

CAN YOU ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS?

1. List at least five parallels between the story of Avraham's experience in Egypt and that of his descendants.
2. Where did Avraham first build an altar? Why?
3. Rivka received a gold ring and two bracelets from Avraham's servant. How much did they weigh? What is their historic significance?
4. What is the historic significance of the wells that Yitzchak dug?
5. What is the historic significance of Yaakov's encounter with the guardian angel of Esav?

This and much more will be addressed in the first lecture of this series:
"The Age of the Patriarchs: The Template of History".

To derive maximum benefit from this lecture, keep these questions in mind as you listen to the lecture and read through the outline. Go back to these questions once again at the end of the lecture and see how well you answer them.

PLEASE NOTE: This outline and source book were designed as a powerful tool to help you appreciate and understand the basis of Jewish History. Although the lectures can be listened to without the use of the outline, we advise you to read the outline to enhance your comprehension. Use it, as well, as a handy reference guide and for quick review.

This lecture is dedicated to the memory of and *Li-ilui Nishmas*

ר' אריה בן אברהם ע"ה

Dr. Eric Peterson, of blessed memory.

THE EPIC OF THE ETERNAL PEOPLE
Presented by Rabbi Shmuel Irons

Series XIV Lecture #1

THE AGE OF THE PATRIARCHS: THE TEMPLATE OF HISTORY

I. The Experiences of the Patriarchs: The Blueprint For the Future

A.

והכלל כי כל מה שהיה והוה ויהיה עד עולם הכל כלול בתורה מבראשית עד לעיני כל ישראל ולא הכללים בלבד אלא אפילו פרטיו של כל מיין ומיין ושל כל אדם בפרט וכל מה שאירע לו מיום הולדו עד סופו וכל גלגוליו וכל פרטי פרטיו וכן של כל בהמה וחיה וכל בעל חי שבעולם וכל עשב וצומח ודומם וכל פרטיהם פרטי פרטיהם בכל מיין ומיין ואישי המינים, ומה שיארע להם ושרשם וכן כל מה שכתוב באבות ומשה וישראל כלם הן בכל דור ודור שכולם מתגלגלים ניצוצותיהם בכל דור ודור כידוע, וכן כל מעשיהם מאדם הראשון עד סוף התורה הוא בכל דור ודור כידוע למבין, וכן הוא בכל אדם ואדם לבר. באור הגר"א לספרא דצניעותא פרק ה'

It is a fundamental principle that all that is, was and will be for eternity is included in the Torah from *Beraishis* until *L'Ainei Kol Yisrael*. Not just the general pattern, but even the particulars of every specie and every individual person, every event from the day he was born until the day he dies, all of his reincarnations and all his particulars. This equally applies to every domesticated and wild animal and any living creature in the world and every grass and form of vegetation. Similarly, all that is written regarding the Patriarchs and Moshe and [Klal] Yisrael is all repeated throughout every generation, for the sparks of their spirituality are incarnated in every generation. Similarly, every act which is recorded from the time of Adam until the end of the Torah is actually recurring in every generation, as an astute person knows. It also occurs to every single person as well. **The Gaon's Commentary to Sifra D'Tzniusa, Chapter 5**

B.

א"ר חייא רבה מתחלת ברייתו של עולם צפה הקב"ה בית המקדש בנוי, וחרב, ובנוי, בראשית ברא א-להים, הרי בנוי, היאך מה דאת אמר (ישעיה נא) לנטוע שמים וליסוד ארץ וגו', והארץ היתה תוהו ובוהו, הרי חרב, היך מה דאת אמר (ירמיה ד) ראיתי את הארץ והנה תוהו ובוהו, ויאמר א-להים יהי אור הרי בנוי ומשוכלל לעתיד לבא, היאך מה דאת אמר (ישעיה ס) קומי אורי כי בא אורך, וכתוב (שם/ישעיהו ס') כי הנה החושך יכסה ארץ וגו'. בראשית רבה פרשה ב:ה

Rabbi Chiya Rabbah said: At the very beginning of creation, the Holy One, blessed be He, foresaw the Temple built, destroyed and rebuilt. "In the beginning G-d created" (Gen. 1:1) is alluding to the building of the Temple, just as it says (Isaiah 51:16), ". . . that I may plant the heavens, and lay the foundations of the earth, and say to Zion, You are My people." "And the earth was void and empty" (Gen. 1:2) is alluding to the destroyed Temple. "And G-d said, 'Let there be light'" is alluding to the rebuilt and enhanced Temple of the future, just as it says (Isaiah 60:1), "Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the L-rd has risen upon you." And it is written (Ibid. 60:2), "For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the people; but the L-rd shall arise upon you, and His glory shall be seen upon you." **Medrash Beraishis Rabbah 2:5**

C.

ר"ש בן לקיש פתר קריא בגליות, והארץ היתה תהו זה גלות בבל שנאמר (ירמיה ד) ראיתי את הארץ והנה תהו, ובהו זה גלות מדי (אסתר ו) ויבהילו להביא את המן, וחושך זה גלות יון שהחשיכה עיניהם של ישראל בגזירותיהן שהיתה אומרת להם, כתבו על קרן השור שאין לכם חלק בא-להי ישראל, על פני תהום זה גלות ממלכת הרשעה שאין להם חקר כמו התהום מה התהום הזה אין לו חקר אף הרשעים כן, ורוח א-להים מרחפת זה רוחו של מלך המשיח, היאך מה דאת אמר (ישעיה יא) ונחה עליו רוח ד', באיזו זכות ממשמשת ובאה, המרחפת על פני המים בזכות התשובה שנמשלה כמים, שנאמר (איכה ב) שפכי כמים לבך. מדרש בראשית רבה פרשה ב:ד

Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish interpreted these verses as a reference to the exiles. "And the land was formless" (Gen. 1:2) is referring to the Babylonian exile, as it says (Jeremiah 4:23), "I looked on the earth, and, behold, it was formless . . ." The words, "and empty - *vavahu*" (Ibid.) is a reference to the Median exile, as it says (Esther 6:14), "And they hurried - *vayavhilu* - to bring Haman." The words, "and darkness" (Ibid.), refers to the Greek exile, as the Greeks darkened the eyes of Israel through their decrees, for they said to them, "Write upon the horn of the ox that you don't have a portion in the G-d of Israel." The words, "on the face of the deep waters" (Ibid.) refers to the exile of the evil kingdom, which is not fathomable, just like the deep waters. Just like the deep waters aren't fathomable, so too the evil. "And the spirit of G-d swept over" (Ibid.) is referring to the spirit of the king, Moshiach, just as it says (Isaiah 11:2), "And the spirit of the L-rd shall rest upon him . . ." With what merit will he come? [With the merit of,] "And the spirit of G-d swept over the face of the waters", which is the merit of repentance, which is likened to water, as it says (Lam. 2:19), ". . . pour out your heart like water before the face of the L-rd . . ." **Medrash Rabbah Parshah 2:4**

D.

לאברם היטיב בעבורה ויהי לו צאן ובקר וגו' ויצו עליו פרעה אנשים וישלחו אותו ר' פנחס בשם רבי הושעיא רבה אמר אמר הקב"ה לאברהם אבינו צא וכבוש את הדרך לפני בניך את מוצא כל מה שכתוב באברהם כתיב בבניו באברהם כתיב (שם יב) ויהי רעב בארץ בישראל כתיב (שם מה) כי זה שנתים הרעב בקרב הארץ באברהם כתיב (שם יב) וירד אברם מצרימה לגור שם ובישראל כתיב (במדבר כ) וירדו אבותינו מצרימה באברהם כתיב לגור שם ובישראל כתיב לגור בארץ באנו באברהם כתיב כי כבד הרעב בארץ כנען בישראל כתיב והרעב כבד בארץ באברהם כתיב ויהי כאשר הקריב בישראל כתיב ופרעה הקריב באברהם כתיב (בראשית יב) והרגו אותי ואותך יחיו ובישראל כתיב (שמות א) כל הבן הילוד היאורה תשליכוהו באברהם כתיב אמרי נא אחותי את למען ייטב לי בעבורך וגו' ובישראל כתיב וייטב א-להים למילדות באברהם כתיב ויהי כבוא אברם מצרימה ובישראל כתיב (שם) אלה שמות בני ישראל הבאים מצרימה באברהם כתיב (בראשית יג) ואברם כבד מאד במקנה ובישראל כתיב (תהלים ק"ה) ויוציאם בכסף וזהב באברהם כתיב ויצו עליו פרעה ובישראל כתיב ותחזק מצרים על העם באברהם כתיב וילך למסעיו ובישראל כתיב אלה מסעי בני ישראל: מדרש בראשית רבה מ:ו

And he treated Abram well for her sake; and he had sheep, and oxen, and male donkeys, and menservants, and maidservants, and female donkeys, and camels. . . . And Pharaoh commanded his men concerning him; and they sent him away, and his wife, and all that he had. (Genesis 12:16, 20) Rabbi Pinchas in the name of Rabbi Oshaiah Rabbah said: The Holy One, blessed be He, said to our forefather Abraham, "Go out and pave the way before your children." We find a parallel between everything that is written regarding Abraham and that which is written regarding his children: With regard to Abraham it is written (Gen. 12:10), "And

there was a **famine** in the land . . .” With regard to Israel (Jacob) it is written (Gen. 45:6), “For these two years has the **famine** been in the land . . .” With regard to Abraham it is written (Gen. 12:10), “. . . and Abram **went down to Egypt** [to sojourn there] . . .” With regard to Israel it is written (Numbers 20:15), “How our fathers **went down to Egypt**, . . .” With regard to Abraham it is written (Gen. 12:10), “. . . **to sojourn there** . . .” With regard to Israel it is written (Gen. 47:4), “[They said moreover to Pharaoh,] **To sojourn in the land** we have come . . .” With regard to Abraham it is written (Gen. 12:10), “. . . for **the famine was severe in the land.**” With regard to Israel it is written (Gen. 43:1), “**And the famine was severe in the land.**” With regard to Abraham it is written (Gen. 12:10), “. . . And it came to pass, when he **came near** [to enter to Egypt].” With regard to Israel it is written (Exodus 14:10)), “**And when Pharaoh came near . . .**” With regard to Abraham it is written (Gen. 12:12), “. . . and **they will kill me, but you they will keep alive.**” With regard to Israel it is written (Exodus 1:22), “. . . Every son who is born you shall **throw into the river, [and every daughter you shall let live].**” With regard to Abraham it is written (Gen. 12:13), “Say, I beg you, that you are my sister; that **it may be well** with me for your sake; . . .” With regard to Israel it is written (Exodus 1:20), “Therefore G-d **dealt well** with the midwives . . .” With regard to Abraham it is written (Gen. 12:14), “And it came to pass, that, when Abram **came to Egypt** . . .” With regard to Israel it is written (Exodus 1:1), “**And these are the names of the sons of Israel, who came to Egypt . . .**” With regard to Abraham it is written (Gen. 13:2), “**And Abram was very rich (heavy) in cattle, in silver, and in gold.**” With regard to Israel it is written (Psalms 105:37), “**And he brought them out with silver and gold; . . .**” Regarding Abraham it is written (Gen. 12:20), “**And Pharaoh commanded his men concerning him; [and they sent him away] . . .**” With regard to Israel it is written (Exodus 12:33), “**And the Egyptians urged the people, [that they might send them out of the land in haste;] . . .**” Regarding Abraham it is written (Gen. 13:3), “**And he went on his journeys** [from the Negev to Beth-El, to the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Beth-El and Hai].” With regard to Israel it is written (Numbers 33:1), “**These are the journeys of the people of Israel, [which went forth out of the land of Egypt] . . .**” **Midrash Bereishis Rabbah 40:6**

E.

