”

Said [G-d]: *The one you love.*

“I love this one, and I love that one,” Avraham answered.

G-d replied, “[I mean] Yitzchak. Go there and bring him as a burnt-offering.”

Avraham asked, “Master of all the Worlds, ‘On which mountain [shall I build the altar:]?’”

G-d responded, “When you see My glory standing and waiting for you, I will show you where to erect the altar,” as it says, *on one of the mountains that I will designate to you*. It does not say, *that I designated to you*, but, *that I will designate to you*.

AVRAHAM’S DONKEY

Avraham arose early in the morning and saddled his donkey, taking Yishmael, Eliezer, and Yitzchak, with him. This donkey was the son of the she-donkey created at twilight on the eve of the Shabbos of Creation¹¹⁵, as it says, *Avraham got up early in the morning and saddled his donkey (ibid. 21:3)*. This was the same donkey Moshe rode when he came to Egypt, as it says, *Moshe took his wife and sons and putting them on the donkey, set out to return to Egypt (Shemos 4:20)*, and this is the donkey on which the son of David [Mashiach] will ride in time to come, as it says, *Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Tzion! Shout for joy, O daughter of Yerushalayim! For behold, your king will come to you, righteous and victorious is he, a humble man riding upon the donkey, upon a foal, a calf of she-donkeys*

¹¹⁶. Emendation by *Peirush Rav Ze'ev Wolf Einhorn*.

¹¹⁷. The word *im*, which means “with” and the word *am*, which means “a people” have the same spelling.

(*Zechariah* 9:9).

Yitzchak was thirty-seven years old and Yishmael was fifty years old when they went to Mount Moriah. An argument erupted between Yishmael and Avraham's servant Eliezer. Yishmael said, "Avraham is about to offer his son Yitzchak as a burnt offering on the flame of the altar. I am Avraham's first-born, and the sole heir to his property."

Replied Eliezer, "He cast you out like a divorced wife and sent you into the desert.¹¹⁶ I, on the other hand, am his faithful attendant who waits on him day and night. I am Avraham's rightful heir." By Divine inspiration it was revealed, "Neither of you will inherit."

SEEING THE SITE OF THE AKEIDAH

On the third day, they came to a lookout where [Avraham] saw the glory of the *Shechinah* standing on the mountain [of Moriah, the site of the future Beis Hamikdash], as it says, *On the third day, Avraham looked up, and saw the place from afar* (*ibid.* 22:4). What did he see? A pillar of fire rising from earth to heaven. He said to Yitzchak, "Son, do you see anything on one of the mountains?"

"Yes."

"What do you see?"

"I see a pillar of fire reaching from earth to heaven."

Avraham understood that Yitzchak was accepted as a burnt offering.

Avraham then said to Yishmael and Eliezer, "Do you see anything on top of these mountains?"

"We don't see anything," they replied.

Avraham told them to go back with the donkey, saying: "*Stay here with the donkey*," (22:5), insinuating, that just as the donkey sees nothing, neither do they. [Our sages expound the verse,] *Stay*

¹¹⁶. Text emended by Radal.

here im—with—the donkey, as follows. [You are] an *am* – a people – compared to a donkey.¹¹⁷

Avraham placed the wood on Yitzchak's [shoulders], while he carried the fire and the knife in his hand. The two of them went together.

Said Yitzchak to his father, "Father! Here are the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the offering?"

Replied Avraham, *G-d will seek out for Himself the lamb for the offering, my son*, (22:7,8), telling him, "You are the lamb!"

Rabbi Yishmael said: When they arrived at the designated place, the Holy One, blessed be He, pointed with His finger saying to Avraham, "This is the altar." This is the altar upon which Adam Harishon brought an offering in ancient times; this is the altar on which Kayin and Hevel brought their offerings; this is the altar on which Noach and his sons brought an offering, as it says, *Noach built an altar for Hashem* (*Bereishis* 5:20). It says [at the *Akeidah*], *Avraham built the altar* (22:9)—the altar which had already been used by the early ones to bring offerings.

THE ANGELS' PLEA

Yitzchak said to his father: "Father! Please tie both my hands and feet, because I may flail [my arms and strike you],¹¹⁸ violating the mitzvah of "honor your father." Avraham tied Yitzchak's hands and feet fastening him to the altar. He arranged the fire and the wood, laying Yitzchak out [on the wood]. He then placed one foot on [the altar,] as one who is about to slaughter an animal, stretching out his hand to take the knife, like a *kohen gadol* preparing a flour offering and its libation. The Holy One, blessed be He, sat and watched the father bind [his son] and watched the son whole-

¹¹⁹. Radal adds that *man the son of man* alludes to the fact that Yitzchak was the reincarnation of Adam's son Hevel, and Avraham was the reincarnation of Adam whose sin was rectified at the Akeida.

¹²⁰. See chapter 19:1 above.

heartedly allowing himself to be bound. When [Avraham] reached out to take the knife, the angels cried and wept, as it says, *Behold, the angels cried out outside, messengers of peace wept bitterly* (*Yeshayah* 33:7).

Said the ministering angels, “Master of the universe! You are called the Gracious and Merciful One, for You mercies are on all Your works. Please have mercy on Yitzchak, a man the son of man,¹¹⁹ who is now bound before You like an animal. Save the man who is to be slaughtered like an animal, as it says, *Your righteousness is like the mighty mountains; Your judgments are like the vast deep waters; You save man who is like an animal, O Hashem* (*Tehillim* 36:7).

REVIVAL OF THE DEAD

Rabbi Yehudah says: As the knife touched Yitzchak’s throat, his soul left him, but when G-d’s Voice emerged from between the two *keruvim*, saying, *Do not harm the boy, do not do anything to him* (*Bereishis* 22:12), his soul came back into his body. He was untied, and stood up, experiencing the revival of the dead. Immediately he realized that the dead will be revived in time to come and he recited [the *berachah*]: “Blessed are You Hashem, who revives the dead.”

THE RAM

Rabbi Zechariah says: The ram which was created on the Shabbos eve [of Creation] at twilight,¹²⁰ ran to take Yitzchak’s place, but Samael (i.e., Satan) steered it in the wrong direction in order to prevent Avraham [from bringing it] as an offering. Thus its horns were caught in low-hanging branches, as it says, *Avraham looked up and saw, there, a ram caught by its horns in the thicket* (*ibid.* 22:13). What did the ram do? It stuck its leg into Avraham’s gar-

ment [alerting him to release it from the thicket]. Avraham noticed the ram and disentangled it, offering it instead of Yitzchak, as it says, *Avraham went and got the ram, sacrificing it as a burnt offering (ibid.)*

Rabbi Bererchyah says: The pleasing aroma of the ram rose before the Throne of Glory and was as acceptable to G-d as if it had come from Yitzchok. [G-d] swore to bless him in this world and the next, as it says, *I will bless you greatly, and greatly increase your offspring like the stars of the sky and the sand on the seashore (ibid. 21:17). I will bless you greatly—in this world; and greatly increase you—in the World to Come.*

Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa says: No part of this ram went to waste. The ashes of the ram form the base of the [golden incense] altar in the Sanctuary, as it says, *Once a year [on Yom Kippur] Aharon shall make atonement on the horns of [this altar] (Shemos 30:10)*. The ten sinews of the ram are the ten strings of the harp on which David played. The hide of the ram is the leather belt of Eliyahu, as it says, *They said to him, "He was a hairy man with a leather belt girded around his waist" (2 Melachim 1:8)*. The two horns of the ram are [historic] *shofaros*. Through the left one, the Voice of the Holy One, blessed be He, was heard on Mount Sinai, as it says, *There was the sound of a ram's horn (Shemos 11:19)*. The right horn, which was larger than the left one, will be sounded in the future at the ingathering of the exiles, as it says, *It shall be on that day that a great shofar will be blown (Yeshayah 27:19)*.

CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO

THE LIFE OF YITZCHOK

Six people were named before they were born: Yitzchak, Yishmael, Moshe Rabbeinu, Shlomoh, YOSHIAHU, and MASHIACH, may the Holy One, blessed be He, bring him speedily in our days.

How do we know this about Yitzchak? It says, *G-d said, "Your wife Sarah will bear you a son. You must name him Yitzchak"* (*Bereishis* 17:19). Why was he called Yitzchak? [Because the letters of Yitzchak's name represent the following:]

The *yud* (10) stands for the ten trials of Avraham.