א"ר יהושע דסכנין סימן נתן לו הקב"ה לאברהם שכל מה שאירע לו אירע לבניו, כיצד בחר באברהם מכל בית אביו שנאמר אתה הוא ד' הא-להים אשר בחרת באברם והוצאתו מאור כשדים ושמת שמו אברהם (נחמיה ט) ובחר בבניו משבעים אומות שנאמר כי עם קדוש אתה לד' א-להיך ובך בחר ד' א-להיך להיות לו לעם סגולה מכל העמים אשר על פני האדמה (דברים יד) לאברהם נאמר לך לך, ולבניו נאמר אעלה אתכם מעני מצרים אל ארץ הכנעני והחתי והאמורי והפרזי והחוי והיבוסים אל ארץ זבת חלב ודבש (שמות ג) , לאברהם נאמר ואברכך ואגדלה שמך והיה ברכה ואברכה מברכך, ולבניו נאמר יברכך ד' (במדבר ו), לאברהם נאמר ואעשך לגוי גדול ולבניו נאמר ומי גוי גדול (דברים ד) אברהם כתיב בו אחד היה אברהם (יחזקאל לג) וישראל ומי כעמך ישראל וגו' (דברי הימים א יז), לאברהם נאמר ויהי רעב בארץ וירד אברם מצרימה לגור שם כי כבד הרעב בארץ, ולבניו כיון ששבו למצרים והרעב היה בארץ (בראשית מג) , אברהם ע"י הרעב ירד למצרים ואף בניו על ידי הרעב ירדו למצרים שנאמר וירדו אחי יוסף עשרה לשבור בר ממצרים (בראשית מב), אברהם כשירד נזדווגו לו המצרים ויראו המצרים את האשה כי יפה היא מאד, אף לבניו הבה נתחכמה לו פן ירבה והיה כי תקראנה מלחמה ונוסף גם הוא על שונאינו ונלחם בנו ועלה מן הארץ (שמות א), אברהם נזדווגו לו ארבעה מלכים אף לישראל עתידין כל המלכים להתרגש עליהם שנאמר (תהלים ב) למה רגשו גוים ולאמים יהגו ריק ואומר יתיצבו מלכי ארץ ורוזנים נוסדו יחד על ד' ועל משיחו, מה אברהם יצא הקב"ה ונלחם בשונאיו שנ' (ישעיה מא) מי העיר ממזרח צדק יקראוהו לרגלו יתן לפניו גוים ומלכים ירד יתן כעפר חרבו כקש נדף קשתו, אף כך עתיד הקב"ה

לעשות לבניו שנאמר ויצא ה' ונלחם בגוים ההם כיום הלחמו ביום קרב (זכריה יד) . מדרש תנחומא
(ורשא) פרשת לך לך סימן ט

Rabbi Yehoshua of Sakhnin said: The Holy One, blessed be He, gave a [prognostic] sign to Abraham, that everything that would happen to him would happen to his children. In which manner? Abraham was chosen from amongst his father's entire family, as it says (Nehemiah 9:7), "You are the **L-rd the G-d, who chose Abram**, and brought him out of Ur of the Chaldeans, and gave him the name of Abraham." And He chose his children from amongst the seventy nations, as it says (Deut. 14:2), "For you are a holy people to the L-rd your G-d, and the **L-rd has chosen you to be a special people to Himself**, above all the nations that are upon the earth." To Abraham it was stated (Gen. 12:1), "**Get out** [from your country, and from your family, and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you]." To his children it was stated (Exodus 3:17), "And I have said, I will **bring you out** of the affliction of Egypt to the land of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, to a land flowing with milk and honey." To Abraham it was stated (Gen. 12:2,3), "[And I will make of you a great nation], and **I will bless you**, and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing; And I will bless those who bless you . . ." To his children it was stated (Numbers 6:24), "**The L-rd bless you**, [and keep you]." To Abraham it was stated (Gen. 12:2), "And I will make of you **a great nation**, . . ." To his children it was stated (Deut. 4:8), "And **what nation is there so great** . . ." Regarding Abraham it was stated (Ezekiel 33:24), "**Abraham was one (unique) man**, [and he inherited the land]; . . ." Regarding his children it was stated (Chronicles I 17:21), "And **what nation in the earth is like your people** Israel, . . ." Regarding Abraham it was stated (Genesis 12:10), "And there was **a famine in the land**; and Abram went down to Egypt to sojourn there; for the famine was severe in the land." Regarding his children, since they [were destined to] return to Egypt, "**there was a [severe] famine in the land.**" (Gen. 43:1) Abraham went down to Egypt **because of a famine**, and his children also went down to Egypt **because of a famine**, as it is stated (Gen. 42:3), "And Joseph's ten brothers went down to buy grain in Egypt." As soon as Abraham went down, the Egyptians **began to contend with him** (Gen. 12:14), "And it came to pass, that, when Abram came to Egypt, the Egyptians saw the woman that she was very pretty." This also occurred to his children, [as it says] Exodus 1:8, 9, 10), "[And there arose up a new king over Egypt, who knew not Joseph. And he said to his people,] Behold, the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we; Come on, **let us deal wisely with them**; lest they multiply, and it may come to pass, that, when there would be any war, they should join our enemies, and fight against us; and so get them out of the land." Just as **Abraham contended with the four kings**, so too is **Israel destined that all of the kings will rage against them** as it says (Psalms 2:1, 2), "Why do the nations rage, and the peoples mutter a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the L-rd, and against his anointed . . ." Just as the Holy One, blessed be He, went out to fight against the enemies of Abraham, as it says (Isaiah 41:2), "Who raised up one from the east whom righteousness met wherever he set his foot, gave the nations before him, and made him rule over kings? **His sword make them as dust, his bow as driven stubble,**" so too is the Holy One, blessed be He, destined to act towards his children, as it says (Zechariah 14:3), "Then shall the L-rd go forth, **and fight against those nations**, as when he fought in the day of battle." **Midrash Tanchuma (Warsaw) Parshas Lech Lecha, Siman 9**

F.

ויעבר אברם בארץ עד מקום שכם אומר לך כלל תבין אותו בכל הפרשיות הבאות בענין אברהם יצחק ויעקב, והוא ענין גדול, הזכירוהו רבותינו בדרך קצרה, ואמרו (תנחומא ט) כל מה שאירע

לאבות סימן לבנים, ולכן יאריכו הכתובים בספור המסעות וחפירת הבארות ושאר המקרים, ויחשוב החושב בהם כאלו הם דברים מיותרים אין בהם תועלת, וכולם באים ללמד על העתיד, כי כאשר יבוא המקרה לנביא משלשת האבות יתבונן ממנו הדבר הנגזר לבא לזרעו: ודע כי כל גזירת עירין כאשר תצא מכח גזירה אל פועל דמיון, תהיה הגזרה מתקיימת על כל פנים – ולכן יעשו הנביאים מעשה בנבואות כמאמר ירמיהו שצוה לברוך והיה ככלותך לקרוא את דברי הספר הזה תקשור עליו אבן והשלכתו אל תוך פרת ואמרת ככה תשקע בבל וגו' (ירמיה נא:סג,סד) וכן ענין אלישע בהניחו זרעו על הקשת (מ"ב יג:טז – יז), ויאמר אלישע ירה ויור ויאמר חץ תשועה לד' וחץ תשועה בארם ונאמר שם (פסוק יט) ויקצוף עליו איש הא-להים ויאמר להכות חמש או שש פעמים אז הכית את ארם עד כלה ועתה שלש פעמים תכה את ארם: ולפיכך החזיק הקב"ה את אברהם בארץ ועשה לו דמיונות בכל העתיד להעשות בזרעו, והבן זה – ואני מתחיל לפרש הענינים בפרט בפסוקים בעזרת השם: פירוש הרמב"ן לבראשית יב:

And Abram passed through the land to the place of Shechem, . . . I am about to tell you an [important] principle. Apply it to all of the forthcoming sections regarding Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. It is a significant idea. Our Rabbis mentioned it briefly and said (Tanchuma 9), "Everything that happened to the Patriarchs is a prognostic sign for their children." For that reason, Scripture elaborates on their travels, the digging of wells, and other occurrences. [A casual reader] would think that these are superfluous, without any benefit. [But] they all came to teach us regarding the future; for when a happening occurs to a Patriarchic prophet, one should give serious thought to the event that is alluded to that has been decreed upon their posterity.

You should know that whenever decrees of the Divine powers emerge from mere thought into [symbolic] action, the decree will be fulfilled [without annulment]. For that reason, the prophets will take some [symbolic] action to fulfill their prophecy, as is evident with Jeremiah who commanded Baruch (Jeremiah 51:63, 64), "And it shall be, when you have finished reading this book, that you shall bind a stone to it, and cast it into the midst of Euphrates; And you shall say, 'Thus shall Babylon sink, and shall not rise from the evil that I will bring upon her; and they shall be weary.' Thus far are the words of Jeremiah." Similarly when Elisha put his arm on the bow (Kings II 13:16-17), "And he said to the king of Israel, 'Put your hand upon the bow.' And he put his hand upon it; and Elisha put his hands upon the king's hands. And he said, 'Open the window eastward.' And he opened it. Then Elisha said, 'Shoot.' And he shot. And he said, 'The arrow of the L-rd's deliverance, and the arrow of deliverance from Aram; for you shall strike the Arameans in Aphek, till you have consumed them.'" And it is stated there (ibid. 19), "And the man of G-d was angry with him, and said, 'You should have struck five or six times; then you would have struck Aram till they had been consumed; whereas now you shall strike Aram only three times.'" For that reason, the Holy One, blessed be He, supported Abraham on earth and effected on his behalf events that resembled the future events of his posterity. Give thought to this. With G-d's help, I will begin to explain these ideas in particular in my explanation of the verses. **Commentary of Ramban to Genesis 12:6**

II. Avraham's Arrival in Canaan

A. Shechem

(1) ויעבר אברהם בארץ עד מקום שכם עד אלון מורה והפנעני אז בארץ: וירא ד' אל אברהם ויאמר לזרעך אתן את הארץ הזאת ויבן שם מזבח לד' הנראה אליו: בראשית יב:ז

And Abram passed through the land to the place of Shechem, to the terebinth (plains) of Moreh. And the Canaanite was then in the land. And the L-rd appeared to Abram, and said, To your seed will I give this land; and there he built an altar to the L-rd, who appeared to him. **Genesis 12:6-7**

(2) עד מקום שכם. להתפלל על בני יעקב כשיבאו להלחם בשכם: אלון מורה. הוא שכם, הראהו הר גריזים והר עיבל ששם קבלו ישראל שבועת התורה: רש"י שם

To the place of Shechem: To pray on behalf of the sons of Jacob at the time that they would fight in Shechem. **to the terebinth (plains) of Moreh:** This is [adjacent to] Shechem. He showed him Mount Gerizzim and Mount Ebal, where Israel would accept the oath that bound them to observe the Torah. **Rashi, ibid.**

(3) אִזְ יִבְנֶה יְהוֹשֻׁעַ מִזְבֵּחַ לַד' אֶל-לְהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּהַר עֵיבָל: כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה מֹשֶׁה עֶבֶד-ד' אֶת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל כְּפִתּוּב בְּסֵפֶר תּוֹרַת מֹשֶׁה מִזְבַּח אֲבָנִים שְׁלֵמוֹת אֲשֶׁר לֹא הֵנִיף עֲלֵיהֶן בְּרִזָּל וַיַּעֲלוּ עָלָיו עֹלוֹת לַד' וַיִּזְבְּחוּ שְׁלָמִים: יְהוֹשֻׁעַ ה:ל-לא

Then Joshua built an altar to the L-rd G-d of Israel in Mount Ebal, As Moses the servant of the L-rd commanded the people of Israel, as it is written in the Book of the Torah of Moses, an altar of whole stones, over which no man has lifted up any iron; and they offered on it burnt offerings to the L-rd, and sacrificed peace offerings. **Joshua 8:30-31**

(4) ויעבור אברם בארץ עד מקום שכם – היא עיר שכם, כן זה שם המקום ההוא ושכם בן חמור על שם עירו נקרא וכתב רש"י נכנס לתוכה עד מקום שכם להתפלל על בני יעקב כשיבואו מן השדה עצבים ונכון הוא ואני מוסיף כי החזיק אברהם במקום ההוא תחלה, וקודם שנתן לו את הארץ, נרמז לו מזה כי בניו יכבשו המקום ההוא תחלה קודם היותם זוכים בו, וקודם היות עון יושב הארץ שלם להגלותם משם ולכן אמר והכנעני אז בארץ וכאשר נתן לו הקב"ה הארץ במאמר, אז נסע משם ונטע אהל בין בית אל ובין העי, כי הוא המקום אשר כבש יהושע בתחלה: פירוש הרמב"ן לבראשית יב:

And Abram passed through the land to the place of Shechem . . . (Gen. 12:6) This is the city of Shechem and it is also the name of the general area. Shechem, the son of Chamor, was given that name because of the city [that preceded him]. Rashi writes that [Abraham] entered the land [and continued to travel] until he came to the place of Shechem, in order to pray for the children of Jacob that would come from the field saddened [at what had occurred to their sister]. This is correct. I would like to add that [the fact that] Abraham first took hold of that place, before he was given the land, was meant as a hint that his descendants would conquer that area first, before he would have rights to it and before the [quota of] sins of the inhabitants of the land had been met so that they would be forced to be exiled from there. For that reason does it say (ibid.), “. . . And the Canaanite was then in the land.” As soon as the Holy One, blessed be He, verbally gave him the land, he then traveled from there and pitched his tent between Beth El and HaAi, for this was the first place that Joshua conquered. **Commentary of Ramban to Genesis 12:6**

B. Between Beth El and HaAi,

(1) וַיַּעֲתֵק מִשָּׁם הָהָרָה מִקְדָּם לְבֵית אֵל וַיֵּט אֶהֱלָה בֵּית אֵל מִיַּם וְהָעֵי מִקְדָּם וַיִּבֶן שָׁם מִזְבֵּחַ לַד' וַיִּקְרָא בְשֵׁם ד': בראשית יב:

And he moved from there to a mountain in the east of Beth-El, and pitched his tent, having Beth-El on the west, and Hai on the east; and there he built an altar to the L-rd, and called upon the name of the L-rd. **Genesis 12:8**

(2) ויבן שם מזבח. נתנבא שעתידין בניו להכשל שם על עון עכן, והתפלל שם עליהם:

And there he built an altar: He prophesied that in the future his descendants would stumble there [in that area] because of the sin of Achan and he prayed there on their behalf. **Rashi ibid.**

(3) אמר רבי אלעזר: לעולם יקדים אדם תפלה לצרה, שאילמלא הקדים אברהם תפלה לצרה בין בית אל ובין העי לא נשתייר משונאיהן של ישראל שריד ופליט. סנהדרין מד:

R. Elazar said: One should always offer up prayer before misfortune comes; for had not Avraham anticipated trouble by prayer between Beth-el and Ai (see Gen. 12:8 - He pitched his tent, having Beth-el on his west, and Ai on the east, and he builded an altar to the L-rd and called upon the name of the L-rd.) there would not have remained of Israel's sinners a remnant or a survivor. **Sanhedrin 44b**

(4) ויעתק משם ההרה – נעתק מאותו מקום שבנה המזבח ובא אל הר המוריה ובנה מזבח פעם אחרת, להורות כי שם עתידים ישראל להקריב העולה והשלמים בבית המקדש, והתפלל שם גם כן להורות (ישעיה נו) כי ביתי בית תפלה יקרא לכל העמים, זהו שאמר ויבן שם מזבח לד' ויקרא בשם ד'. רבינו בחיי לבראשית יב:

And he moved from there to a mountain in the east of Beth-El, and pitched his tent, having Beth-El on the west, and Hai on the east; and there he built an altar to the L-rd, and called upon the name of the L-rd. (Genesis 12:8): “And he moved from there” i.e. from the place where he [originally] built an altar (Shechem) and came to Mount Moriah and built an altar there for a second time. This teaches us that Israel is destined to sacrifice the burnt offerings and peace offerings in the Bais HaMikdash (Temple). He prayed there to indicate that (Isaiah 56:7), “My house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples.” This is what is meant by the phrase, “and there he built an altar to the L-rd, and called upon the name of the L-rd.” **Rabbainu Bachya, Genesis 12:8**

C.

(1) ויִסַּע אַבְרָם הַלּוֹךְ וְנֹסֵעַ הַנְּגֵבָה. בראשית יב:ט

And Abram journeyed, going on still toward the Negev. **Genesis 12:9**

(2) הלוך ונסוע. לפרקים יושב כאן חדש או יותר ונסוע משם, ונוטה אהלו במקום אחר, וכל מסעיו הנגבה, ללכת לדרומה של ארץ ישראל, והיא לצד ירושלים. . . רש"י שם

And Abram journeyed, going on still toward the Negev: At times he would stay in a place for a month or more and then journey on from there and pitch his tent in another place. And all of his journeys were towards the Negev, i.e. towards the south of Eretz Yisrael, which is towards Jerusalem. **Rashi, ibid.**

(3) הנגבה כתב רבינו שלמה ללכת לדרומה של ארץ ישראל, והוא בחלק של בני יהודה שנטלו בדרומה של ארץ ישראל וכן לעתיד לבא בבניו, שנאמר (שופטים א ב) יהודה יעלה בתחלה: רמב"ן לבראשית יב:ט

Rabbainu Shlomo wrote that [Abraham] traveled towards the south of the land of Israel, which is in the portion of the descendants Judah (Yehudah), who took [their portion] in the south of the land of Israel. So too did the events unfold for his descendants in the future, as it says (Judges 1:2), “And the L-rd said, ‘Judah shall go up; behold, I have delivered the land into his hand.’”

Ramban to Genesis 12:9

(4) וַיַּעַל מֹשֶׁה מֵעֵרְבַת מוֹאָב אֶל הַר נֶבֹו רֹאשׁ הַפְּסֶגָה אֲשֶׁר עַל פְּנֵי יְרֵחוֹ וַיִּרְאֶהוּ ד' אֶת כָּל הָאָרֶץ
אֶת הַגְּלְעָד עַד דָּן: וְאֶת כָּל נַפְתָּלִי וְאֶת אֶרֶץ אֶפְרַיִם וּמְנַשֶּׁה וְאֶת כָּל אֶרֶץ יְהוּדָה עַד הַיָּם הָאֲחֻרֹן: וְאֶת
הַנֶּגֶב וְאֶת הַכֶּכֶר בְּקֶעֶת יְרֵחוֹ עִיר הַתְּמָרִים עַד צֶעֶר: דברים לג:א-ג

And Moses went up from the plains of Moab to the Mountain of Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, that is opposite Jericho. And the L-rd showed him all the land of Gilead, to Dan, And all Naphtali, and the land of Ephraim, and Manasseh, and all the land of Judah, as far as the utmost sea, And the Negev, and the plain of the valley of Jericho, the city of palm trees, as far as Zoar. **Deut. 34:1-3**

(5) ואת הנגב. ארץ הדרום. דבר אחר, מערת המכפלה, שנאמר ויעלו בנגב ויבא עד חברון
(במדבר יג, כה.): רש"י שם

The Negev: The land of the south. Another interpretation: The cave of Machpelah, as it says (Number 13:25), "And they went up to the Negev and they came to Hebron." **Rashi, ibid.**

III. The Egyptian Experience

A.

ויהי רעב בארץ הנה אברהם ירד למצרים מפני הרעב לגור שם להחיות נפשו בימי הבצורת, והמצרים עשקו אותו חנם לקחת את אשתו, והקב"ה נקם נקמתם בנגעים גדולים, והוציאו משם במקנה בכסף ובזהב, וגם צוה עליו פרעה אנשים לשלחם: ורמזו אליו כי בניו ירדו מצרים מפני הרעב לגור שם בארץ, והמצרים ירעו להם ויקחו מהם הנשים כאשר אמר (שמות א כב) וכל הבת תחיון, והקב"ה ינקום נקמתם בנגעים גדולים עד שיוציאם בכסף וזהב וצאן ובקר מקנה כבד מאד, והחזיקו בהם לשלחם מן הארץ לא נפל דבר מכל מאורע האב שלא יהיה בבנים והענין הזה פרשוהו בבראשית רבה (מ:ו) רבי פנחס בשם רבי אושעיא אמר, אמר הקב"ה לאברהם צא וכבוש את הדרך לפני בניך, ואתה מוצא כל מה שכתוב באברהם כתוב בבניו, באברהם כתוב ויהי רעב בארץ, בישראל כתיב (להלן מה:ו) כי זה שנתים הרעב בקרב הארץ: רמב"ן לבראשית יב:

And there was a famine in the land: (Gen. 12:10) Behold Abraham went down to Egypt because of the famine, to temporarily dwell there in order to sustain his life during the period of drought. The Egyptians mistreated him unjustly and took away his wife. The Holy One, blessed be He, revenged them through great plagues and he sent them away from there with live stock, silver and gold. In addition, Pharaoh also commanded [his] men to send them out. With this, He hinted to him that his descendants would go down to Egypt because of a famine and dwell there, in the land, and that the Egyptians would mistreat them and [attempt] to take away their women, as it says (Exodus 1:22), ". . . and every daughter you shall let live." And the Holy One, would seek their revenge through great plagues until He would take them out with silver and gold, and great herds of sheep and cattle, and they took hold of them to send them out. There was nothing in the original event of the Patriarch that did not occur to his descendants. This idea is explained in the Midrash Bereishis Rabbah (8:6): Rabbi Pinchas in the name of Rabbi Oshaiah Rabbah said: The Holy One, blessed be He, said to our forefather Abraham, "Go out and pave the way before your children." We find a parallel between everything that is written regarding Abraham and that which is written regarding his children: With regard to Abraham it is written (Gen. 12:10), "And there was a **famine** in the land . . ." With regard to Israel (Jacob) it is written (Gen. 45:6), "For these two years has the **famine** been in the land . . ." **Ramban, Gen. 12:10**

B.