The *tzadi* (90) represents the 90 years of Sarah's life when she gave birth to Yitzchak.

The *ches* (8) alludes to his *milah*, which was on the eighth day.

The *kuf* (100) alludes to the age of Avraham, as it says, *Avraham was 100 years old when his son Yitzchak was born* (*ibid.* 21:5).

How do we know Yishmael was named before his birth? *An angel of G-d said to [Hagar], "You are pregnant and will give birth to a son. You must name him Yishmael, for G-d has heard your suffering"* (*ibid.* 16:11). Why was he called Yishmael? Because [*yishma E-l* translates as "G-d will hear," and] in time to come G-d will hear the cries of the [Jewish] people, concerning [the atrocities] the children of Yishmael will commit in Eretz Yisrael. As it says, *Yishma E-l—May G-d hear [Yisrael's cries] and humble them*

¹²¹. YOSHIAHU was killed in battle (2 *Melachim* 24:29). He accepted G-d's judgment, saying *Hashem is righteous*, therefore he was accepted as an offering on the altar (*Biur Rada*).

[*Yishmael's children*] (*Tehillim* 55:20).

How do we know Moshe was given his name before he was born? It says, *My spirit will not continue to contend with man forever*, beshagam—*since he is nothing but—flesh* (*Bereishis* 6:5). The numeric value of *beshegam* equals Moshe (345). The verse continues, *his days shall be 120 years*, and Moshe lived 120 years.

How do we know Shlomoh [was given his name before he was born]? It says, *Behold, a son will be born to you . . . His name will be Shlomoh . . . I will bestow shalom—peace—and tranquility upon Yisrael in his days* (1 *Divrei Hayamim* 22:9).

How do we know this about Yoshiahu? It says, *Behold a son will be born to the house of David—Yoshiahu will be his name* (1 *Melachim* 13:2). Why was he called Yoshiahu? Because he was accepted as a gift for the altar. [Yoshiahu is a contraction of] *ya'ei shai*, which means, he is a glorious gift.¹²¹

How do we know King Mashiach [was named before he was born]? It says, *May his name endure forever, may his name be Yīnon as long as the sun endures* (*Tehillim* 72:17). Why is he called *Yīnon*? [*Yīnon* means revive, and] in time to come he will revive those asleep in the dust.

SARAH'S DEATH

Satan was furious when Avraham returned from the *Akeidah*, realizing that his scheme to stop Avraham from bringing the offering had been foiled. What did he do? He approached Sarah saying, "Have you heard the latest news?"

"No," she replied.

"Your aged husband took the youth Yitzchak and sacrificed him as a burnt-offering. The boy moaned and groaned but could not free himself," Satan reported.

¹²². The dream in this verse refers to the "fourth kingdom," which is the Roman Empire—the descendants of Eisav.

Sarah broke into tears, weeping bitterly. She uttered three moans corresponding to the three *tekiah* sounds [of the shofar] and three cries corresponding to the three *teruah* sounds. Then her soul departed.

When Avraham came home, he saw that Sarah had died, as it says, *Avraham came to eulogize Sarah and to weep for her* (*Bereishis* 23:2). From where did he come? From Mount Moriah, [the site of the *Akeidah*].

Rabbi Yose says: Yitzchak observed three years of mourning for his mother Sarah. After three years he married Rivkah and stopped mourning. This teaches that the love of an unmarried man is focused on his parents, but once he is married his affection is devoted to his wife, as it says, *A man shall therefore leave his father and mother and unite with his wife* (*ibid.* 2:24). Is one allowed to leave his father and mother [after his marriage?] Is he not still obligated to honor his father and mother? The verse, *He unites with his wife* refers to love, for he loves his wife more.

YAAKOV AND EISAV

Rabbi Yehudah says: Rivkah was barren for twenty years. After twenty years Yitzchak went with her to Mount Moriah, the site of the *Akeidah*, and prayed for her to become pregnant. G-d accepted his plea, as it says, *Yitzchak pleaded with G-d for her sake. G-d granted his plea, and Rivkah became pregnant* (*ibid.* 25:21). When the discomfort of pregnancy became unbearable, she prayed in the place of purity, [the site of the future Beis Hamikdash,] as it says, *She went to inquire of Hashem* (*ibid.* 25:22).

The two unborn sons were like mighty warriors, as it says, *The children clashed inside her* (*ibid.* 25:22). What did Yaakov do? He grabbed Eisav's heel to knock him down, as it says, *His hand was grasping Eisav's heel* (*ibid.* 25:26). This teaches that the children of

¹²³. Emendation according to the Gra (*Biur Radal*).

¹²⁴. *Biur Radal*.

Eisav will only be defeated when a descendant of Yaakov will strike their feet, as it says, *As you watched, a stone was hewn without hands and struck the statue on its feet (Daniel 2:34)*.¹²² It says in another verse, *I have vengeance and retribution, waiting for their foot to slip (Devarim 32:35)*.

Rav Acha says: The boys grew up; Yaakov followed the path of life, dwelling in the study halls [of Shem and Eiver], engrossed in Torah without letup. The wicked Eisav followed the path of death, [scheming] to kill Yaakov, as it says, *He said to himself: The days of mourning for my father will soon be here. I will then be able to kill my brother (Bereishis 17:41)*.

Rabbi Shimon says: While Yitzchak was bound to the Altar, he looked upward and saw the *Shechinah*. Although it says, *No human can have a vision of Me and live (Shemos 33:20)*, Yitzchok did not die; rather his eyesight was dimmed in his old age, as it says, *Yitzchak had grown old, and his eyesight was fading (ibid. 27:1)*. From this we infer that a sightless person is considered as dead.

YITZCHOK'S BLESSING

On the night of Pesach, Yitzchak called his elder son Eisav, saying, "Tonight the angels¹²³ recite *Hallel*, and the storehouse of dew is opened. Prepare a tasty dish for me and I will bless you while I still can." But the Divine Spirit remarked, *Do not eat the bread of one who has an evil eye (Mishlei 23:6)*. [Eisav] went [hunting], but was detained [through heavenly intervention and failed to trap anything].

Said Rivkah to Yaakov, "Son, tonight the storehouse of dew is opened, and the angels sing songs of praise. In time to come, your descendants will be set free from slavery on this night, and they will

¹²⁵. 1. The dew of heaven; 2. The fat of the earth; 3. Much grain; 4. Wine; 5. Nations will serve you; 6. Governments will bow down to you; 7. You shall be a lord over your brothers; 8. Your mother's children will prostrate themselves to you; 9. Those that curse you will be cursed; 10. Those that bless you will be blessed.

¹²⁶. Divine utterances recorded in Bereishis 1 and 2:18. See Chapter 3, page 11.

sing songs of praise. Prepare a tasty dish for your father, so that he blesses you, while he still can.”

Because he was well-versed in the Torah [Yaakov knew that honoring his father takes precedence over honoring his mother¹²⁴,] and was therefore afraid of incurring his father’s curse. His mother said, “Son, a blessing will descend upon you and your children, but any curse, will fall upon me alone, as it says, *Let the curse be on me* (*ibid.* 27:13).

Yaakov went and brought two goat kids. Did Yitzchak usually eat two goat kids? Surely one kid would be sufficient, as it says, *A righteous person eats to satisfy his soul* (*Mishlei* 13:25)? One goat was for the *pesach* offering, the other was for a tasty dish to be eaten before the *pesach* as the *Mishnah* says, “The *pesach* offering must be eaten when one is sated.”

Yaakov entered, saying to his father, “*Sit up, and eat the game I trapped*” (*ibid.* 27:19).

Said Yitzchak, “*The voice is Yaakov’s voice*,—for it mentions the oneness of Hashem, and it is engrossed in thoughts of Torah. *But the hands are the hands of Eisav* – which engage in bloodshed and murder.”

When they announce in heaven, “The voice is Yaakov’s voice, [for he is praying and studying Torah,]” there is excitement in heaven. Moreover, when that announcement is heard on earth, those that listen and respond [by praying and studying Torah], have a share in the voice of Yaakov. Those who do not listen and do not respond accordingly [neglecting to pray and study Torah], have a share in *the hands are the hands of Eisav*.