וכבר הוציא שרה מביתו בנגעים גדולים שהביא עליו, ונצח אברהם לכדו המלכים הגדולים, וכל זה בעזרת א-ל-ש-די השם הנודע לאבות, וככה יעשה בבנים. פירוש הרמב"ן לשמות ג:יג

Pharaoh had already released Sarah from his house through the great plagues which He had brought upon him, and Abraham had defeated singlehandedly great kings. All of this was through the assistance of "E-l Sha-dai" (the Almighty One), the name which was known to the Patriarchs. He will do the same for [their] descendants. **Ramban to Exodus 3:13**

IV. Avraham and the World Powers

A.

(1) וַיִּשְׁמַע אַבְרָם כִּי נִשְׁבָּה אָחִיו וַיִּרְק אֶת-הַנִּיכָיו יְלִידֵי בֵיתוֹ שְׁמֹנֶה עָשָׂר וּשְׁלֹשׁ מֵאוֹת וַיִּרְדֹּף עַד-דָּן: בראשית יד:יג

And when Abram heard that his brother was taken captive, he armed his trained servants, born in his own house, three hundred and eighteen, and pursued them to Dan. **Genesis 14:14**

(2) עד דן. שם תשש כחו, שראה שעתידין בניו להעמיד שם עגל (סנהדרין צו.): רש"י שם

There his strength waned, for he foresaw that his descendants would set up a [golden] calf there. **Rashi, ibid.**

B.

ויהי בימי אמרפל מלך שנער המעשה הזה אירע לאברהם להורות כי ארבע מלכיות תעמודנה למשול בעולם ובסוף יתגברו בניו עליהם ויפלו כלם בידם, וישיבו כל שבותם ורכושם והיה הראשון מהם מלך בבל, כי כן העתיד, כדכתיב (דניאל ב:לח) אנת הוא רישא די דהבא ואולי "אלסר" שם עיר במדי או בפרס ו"עילם", בעיר ההיא המלך מלך יון, הוא המלך הראשון, ומשם נתפשט מלכותו כשנצח דריוש וכבר הזכירו זה רבותינו (ע"ז י) רבי יוסי אומר שש שנים מלכו בעילם, ואחר כך נתפשטה מלכותם בכל העולם כולו ו"מלך גוים" המלך על עמים שונים אשר שמוהו עליהם לראש ולקצין, רמז למלך רומי אשר המלך על עיר מקובצת מעמים רבים, כיתים ואדום ויתר גוים: וכך אמרו בבראשית רבה (מב ב) אמר רבי אבין, כשם שפתח בארבע מלכיות, כך אינו חותם אלא בארבע מלכיות וכו' ושם עוד (מב ד, בשינוי לשון) ויהי בימי אמרפל מלך שנער, זו בבל אריוך מלך אלסר, זו מדי, כדרלעומר מלך עילם, זו יון, ותדעל מלך גוים, זו מלכות אדום שהיא מכתבת טירוניא מכל אומות העולם: רמב"ן לבראשית יד:א

And it came to pass in the days of Amraphel king of Shinar . . . (Gen. 14:1): This incident happened to Abraham to teach us that four kingdoms would arise to rule over the world. Eventually, [Abraham's] descendants would overpower them (the four kingdoms), they would all fall defeated through the hands [of Abraham's descendants], and they would return all of the captives and wealth which they plundered. The first one of them was the king of Bavel. So too would it be in the future, as it is written (Daniel 2:38), "You [Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon,] are this head of gold." Perhaps, Ellasar is a name of a city in Medea or Persia. And Elam was the city in which the king of Greece ruled. He (Alexander) was the first king and from there did his kingdom spread out when he defeated Darius. Our Rabbis have already mentioned this (Avodah Zarah 10a): Rabbi Yosei said, Six years did the Greeks reign in Elam and thereafter their dominion extended universally. "King of nations", the king who ruled over various nations who

had appointed him as a leader and general over them. This hints to the king of Rome, a king of a city made up of diverse nations such as the Kittim, Edom, and various others. This is what our Sages stated (Midrash Bereishis Rabbah 42:2), “Rabbi Avin said: Just like [Jewish history] begins with four kingdoms, so too does it end with the four kingdoms - Babylon, Medea, Greece, and Rome.” In addition there is another citation (Ibid. 42:4): “And it came to pass in the days of Amraphel king of Shinar,” is referring to Babylon. “Arioch king of Ellasar,” is referring to Medea. “Kedorlaomer king of Elam,” is referring to Greece. “. . . and Tidal king of nations,” is referring to the kingdom of Edom (Rome) which causes all of the nations of the world to write critical (anti Semitic) literature. **Ramban, Genesis 14:1**

V. The Marriage of Yitzchak and Rivkah

ויקח האיש נזם זהב בקע משקלו ושני צמידים – מה היה צריך להודיענו המשקל. אבל רמז לך במתנות האלה שעתידי לצאת ממנה עם מקבלי התורה שיביאו שקלים שכתוב בהם בקע לגולגלת, ושיקבלו שני לוחות הברית שהם עשרת הדברות, ויש בכללם קע"ב תיבות, וזהו ושני צמידים על ידיה עשרה זהב משקלם. ועוד כי לשון שקל הוא נוטריקון אש קול, רמז למתן תורה שכתוב שם (דברים ד) מן השמים השמיעך את קולו ליסרך ועל הארץ הראך את אשו הגדולה: ומזה יש לך להתבונן בדבר המן הרשע שאמר ועשרת אלפים ככר כסף אשקול ע"י עושי המלאכה, כי כוונתו הרעה להשמיד שונאי ישראל ולבטל בעשרה שלו העשרה שנתנו ע"י האש והקול. וזהו שרמז כאן בתפלה אנכי בדרך נחני ד' כי זכות התורה שהיא אנכי שעתידין בניה לקבל היתה עמו בהצלחת הדרך: והנה כל המאורעות האלה לרבקה הכל סימן לבניה. והמקרים שאירעו לעבד בהצלחת הדרך דוגמת המקרים שאירעו לבניה בדרך המדבר. כשם שהיה מלאך עמו בדרך מכח תפלתו של אברהם שאמר הוא ישלח מלאכו לפניך. כך מצינו בניה בדרך המדבר, (שמות כג) הנה אנכי שולח מלאך לפניך, ולפי שהיה המלאך המיוחד שבנפרדים לכך אמר מלאכו כלומר המיוחד לו והוא השר האחד הנאצל ממדתו של אברהם. וזהו (שם) כי ילך מלאכי, אברהם קראו בכאן מלאכו והקב"ה קראו מלאכי. וכשם שעלו המים לקראתה כן בבניה בדרך המדבר (במדבר כא:יז) עלי באר ענו לה. והעבד שנתן לה המתנות האלה רמז לה בהן, כי כשם שקבלה היא המתנות האלה על ידי עבד, כן בניה עתידיים לקבל התורה ע"י משה עבד השם שהוא היה העבד הנאמן אשר כל טוב אדוניו בידו, ממה שכתוב (שמות לג) אני אעביר כל טובי. וכשם שנתן לה מתנות רבות מקצתן בדרך ומקצתן בבית, ואותן שבדרך היו נזם זהב בקע משקלו ושני צמידים עשרה זהב משקלם. כן בניה במדבר הביאו שקלים וקבלו שני לוחות הברית שבהן עשרת הדברות. וכשם שנתן לה מתנות בבית ג"כ מלבד אותן שנתן לה בדרך, הוא שכתוב ויוצא העבד כלי כסף וכלי זהב, כן בניה בארץ מואב סמוך לביאתן לארץ נתנו להם מצות רבות, וכענין שכתוב (דברים כח) אלה דברי הברית אשר צוה ד' את משה לכרות את בני ישראל בארץ מואב מלבד הברית אשר כרת אתם בחורב. ומזה דרו"ל תורה מגלה מגלה נתנה. וכשם שנכפלה הפרשה זו בענין העבד ב' פעמים וחזר העבד לספר כל הדברים שאירעו לו בדרך, כן בניה קבלו התורה לוחות ראשונות ולוחות שניות, ומשה עבד ה' במשנה תורה חזר לספר בעבר הירדן כל הדברים שאירעו להם בלוחות ראשונות. והענינים האלה שנרמזו בנשואי יצחק ורבקה שהולידו ליעקב ובניו אשר יצאו מהם עם מקבלי התורה, נרמזו כל זה בשליחות העבד למעלת האבות: רבינו בחיי לבראשית כד:כב

. . . the man took a golden ear ring of half a shekel weight, and two bracelets for her hands of ten shekels weight of gold. (Genesis 24:22): What was the purpose of the informing about the weight? It is a hint for you, however, that these gifts are destined to issue forth from her, with those who will receive the Torah, who will bring their *shekalim*, of which it is written, “*bekalagulgules*”, and [it is a hint] that they will receive the two tablets of the covenant, which are the

ten commandments, which contain one hundred and seventy two words (*beka-בקע*). These are the two bracelets on her hand, ten shekels weight of gold. In addition, the word *shekel* is an abbreviation for *aish kol* (fire-sound), which is a hint to the giving of the Torah about which it is written (Deut. 4:36), “From heaven He made you hear His voice, that He might instruct you; and upon earth He showed you His great fire; [and you heard His words out of the midst of the fire].” From here you can gain a deeper understanding regarding the wicked Haman who said (Esther 3:9), “. . . I will pay ten thousand talents of silver to the hands of those who have the charge of the business, [to bring it into the king’s treasuries].” His evil intention was to utterly destroy Israel and to annul through his “ten” the “ten” which were given through the fire and sound. This is what is alluded to in the prayer (Genesis 24:27), “As for me (*anochi-אנכי*), the L-rd has guided me in the way . . .” For in the merit of the Torah, which is [symbolized] by the word “anochi” (I) [which is the first word of the ten commandments], which her descendants were destined to receive, [He] was with him to make successful his way.

Behold, all that occurred to Rivka is a sign for her descendants and that which occurred to [Avraham’s] servant and his success in his travels is similar to that which would occur to her descendants on their travels through the desert. Just as there was an angel with him on the way, as a result of the prayer of Avraham who said (Genesis 24:7), “[The L-rd G-d of heaven, who took me from my father’s house, and from the land of my family, and who spoke to me, and who swore to me, saying, To your seed will I give this land;] He shall send His angel before you, [and you shall take a wife for my son from there],” so too do we encounter with her descendants (Exodus 23:20), “Behold, I send an Angel before you, [to keep you in the way, and to bring you into the place which I have prepared].” And because this angel was the most special of the spiritual beings, does it say, “His angel,” i.e. the most special to Him. This was the angel that embodied the spiritual essence of the attribute of Avraham (kindness). This is the meaning of (Exodus 23:23), “For my Angel shall go before you, [and bring you in to the Amorites, and the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Canaanites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites; and I will cut them off].” Here Avraham referred to him as, “His angel,” and the Holy One, blessed be He, referred to him as, “My angel”. And just as the water rose to meet her, (see Rashi Gen. 24:17) so too [did it happen with her descendants (Numbers 21:17), “[Then Israel sang this song,] Spring up, O well; sing you to it.” The servant who gave her these gifts hinted to her [this message] through them that just as she received these gifts through a servant, so too, are her descendants destined to receive the Torah through Moshe, the servant of G-d, who was the faithful servant who possessed “all the goods of his master in his hand,” (See Gen. 24:10) as it says (Exodus 33:19), “I will make all my goodness pass before you.” And just as he gave her many gifts, some while he was on the way and some in the house, on the way he gave a golden ring of half a shekel weight, and two bracelets for her hands of ten shekels weight of gold, so too her descendants brought shekels and received the two tablets of the covenant, which contained the ten commandments, [while they were still on the way] in the desert. And just as he gave her gifts in the house, besides those which he gave on the way, as it is written (Gen. 24:53), “And the servant brought forth jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, [and garments, and gave them to Rivkah; he gave also to her brother and to her mother precious things],” so too her descendants, while they were in the land of Moab, right before they came to the land, Hashem gave them many mitzvos (commandments). This is similar to that which is written (Deuteronomy 28:69), “These are the words of the covenant, which the L-rd commanded Moses to make with the people of Israel in the land of Moab, beside the covenant which he made with them in Horeb.” From this did our Sages derive that the Torah was transmitted in stages, in scrolls, [and only later combined into a single whole. - See Gittin 60a] Just as the section regarding [Avraham’s] servant was repeated twice and the servant repeated all of the things that happened to him on the way, so

too, her descendants received the Torah, the first tablets and the second tablets, and Moshe, Hashem's servant, in the book of Deuteronomy (Mishneh Torah), while he was on the far bank of the Jordan, repeated all of the events that occurred to them regarding the first tablets. These things, which are hinted at in the marriage between Yitzchak and Rivkah, who eventually gave birth to Yaakov, and [he] to his descendants who eventually received the Torah, were hinted at through the agency of the servant [due to] the special qualities of the Patriarchs. **Rabbainu Bachya, Genesis 24:22**

VI. Exile and Yitzchak's Wells

A.

ולדעתי נכלל עוד בענין רמיזה בעתיד, כי גלות אברהם אל מצרים מפני הרעב רמז שיגלו בניו שם, ולכתו אל אבימלך לא היה גלות כי שם היה יושב ברצונו, אבל ירידתו של יצחק שם מפני הרעב ירמוז לגלות, כי גלה ממקומו בעל כרחו והלך אל ארץ אחרת, והנה היה גלותו ממקומו אל ארץ פלשתים שהיא ארץ מגורי אביו, וירמוז לגלות בכל שהוא מקום מגורי אבותם שהיו באור כשדים: ומתחילה אמר הנוגע באיש הזה ובאשתו מות יומת ולימים חזר בו ואמר לך מעמנו ואחרי כן חזרו אליו בברית, וכך גלות בכל גלו שם מפני זלעפות רעב, ומעת היותם שם לא עבדום ולא ענו אותם, אבל היו גדוליהם שרים במלכות, ואחרי כן אמרו מי בכם מכל עמו יהי א-להיו עמו ויעל (עזרא א ג), ודע כי הגלות הנזכר ירמוז למעשה יצחק, כאשר לא לקחו אשתו, ולא היה לו שם רק הגלות והפחד, והזהירו עליהם שרי עבר הנהר והפחות ואחרי כן בטלו הבנין והות בטלא עד זמן ועידן אחרי כן חזרו ונתנו רשות בבנין והזהירו ואמרו די להון מהקרבין ניחוחין לאלה שמיא ומצלין לחיי מלכא ובנוהי (שם ו:י): רמב"ן לבראשית כו:א

In my opinion there is yet another lesson to be learned, i.e. a hint at the future, for the exile of Avraham to Egypt because of the famine alludes to the fact that his descendants would be exiled there. Avraham's [later] traveling to Avimelech was not an exile, for he willfully dwelt there. The descent of Yitzchak to that place, [however,] because of a famine, does hint at an exile, for he was forced to leave his home, travel to another land, and go into exile. Behold he was exiled from his home to the land of the Philistines, which was the land of the sojourning of his father. This hints at the Babylonian exile, which was the place of the sojourning of our forefathers, which was in Ur Kasdim. You should know that the aforementioned exile parallels the events of the life of Yitzchak. Since the Philistines didn't take his wife, Yitzchak only experienced there exile and fear. At the very beginning [of his exile] the king said: He who touches this man or his wife shall surely be put to death. He [then] recanted and said to him: Go from us; [for you are mightier than us]. And afterwards they came back to him and made a treaty. This pattern is evident in the Babylonian exile. They were exiled there because of a terrible famine, [which came about because of the siege of the Babylonians]. When they came there the Babylonians did not enslave or torment them. [On the contrary,] they were from the most esteemed ministers of the realm. Afterwards the [Persians, who superceded the Babylonians,] said to them: Who is there among you of all his people? His G-d be with him, and let him go [up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the L-rd G-d of Israel, He is the G-d, which is in Jerusalem]. And he admonished the mighty princes and governors of the other (southwest) side of the river (Euphrates) [to support them and their efforts to resettle]. Afterwards, however, the [ruling power recanted and] ordered the building to cease and it ceased for "a season and a time". Afterwards, they once again gave permission to build and admonished them (Ezra 6:10), "That they may offer pleasing sacrifices to the G-d of heaven, and pray for the life of the king, and of his sons." **Ramban, Genesis 26:1**

B.

(1) וַיִּחְפְּרוּ עֲבָדֵי יִצְחָק בְּנַחַל וַיִּמְצְאוּ שָׁם בְּאֵר מַיִם חַיִּים: וַיְרִיבוּ רֵעֵי גֵרָר עִם רֵעֵי יִצְחָק לֵאמֹר לָנוּ הַמַּיִם וַיִּקְרָא שֵׁם הַבְּאֵר עֵשֶׂק כִּי הִתְעַשְׂקוּ עִמּוֹ: וַיִּחְפְּרוּ בְּאֵר אַחֶרֶת וַיְרִיבוּ גַם עָלֶיהָ וַיִּקְרָא שְׁמָהּ שִׁטְנָה: וַיַּעֲתֵק מִשָּׁם וַיִּחְפֹּר בְּאֵר אַחֶרֶת וְלֹא רָבוּ עָלֶיהָ וַיִּקְרָא שְׁמָהּ רְחֹבוֹת וַיֹּאמֶר כִּי עַתָּה הִרְחִיב ד' לָנוּ וּפְרִינוּ בְּאֶרֶץ: בְּרֵאשִׁית כו:יט-כב

And Isaac's servants dug in the valley, and found there a well of natural spring water. And the herdsmen of Gerar did strive with Isaac's herdsmen, saying, The water is ours; and he called the name of the well Esek; because they strove with him. And they dug another well, and strove for that also; and he called the name of it Sitnah. And he moved from there, and dug another well; and for that they strove not; and he called the name of it Rehoboth; and he said, For now the L-rd has made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land. **Genesis 26:19-22**

(2) ויקרא שם הבאר עשק יספר הכתוב ויאריך בענין הבארות, ואין בפשוטי הספור תועלת ולא כבוד גדול ליצחק, והוא ואביו עשו אותם בשוה, אבל יש בדבר ענין נסתר בתוכו, כי בא להודיע דבר עתיד כי "באר מים חיים" ירמוז לבית א-להים אשר יעשו בניו של יצחק, ולכן הזכיר באר מים חיים, כמו שאמר (ירמיה יז יג) מקור מים חיים את ד' וקרא הראשון עשק, ירמוז לבית הראשון אשר התעשקו עמנו ועשו אותנו כמה מחלוקות וכמה מלחמות עד שהחריבוהו והשני קרא שמה שטנה, שם קשה מן הראשון, והוא הבית השני שקרא אותו כשמו שכתוב בו (עזרא ד ו) ובמלכות אחשוורוש בתחילת מלכותו כתבו שטנה על יושבי יהודה וירושלם, וכל ימיו היו לנו לשטנה עד שהחריבוהו וגלו ממנו גלות רעה והשלישי קרא רחובות, הוא הבית העתיד שיבנה במהרה בימינו והוא יעשה בלא ריב ומצה, והא-ל ירחיב את גבולנו, כמו שנאמר (דברים יט ח) ואם ירחיב ד' א-להיך את גבולך כאשר דבר וגו' שהוא לעתיד וכתוב בבית השלישי (יחזקאל מא ז) ורחבה ונסכה למעלה למעלה, ופרינו בארץ, שכל העמים יעבדוהו שכם אחד: רמב"ן לבראשית כו:כ

He called the name of the well Esek; [because they strove with him]. (Genesis 26:20): Scripture relates in great detail the story of the wells. On the surface, there doesn't seem to be any benefit from retelling this story nor does it add much honor to Yitzchak. He and his father equally made them. There is, though, a hidden idea, for it is informing us about the future, for the "well of spring water" is an allusion to the House of G-d, which the descendants of Yitzchak were destined to make. For that reason, Scripture mentions, "a well of living water," as it says (Jeremiah 17:13), "You, Hashem, are a source of living water." He called the first "Esek" (strife), which alludes to the first Temple wherein they strove with us and fomented many disputes, until they finally destroyed it. He called the second, "Sitnah" (accusation), a name which is harsher than the first. This is the second Temple which was called by the name it is referred to (Ezra 4:6), "And in the kingdom of Acheshverash, in the beginning of his kingdom, they wrote to him an accusation against the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem." The entire time it stood it was a source of accusation until they destroyed it and they were exiled a terrible exile. The third was called "Rehovos". That is referring to the Temple that will be built in the future, speedily in our days which will be made without strife and argumentation. Hashem will broaden our boundaries, as it says (Deut. 19:8), "When Hashem will broaden (*yarchiv*) your borders, as He spoke . . .," which will occur in the future. And it is written regarding the third Temple (Ezekiel 41:7), "And the side chambers became broader as one circled higher and higher; for the winding around of the house went still upward around the house," and we will become fruitful in the land for all of the nations will serve Him together. **Ramban, Genesis 26:20**

VII. Yaakov and the Well

A.