Rabbi Yehudah says: Yitzchak gave Yaakov ten blessings involving the dew of heaven and the fat of the earth (*ibid.* 27:28),¹²⁵ as it says, *May G-d grant you the dew of heaven and the fat of the earth*, to match the ten utterances with which G-d created the world.¹²⁶ Yaakov left his father walking as if a crown were on his head, like a groom at the side of his adorned bride. Life-giving dewdrops from heaven descended on him, energizing him and turning him into a mighty warrior. And so it says, *From the mighty hands of Yaakov; from then on, he became a shepherd, a builder of Yisrael* (*ibid.*

49:24).

GLOSSARY



ADAM HARISHON - Adam the first man
ADAR - The twelfth Hebrew month
AGGADIC - Homiletic
AKEIDAH - The binding of Isaac as a sacrifice
AVRAHAM - Abraham
BAMIDBAR - The Book of Numbers
BAVEL - Babylonia
BEHEMAH - A large Aggadic Animal
BEIS HAMIDRASH - Torah study hall
BEIS HAMIKDASH - Holy Temple
BEN - Son of
BERACHAH pl. *BERACHOS* - Blessing
BEREISHIS - The Book of Genesis
B'NEI YISRAEL - Children of Israel
BRIS MILAH - Covenant of circumcision
CHASHMAL - A type of Angel
CHASSAN pl. *CHASSANIM* - Groom
CHODESH - Month
CHUPPAH pl. *CHUPPAHS* - Canopy
DAVEN, DAVENING - Prayer
DEVARIM - The Book of Deuteronomy
DIVREI HAYAMIM - The Book of Chronicles

- EICHA* - The Book of Lamentations
EISAV - Esau
ELIYAHU - Elijah
ELOKEINU - our God
ERETZ YISRAEL - The Land of Israel
EREV - The day preceding a holiday
GALUS - Exile
GAN EDEN - The Garden of Eden
GEHINNOM - Hell
GEMARA - Talmud
GEMATRIA - Numerical value of a word
HALACHAH pl. *HALACHOS* - Law
HANAVI - The Prophet
HASHEM - God
HAVDALAH - The blessing recited at the close of Shabbos
HOSHEA - The Book of Hosea
IYOV - Job
KEDUSHAH - Sanctity
KOHELES - Ecclesiastes
KOHEN - Priest - Descendant of Aaron
LIVYASAN - The Leviathan
MASHIACH - The Messiah
MELACHIM - The Book of Kings
MILAH - Circumcision
MINCHAH - The afternoon prayer
MISHLEI - Proverbs
MISHNAH - Compilation of the oral tradition; it also refers to one paragraph of this compilation
MITZVAH pl. *MITZVOS* - Commandment
NAVI - Prophet
PESACH - Passover; The Pascal Sacrifice
RABBEINU - Our Teacher
RASHI - The primary commentary to The Talmud and Scriptures
RIVKAH - Rebecca
SEFER pl. *SEFORIM* - Book or scroll
SHABBOS pl. *SHABASOS* - The day of rest; Saturday
SHECHINAH - Divine Presence

SHECHITAH – Ritual Slaughter
SHEMA - The portion of the Torah containing the declaration of Hashem's unity that we say twice daily
SHEMITTAH - The sabbatical year when work in the field is prohibited
SHEMONEH ESREI - The eighteen beracha prayer that we say thrice each day
SHEMOS - The Book of Exodus
SHEMUEL - The Book of Samuel
SHIR HASHIRIM - Song of Songs
SHLOMOH - Solomon
SHOFAR pl. *SHOFAROS* - Rams Horn
SHOFETIM - The Book of Judges
SUKKOS - Festival of Tabernacles
TANACH - Scriptures
TANNA – Sage of the Mishnah
TEFILLIN - Phylacteries
TEHILLIM - Psalms
TEKUFAH - Season
TESHUVAH - Repentance
TISHAH BE'AV - The Fast of the Ninth of Av
TZADDIK pl. *TZADDIKIM* - Pious Person
VAYIKRA - The Book of Leviticus
YAAKOV - Jacob
YOM TOV pl. *YAMIM TOVIM* - Festivals
YARDEN RIVER - Jordan River
YECHYEZKEL - Ezekiel
YEHOSHUA - Joshua
YERUSHALAYIM - Jerusalem
YESHAYAH - Isaiah
YESHIVAH - Torah Academy
YETZER HARA - Evil Inclination
YIRMIYAH - Jeremiah
YISRAEL - Israel
YITZCHOK - Isaac