וַיֵּשֶׁא יַעֲקֹב רִגְלָיו וַיֵּלֶךְ אֶרְצָה בְּנֵי קְדָם: וַיֵּרָא וְהִנֵּה בְּאֵר בְּשֵׂדֶה וְהִנֵּה שָׁם שְׁלֹשָׁה עֲדָרֵי צֹאן רֹבְצִים עָלֶיהָ כִּי מִן הַבְּאֵר הַהוּא יִשְׁקוּ הָעֲדָרִים וְהָאֶבֶן גְּדֹלָה עַל פִּי הַבְּאֵר: וְנֹאֲסָפוּ שָׁמָּה כָּל הָעֲדָרִים וַיִּגְלְלוּ אֶת הָאֶבֶן מֵעַל פִּי הַבְּאֵר וְהִשְׁקוּ אֶת הַצֹּאן וְהִשִּׁיבוּ אֶת הָאֶבֶן עַל פִּי הַבְּאֵר לְמַקְמָהּ: וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם יַעֲקֹב אַחֵי מַאִין אַתֶּם וַיֹּאמְרוּ מִחֶרֶן אֲנַחְנוּ: וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם הִידְעֶתֶם אֶת לְבָן בֶּן נַחוֹר וַיֹּאמְרוּ יָדְעָנוּ: וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם הֲשִׁלּוּ לּוֹ וַיֹּאמְרוּ שְׁלֹו' וְהִנֵּה רְחֵל בְּתוֹ בָּאָה עִם-הַצֹּאן: וַיֹּאמֶר הֵן עוֹד הַיּוֹם גְּדוֹל לֹא עֵת הָאָסֶף הַמְּקַנֶּה הַשְּׁקוּ הַצֹּאן וּלְכוּ רְעוּ: וַיֹּאמְרוּ לֹא נוּכַל עַד אֲשֶׁר יֵאָסְפוּ כָּל הָעֲדָרִים וַיִּגְלְלוּ אֶת הָאֶבֶן מֵעַל פִּי הַבְּאֵר וְהִשְׁקִינוּ הַצֹּאן: עוֹדְנוּ מְדַבֵּר עִמָּם וּרְחֵל | בָּאָה עִם-הַצֹּאן אֲשֶׁר לְאֵבִיהָ כִּי רָעָה הוּא: וַיְהִי כַּאֲשֶׁר רָאָה יַעֲקֹב אֶת רְחֵל בֵּת לְבָן אַחֵי אָמוֹ וְאֵת צֹאן לְבָן אַחֵי אָמוֹ וַיִּגֵּשׁ יַעֲקֹב וַיִּגַּל אֶת הָאֶבֶן מֵעַל פִּי הַבְּאֵר וַיִּשֶׁק אֶת צֹאן לְבָן אַחֵי אָמוֹ: בְּרֵאשִׁית כֹּטֶא-י

Then Jacob went on his journey, and came to the land of the people of the east. And he looked, and saw a well in the field, and, lo, there were three flocks of sheep lying by it; for from that well they watered the flocks; and a great stone was upon the well's mouth. And there were all the flocks gathered; and they rolled the stone from the well's mouth, and watered the sheep, and put the stone again upon the well's mouth in his place. And Jacob said to them, My brothers, where are you from? And they said, Of Haran are we. And he said to them, Know you Laban the son of Nahor? And they said, We know him. And he said to them, Is he well? And they said, He is well; and, behold, Rachel his daughter comes with the sheep. And he said, Behold, it is yet high day, nor is it time that the cattle should be gathered together; water the sheep, and go and feed them. And they said, We can not, until all the flocks are gathered together, and till they roll the stone from the well's mouth; then we will water the sheep. And while he still spoke with them, Rachel came with her father's sheep, for she kept them. And it came to pass, when Jacob saw Rachel the daughter of Laban his mother's brother, and the sheep of Laban his mother's brother, that Jacob went near, and rolled the stone from the well's mouth, and watered the flock of Laban his mother's brother. **Genesis 29:1-10**

B.

וירא והנה באר בשדה והנה שם שלשה עדרי צאן רובצים עליה. יאריך הכתוב בספור הזה להודיענו כי קווי ד' יחליפו כח, ויראתו תתן עוז, כי הנה יעקב אבינו בא מן הדרך והוא עיף, ויגל לבדו האבן אשר היו צריכים אליה כל הרועים, ושלשה עדרי צאן אשר להם רועים רבים ושומרים כלם רובצים עליה אינם יכולים להניעה כלל: ולרבותינו בבראשית רבה (ע:ח) גם בזה להם סוד רמז לעתיד, כי נזדמן לו ככה שנכנס בדרך הבאר, ולא נאספו כל העדרים רק שלשה מהם, ובא בזמן שהאבן על פי הבאר והעדרים שומרים לה, וכל הענין המסופר כאן, להודיעו שיצליח בדרך הזה ויצא ממנו זרע זוכה לרמז הזה, כי הבאר ירמוז לבית המקדש, וג' עדרי צאן עולי שלשה רגלים, כי מן הבאר ההוא ישקו העדרים, שמשם היו שואבין רוח הקדש, או שירמוז כי מציון תצא תורה (ישעיה ב:ג) שנמשלה למים (ב"ק יז), ודבר ד' מירושלם ונאספו שמה כל העדרים, באים מלבא חמת עד נחל מצרים (מ"א ח:סה) ויגללו את האבן והשקו, שמשם היו שואבין רוח הקודש והשיבו את האבן, מונח לרגל הבא: רמב"ן לבראשית כט:ב

And he looked, and saw a well in the field, and, lo, there were three flocks of sheep lying by it; [for from that well they watered the flocks; and a great stone was upon the well's mouth]. (Genesis 29:2) Scripture elaborates upon this incident to tell us that “those who wait upon the L-rd shall renew their strength” (Isaiah 40:31) and that the fear of G-d gives strength [to those who possess it]. Behold our Patriarch Jacob had just arrived from [after a long] journey

and yet he single handedly rolled away the stone [a feat] which normally needed all of the [local] shepherds to accomplish. The three flocks of sheep which were lying by the well [were tended to by] many shepherds and watchmen and yet they were not at all able to roll the stone [and had to wait the arrival of the other flocks]. According to our Rabbis, (Midrash Bereishis Rabbah 70:8), this story also contains a secret relating to the future. The reason that it so happened that only three flocks were gathered there when Jacob arrived from his journey, which was when the stone was covering the mouth of the well and the flocks were waiting for its [removal], and all of the other recorded events, was to let Jacob know that he would be successful on this trip and that he would merit descendants that would merit that which was alluded to in this narrative. For the well is an allusion to the Bais HaMikdash (the Temple) and the three flocks of sheep allude to the pilgrims who come up for the three holidays, for “for from that well they watered the flocks” for from there (the Temple) they drew the Holy Spirit. Alternately, it hints that “for from Zion shall go forth Torah” (Isaiah 2:3) which is compared to water (Bava Kama 17a), and that “the word of the L-rd [shall go forth] from Jerusalem” (ibid). “There all of the flocks gathered” (Gen. 29:3) who came “from the entrance to Hamath to the brook of Egypt” (Kings I 8:65), “and they rolled the stone from the well’s mouth, and watered the sheep” (Gen. 29:3), for they drew the Holy Spirit from it, “and put the stone again upon the well’s mouth in his place” (ibid.) where it rested until the next holiday. **Ramban, Genesis 29:2**

VIII. Yaakov’s Encounter With Esav

A.

ועל דעתי גם זה ירמוז כי אנחנו התחלנו נפילתנו ביד אדום, כי מלכי בית שני באו בברית עם הרומיים (ספר החשמונאים א ח) ומהם שבאו ברומה (כך כותב רבינו בויקרא כו:טז), והיא היתה סבת נפילתם בידם, וזה מוזכר בדברי רבותינו ומפורסם בספרים (יוסיפון פרק סה): רמב”ן לבראשית לב:ד

In my opinion, this also is hinting that we ourselves initiated our downfall through Edom (Rome). For the kings of the Second Temple made a treaty with the Romans (Maccabees I Chapter 8). And some of them came to Rome (See Ramban, Leviticus 26:16) This was the cause of their downfall. This is mentioned in the words of our Rabbis (See Avodah Zarah 8b) and is well known through [other] works (Yosippon Chapter 65) **Ramban 32:4**

B.

ויש בה עוד רמז לדורות כי כל אשר אירע לאבינו עם עשו אחיו יארע לנו תמיד עם בני עשו, וראוי לנו לאחז בדרכו של צדיק שנזמין עצמנו לשלשת הדברים שהזמין הוא את עצמו, לתפלה ולדורון ולהצלה בדרך מלחמה, לברוח ולהנצל, וכבר ראו רבותינו הרמז הזה מן הפרשה הזאת כאשר אזכיר (להלן לב:ט, לג:טו): רמב”ן לבראשית לב:ב

There is an additional allusion [in this narrative] to future events, for all that occurred to our forefather [Jacob in his dealings] with Esau, constantly occurs to us [in our own dealings] with Esau’s descendants (Rome). It is befitting for us to emulate the way of the *tzaddik* (Jacob) and to ready ourselves through the three things, prayer, tribute, and deliverance through battle, to escape and be saved, by which he prepared himself. Our Rabbis have already seen this allusion in this section, as I will mention (Gen. 32:9, 33:15). **Ramban, Genesis 32:2**

C.

והיה המחנה הנשאר לפליטה . . . וגם זה ירמוז שלא יגזרו עלינו בני עשו למחות את שמנו, אבל יעשו רעות עם קצתנו בקצת הארצות שלהם, מלך אחד מהם גוזר בארצו על ממוננו או על גופנו, ומלך אחר מרחם במקומו ומציל הפלטים וכך אמרו בבראשית רבה (עו:ג) אם יבא עשו אל המחנה האחת והכהו, אלו אחינו שבדרום, והיה המחנה הנשאר לפליטה, אלו אחינו שבגולה ראו כי גם לדורות תרמוז זאת הפרשה: רמב"ן לבראשית לב:ט

And said, If Esau comes to the one company, and attacks it, then the other company which is left shall escape. (Gen. 32:9): . . . This also is an allusion to the fact that the descendants of Esau will not [successfully] decree to utterly blot out our name. They may perpetrate evils against some of us in some of the land which they control; i.e. one king of theirs may issue a decree against our property or against our person, but another king will show compassion and take in the survivors into his kingdom. This is what [our Sages] said (Midrash Bereishis Rabbah 76:3): "If Esau comes to the one company, and attacks it," refers to our brethren in the south (Judea), "then the other company which is left shall escape," is referring to our brethren in the Diaspora. Take note that this section is also alluding to events in the future. **Ramban, Genesis 32:9**

D.

ורוח תשימו בין עדר כדי להשביע עינו של אותו הרשע ולתווהו על הדורון וסברו בבראשית רבה (עז:ג) שיש בזה רמז, אמר יעקב לפני הקב"ה רבוננו של עולם אם יהיו צרות באות על בני לא תביא אותן זו אחר זו אלא הרוח להם מצרותיהם עשה רמז שיהיו המסים והארנוניות שיגבו בני עשו מזרעו ברוח והפרש בין זו לזו: רמב"ן לבראשית לב:ז

And put a space between drove and drove: This was done in order to satiate the eye of that evil one and to increase his desire for the tribute. The Rabbis maintained, as recorded in the Midrash Beraishis Rabbah (75:13), that there is an allusion here [of a conversation between Yaakov and G-d]. Yaakov said before the Holy One, blessed be He, "Master of the Universe, if troubles befall my children don't bring them on one right after the other but rather create an interval between them." He hinted that the taxes that the descendants of Esau collect from his descendants should be imposed intermittently. **Ramban 32:17**

E.

וירא כי לא יכל לו מלאכיו גבורי כח עושי דברו, ועל כן לא יכול לו המלאך להזיקו, כי לא הורשה רק במה שעשה עמו להקע כף ירכו ואמרו בבראשית רבה (עז:ג) נגע בכל הצדיקים שעתידין להיות ממנו, זה דורו של שמד והענין כי המאורע כלו רמז לדורותיו שיהיה דור בזרעו של יעקב יתגבר עשו עליהם עד שיהיה קרוב לקעקע ביצתן, והיה זה דור אחד בימי חכמי המשנה כדור של רבי יהודה בן בבא וחביריו, כמו שאמרו (שהש"ר ב:ז) אמר רבי חייא בר אבא אם יאמר לי אדם תן נפשך על קדושת שמו של הקב"ה אני נותן ובלבד שיהרגוני מיד, אבל בדורו של שמד איני יכול לסבול, ומה היו עושים בדורו של שמד, היו מביאין כדוריות של ברזל ומלכנין אותן באור ונותנין אותן תחת שיחיהן ומשיאין נפשותיהן מהן ויש דורות אחרים שעשו עמנו כזה ויותר רע מזה, והכל סבלנו ועבר עלינו, כמו שרמז ויבא יעקב שלם: רמב"ן לבראשית לב:כו

And when he saw that he prevailed not against him: (Psalms 103:20) "[Bless the L-rd,] O you his angels, you mighty ones, who do His word, listening to the voice of His word!" Therefore the angel could not harm him, for he was only given permission to affect the hollow of his thigh. The

Sages said as recorded in Midrash Beraishis Rabbah 77:3 that [through that act,] he affected all of the *tzaddikim* (righteous ones) who were destined to issue from him. Specifically this refers to the generation of forced conversion (*shmad*). The idea is that the entire incident alludes to [Yaakov's future] generations, that there will come a generation where Esau will overcome the descendants of Yaakov to such an extent that they will have almost crushed them entirely (lit. their genitals). This occurred during the Mishnaic period in the generation of Rabbi Yehudah ben Bava and his colleagues, as they said (Midrash Shir HaShirim 2:7), "Rabbi Hiyya bar Abba said: If someone were to tell me to give up my life for the sanctity of the Name of the Holy One, blessed be He, I would do so, provided that they kill me immediately. I wouldn't have been able, however, to withstand the treatment that the generation of forced conversion endured. What did they do then? The [Romans] would bring iron balls and heat them until they were white hot and put them under the armpits [of the Jews] and thereby kill them [in an agonizing manner]. There were other generations that they administered such measures and even worse. We all bore the pain but it [eventually] passed as is alluded in the verse (Gen. 33:18), "And Yaakov arrived [in the city of Shechem] in perfect condition." **Ramban, Genesis 32:26**

F.

וירץ עשו. נהפך לבו כמו רגע בהכנעותיו של יעקב כאמרם ז"ל שאחיהו השילוני קלל את ישראל בקנה הנכנע לכל הרוחות הן לו עשו כן בריוני בית שני לא היה נחרב בית מקדשנו כמו שהעיד רבי יוחנן בן זכאי באמרו (גטין פרק הנזקיין) בריוני דבן לא שבקונן: רמב"ן לג"ד:

And Esau ran to meet him: His heart immediately changed because of Yaakov's submission, similar to the statement of our Sages (Taanis 20a) that Ahiyah the Shilonite cursed them by comparing them to a reed that bends with the winds [but nonetheless as soon as the wind ceases the reed resumes its upright position]. Had the ruffians (zealots) during the period of the second Temple followed this example the holy Temple would not have been destroyed, as Rabbi Yochanon ben Zakai attested to in his statement (Gittin 56b - Perek HaNizakin), "The ruffians amongst us won't let us [make peace]." **Ramban, Gen. 33:4**

G.

ויחן את פני העיר – לא רצה להיות אכסנאי בעיר, אבל רצה שתהיה תחילת ביאתו בארץ בתוך שלו, ולכן חנה בשדה וקנה המקום, וזה להחזיק בארץ והמעשה הזה היה רמז, כי המקום שהוא יכבש לפניו תחילה, טרם הורישו יושבי הארץ מפני זרעו, כאשר פרשתי באברהם (לעיל יב ו): רמב"ן לבראשית לג"ח

[And Jacob came the city of Shechem, which is in the land of Canaan, whole, when he came from Padan-Aram;] and pitched his tent before the city. [And he bought a parcel of a field, where he had spread his tent, at the hand of the children of Hamor, Shechem's father, for a hundred pieces of money.] (Genesis 33:18, 19): He didn't want to remain a temporary guest in the city, but rather he wanted his initial arrival in the land to be in a place that he owned. For that reason he pitched his tent in the field and acquired the place. This was in order to take hold of the land. This incident was a hint for the future. For this was the first place that was conquered prior to his descendants displacing the inhabitants of the land, as I explained in the section of Abraham. (Gen. 12:6) **Ramban, Genesis 33:18**

IX. Joseph and his Brothers

A.

אלה תולדות יעקב – מאורעיו וילדי יום עליו אחר שישב שם כי מאז שיצא מבית אביו היו עניניו כמו קורות אבותינו בגלות א' ומאז שחזר אל ארץ מגורי אביו היו קורותיו כמו שקרה לאבותינו בבית שני וחורבנו וגלותו וגאולתו לקץ הימין: ספורנו לבראשית לז:ב

These are the generations of Jacob (Genesis 37:2): The happenings and daily events (generations) which occurred to him after he settled there. From the time he left his father's house, his life was similar to that which occurred to our forefathers in the first exile [after the destruction of the first Temple]. From the time that he returned to the land of the sojourn of his father, his life was similar to that of our forefathers during the period of the second Temple, its destruction, their exile and redemption at the end of the days. **Seforno, Genesis 37:2**

B.

מדינים סוחרים. בעלי סחורת גמלי הישמעאלים: וימכרו את יוסף לישמעאלים. לישמעאלים עשו את המכר בעד המדינים הסוחרים ולא רצו לדבר עם הסוחרים פן יכירום בשבתם לפעמי' בעירות למכור אבל דברו עם בעלי הגמלים שאינם מתעכבים בעירות אבל עוברים בהם דרך העבר' בלבד ועל ידם עשו המכר אבל הקונים היו המדינים סוחרים כאמרו והמדינים מכרו אותו אל מצרים. וכן קרה לאבותינו בבית שני שמכרו קצתם את קצתם ביד הרומיים בפרט כשצרו מלכי בית חשמונאי זה על זה כמו שהיה הענין במכירת יוסף שנתגלגל הדבר וירדו אבותינו למצרי' כדבריה' ז"ל: ספורנו לבראשית לז:כח

Midianites (Gen. 37:28): Merchants. They were the owners of the merchandise carried by the camels of the Ishmaelites. **And they sold Joseph to the Ishmaelites:** [Joseph's brothers] sold him to the Midianite merchants through the agency of the Ishmaelites, as they didn't want to deal directly with the Midianites lest they recognize them, for at times they stayed in the cities to sell [their wares]. They spoke, however to the camel owners who didn't spend time in the cities but rather just passed through on the way. It was through them that they made the sale. The buyers, however were the Midianites merchants, as it says (Gen. 37:36), "The Midianites sold him to Egypt." Such a thing happened during the second Temple when some of the populace gave over (sold) some of the others to the Romans, specifically when the Hasmonean kings (Hyrcanus and Aristobolus) laid siege, one against each other. This was similar to what happened through the sale of Joseph, which eventually led to our forefathers going down to Egypt, as our Sages, of blessed memory, have explained. **Seforno, Genesis 37:28**

C.

ולשון אחר דרשו שם בבראשית רבה, אמרו רבי יהושע בן לוי פתר קריא בגליות, וא-ל שדי יתן לכם רחמים לפני האיש, זה הקדוש ברוך הוא שנאמר (שמות טו:ג) ד' איש מלחמה, וכתוב (תהלים קו:מו) ויתן אותם לרחמים ושלח לכם את אחיכם, אלו השבטים, אחר ואת בנימין, זה יהודה ובנימין ואני כאשר שכלתי בחורבן ראשון שכלתי בחורבן שני, לא אשכל עוד זה לשונם ז"ל והכונה כי ירידת יעקב למצרים ירמוז לגלותינו ביד אדום כמו שאפרש (ריש פרשת ויחי), וראה הנביא הענין מתחלתו והתפלל סתם לשעה ולדורות והכתוב זה כפי מדרשם יש לו סוד גדול כי אמר וא-ל ש-די, במדת הדין, יתן לכם רחמים שלפניו, יעלה אתכם ממדת הדין למדת רחמים והמשכיל יבין: רמב"ן לבראשית מג:יד

There is another explanation that is expounded in the Midrash Bereishis Rabbah: They said, “Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi explained this verse that it refers to the exiles. ‘And [may] G-d A-lmighty give you mercy before the *man*,’ (Gen. 33:14) is referring to the Holy One, blessed be He, as it says (Exodus 15:3), ‘The L-rd is a *man* of war.’ It is also written (Psalms 106:46), ‘And he caused them to be pitied by all those who held them captive.’ ‘. . . that he may send away your [other] brother,’ (ibid.) is referring to the [founders of the] tribes. ‘. . . other [brother] and Benjamin,’ is referring to Yehudah and Benjamin. ‘If I be bereaved of my children,’ is referring to the destruction of the first Temple. ‘. . . then I am bereaved,’ is referring to the second Temple. ‘In the future, I will not be bereaved any longer.’” - The idea is that the coming down of Jacob to Egypt is an allusion to our exile through Edom, as I will explain [at the beginning of Parshas Vayechi]. The prophet immediately foresaw the future and prayed for both the temporary situation and for the future generations. This verse, according to the Midrash contains a great secret, for it states (Gen. 43:14) that, “E-l Sha-dai”, which is associated with the attribute of justice, “shall grant you mercy,” [which means that] He shall elevate you from [being the subject of] the attribute of justice to the attribute of mercy. An intelligent person will understand this.

Ramban, Genesis 43:14

X. The End of Days

ויהי ימי יעקב שני חייו שבע שנים וארבעים ומאת שנה – פרשה זו סתומה מפני שני טעמים, האחד לפי שעכשיו היה מתחיל הגלות ונסתם לבם מצרת השעבוד. והשני לפי שבקש יעקב לגלות את הקץ לבניו ונסתם ממנו, שהרי מה שכתוב את אשר יקרא אתכם באחרית הימים, הכונה לימות המשיח בקץ הגלות הזה הארוך שאנו עומדים בו היום, כי כל עניני יעקב ומקוריו הם רמז לגלותינו השלישי הזה, כי כן היה יעקב שלישי לאבות. ולפי שנרמז ענין המשיח בכלל דבריו כמו שאמר עד כי יבא שילה, באה הפרשה הזאת סתומה לרמוז הקץ הסתום שהיה רוצה לגלותו ונסתם ממנו. וכן אמר דניאל (דניאל יב) כי סתומים וחתומים הדברים עד עת קץ ישוטטו רבים ותרבה הדעת. וכן אמר ישעיה ע"ה (ישעיה ט) לםרבה המשרה ולשלו' אין קץ ובאה המ"ם סתומה שלא כמשפט, כי משפט המ"ם שבאמצע תיבה להיות פתוחה וזו סתומה לרמוז כי המעלה והמשרה של ישראל הלא היא סתומה בזמן הגלות. ומצינו בעזרא מ"ם פתוחה בסוף תיבה וזה ג"כ שלא כמשפט והוא שכתוב (נחמיה ב) בחומות ירושלים אשר המ פרוצים ושעריה אכלו באש. ואמרו במדרש שבא הרמז כאשר יסתמו חומות ירושלים שהם עתה פתוחים ופרוצים בזמן הגלות, אז תפתח המשרה שהיא סתומה. וכשם שאותיות הללו באו שלא כמשפט שאר האותיות ויש בהם רמז, כן פרשה זו סתומה שלא כמשפט שאר פרשיות לרמוז על מה שאמרנו. וכן אמרו באגדה ראה יעקב אבינו שהיו כל אותיות בשמות י"ב שבטים בניו חוץ מאות ח' וט' אמר יעקב כיון שאין בהם חטא ראויין הם לגלות להם את הקץ, כיון שראה שאין בהם קו"ף וצד"י אמר אינם ראויים לגלות להם את הקץ לכך סתם ולא גלה ולכך פרשה זו סתומה: רבינו בחיי לבראשית מז:כח

[And Jacob lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years;] so the whole age of Jacob was a hundred and forty seven years. (Gen. 47:28): This section (*Parsha*) is “*setuma*” (literally closed, i.e. connected to the last section without a break) for two reasons. First, because the exile was beginning now and their heart was closed from the pain of the enslavement. The second reason is that Yaakov desired to reveal the “end” to his sons, but it was “closed” from him, for that which is written (Gen. 49:1), “. . . that which will occur to you at the end of days,” is referring to the Messianic era, at the end of the long exile in which we are standing today. For the content and all of the occurrences of Jacob’s life is a hint to this third exile of ours, for Jacob was the third of the Patriarchs. And since the subject of the Messiah (*Moshiach*) is included within his words, as it says (Gen. 49:10), “[The staff shall not depart from Judah, nor the scepter

from between his feet,] until Shiloh come; [and to him shall the obedience of the people be,]” this section (Parsha) is “*setuma*” (closed) to allude to the “*keitz*” (end), for he wanted to reveal it but it became closed off from him. Similarly does it say (Daniel 12:9), “. . . for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end” (ibid 4) “many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase.” Similarly, Isaiah, of blessed memory, stated (Isaiah 9:6), “*l’marbeih hamisrah u’l’shalom ein keitz* - For the increase of the realm and for peace without end, [upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from now and forever.] The “*mem*” of “*misrah*” is “*setuma*” (ס) which is against the normative rule [of spelling], as the rule is that a “*mem*” in the middle of a word should be “*pesucha*” (מ). This one, however, is “*setuma*” to hint to the fact that the special quality and authority (*misrah*) of Israel at the time of the exile is in fact “*setuma*” - closed or hidden. In the [book of] Ezra we find a “*mem pesucha*” (מ) at the end of a word. This too is against the normative rule [of spelling]. The verse is (Nehemiah 2:13), “And I went out by night by the Valley Gate, to the Well of the Crocodile, and to the Dung Gate, and viewed the walls of Jerusalem, which were (המ) broken down, and its gates had been consumed by fire.” Our Sages state in the Midrash that the verse is alluding to the [prediction] that when the walls of Jerusalem will be [eventually] closed [and completed], which are at the time of exile, open and broken up, then the reign, which is at present closed (like the *mem setuma*), will [eventually] open [just like the *mem pesucha*]. And just as these letters which did not follow the rules of [spelling] are alluding [to an important idea,] so too this section (*Parsha*) which likewise is [closed - *setuma*] contrary to the normative rule of other *Parshas*, is alluding to what we have stated. Similarly our Sages stated in an Agadah: Yaakov saw that all of the letters [of the Hebrew alphabet] were contained in the names of the twelve tribes with the exception of “*hess*” and “*tess*”. Yaakov said, “since they don’t have any sin (*het*), they are worthy of having the ‘*keitz*’ (end) revealed to them.” [But] when he realized that their names [also] did not contain the letters “*kuf*” and “*tzadi*”, he said that they are not worthy of having the “*keitz*” revealed to them. For that reason he left it closed and didn’t reveal it to them. Therefore the section is *setuma* (closed). **Rabbainu Bachya, Genesis 47:28**

XI. Yosef as a Symbol for Zion and the Jewish People

ואת יהודה שלח זש"ה הנני שולח מלאכי ופנה וגו' (מלאכי ג) בא וראה כל צרות שאירע ליוסף אירע לציון ביוסף כתיב וישראל אהב את יוסף בציון כתיב (תהלים פז) אוהב ד' שערי ציון ביוסף כתיב וישנאו אותו בציון נתנה עלי בקולה על כן שנאתיה (ירמיה יב) ביוסף והנה אנחנו מאלמים אלומים בציון בא יבא ברנה נושא אלמותיו (תהלים קכו) ביוסף המלוך תמלוך עלינו בציון אומר לציון מלך א-להיך (ישעיה נב) ביוסף ויחלום יוסף חלום בציון בשוב ד' את שיבת ציון היינו כחולמים (תהלים קכו) ביוסף הבא נבא אני ואמך וגו' בציון אפים ארץ ישתחוו לך (ישעיה מט) ביוסף ויקנאו בו אחיו בציון קנאתי לציון קנאה גדולה (זכריה ח) ביוסף לך ראה נא את שלו' אחיך בציון ודרשו את שלו' העיר (ירמיה כט) ביוסף ויראו אותו מרחוק בציון זכרו מרחוק את ד' (ירמיהו נא) ביוסף ויתנכלו אותו בציון על עמך יערימו סוד (תהלים פג) ביוסף ויפשיטו את כתונת הפסים בציון והפשיטוך את בגדיך (יחזקאל טז) ביוסף וישליכו אותו הבורה בציון צמתו בבור חיי (איכה ג) ביוסף והבור רק אין בו מים בציון ובבור אין מים כי אם טיט (ירמיה לח) ביוסף וישבו לאכול לחם בציון אשור לשבוע לחם (איכה ה) ביוסף וימשכו ויעלו את יוסף בציון וימשכו את ירמיהו בחבלים ויעלו אותו מן הבור (ירמיה לח) ביוסף ויקרע יעקב שמלותיו בציון לבכי ומספד (ישעיה כב) ביוסף וימאן להתנחם ובציון אל תאיצו לנחמני (שם) ביוסף והמדנים מכרו אותו אל מצרים ובציון ובני יהודה ובני ירושלם מכרתם לבני היונים (יואל ד) ומה שאירע ליוסף טובות אירע לציון טובות ביוסף ויהי יוסף יפה תואר ויפה מראה וציון יפה נוף משוש כל הארץ (תהלים מח) ביוסף איננו גדול בבית הזה ממני בציון גדול יהיה כבוד הבית הזה (חגי ב) ביוסף ויהי ד' את יוסף בציון והיו עיני ולבי שם (ד"ה ב ז)

ביוסף ויט אליו חסד ובציון זכרתי לך חסד (ירמיה ב) ביוסף ויגלה ויחלף שמלותיו ובציון אם רחץ ד' את צואת בנות ציון (ישעיה ד) ביוסף רק הכסא אגדל ממך ובציון בעת ההיא יקראו לירושלים כסא ד' (ירמיה ג) ביוסף כתיב וילבש אותו בגדי שש ובציון עורי עורי לבשי עזך ציון לבשי בגדי תפארתך (ישעיה נב) ביוסף כתיב ואת יהודה שלח לפניו ובציון הנני שולח מלאכי (מלאכי ג):
תנחומא פרשת ויגש י

And he sent Judah [before him to Joseph, to show the way before him to Goshen; and they came to the land of Goshen]. (Genesis 46:28): This is alluding to the verse (Malachi 3:1) “Behold, I send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me; [and the L-rd, whom you seek, shall suddenly come to His Temple, and the messenger of the covenant, whom you delight in, behold, he shall come, says the L-rd of Hosts].” Come and see that all of the troubles that Yosef experienced were also experienced by Tzion. Regarding Yosef it is written (Gen. 37:3), “Now Israel loved Joseph [more than all his children] . . .” and regarding Tzion it is written (Psalms 87:2), “The L-rd loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob.” Regarding Yosef it is written (Gen. 37:4), “[And when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers,] they hated him, [and could not speak peaceably to him],” and regarding Tzion it is written (Jeremiah 12:8), “My heritage is to me like a lion in the forest; it cries out against me; therefore have I hated it.” Regarding Yosef it is written (Gen. 37:7), “For, behold, we were binding sheaves [in the field, and, lo, my sheaf arose, and also stood upright; and, behold, your sheaves stood around, and made obeisance to my sheaf],” and regarding Tzion it is written (Psalms 126:6), “[He who goes forth weeping, bearing the seed for sowing, shall come back with shouts of joy,] bringing his sheaves with him.” Regarding Yosef it is written (Gen. 37:8), “[And his brothers said to him,] Shall you indeed reign over us? [or shall you indeed have dominion over us? And they hated him even more for his dreams, and for his words],” and regarding Tzion it is written (Isaiah 52:7), “[How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who announces peace; who brings good news of good, who announces salvation;] who says to Zion, Your G-d reigns!” Regarding Yosef it is written (Gen. 37:9), “And he dreamed yet another dream, [and told it his brothers, and said, ‘Behold, I have again dreamed a dream; and, behold, the sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to me,’” and regarding Tzion it is written (Psalms 126:1), “[A Song of Maalot.] When the L-rd brought back the captivity of Zion, we were like men who dream..” Regarding Yosef it is written (Gen. 37:10), “[And he told it to his father, and to his brothers; and his father rebuked him, and said to him, What is this dream that you have dreamed?] Shall I and your mother and your brothers indeed come to bow down ourselves to you to the earth?” and regarding Tzion it is written (Isaiah 49:23), “[And kings shall be your foster fathers, and their queens your nursing mothers;] they shall bow down to you with their face toward the earth, [and lick up the dust of your feet; and you shall know that I am the L-rd; for those who wait for me shall not be ashamed].” Regarding Yosef it is written (ibid. verse 11), “And his brothers envied him; [but his father kept the matter in mind],” and regarding Tzion it is written (Zechariah 8:2), “[Thus says the L-rd of hosts;] I was zealous for Zion with great zeal, [and I was zealous for her with great fury].” Regarding Yosef it is written (Gen. 37:14), “[And he said to him, Go, I beg you,] see whether it is well with your brothers, and well with the flocks; [and bring me word again. So he sent him out from the valley of Hebron, and he came to Shechem],” and regarding Tzion it is written (Jeremiah 29:7), “And seek the peace of the city [where I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray to the L-rd for it; for in its peace shall you have peace].” Regarding Yosef it is written (Gen. 37:18), “And they saw him from far away, [even before he came near to them, and they conspired against him to slay him],” and regarding Tzion it is written (Jeremiah 51:50), “You who have escaped the sword, go away, do not stand still; remember the L-rd from

far away, and let Jerusalem come to your mind.” Regarding Yosef it is written (ibid.), “[And they saw him from far away, even before he came near to them,] and they conspired against him to slay him,” and regarding Tzion it is written (Psalms 83:4), “They have taken crafty counsel against your people, and consulted against your hidden ones.” Regarding Yosef it is written (Gen. 37:23), “And it came to pass, when Joseph came to his brothers, that they stripped Joseph of his coat, his coat of long sleeves that was on him,” and regarding Tzion it is written (Ezekiel 16:39), “[And I will also give you into their hand, and they shall tear down your platform, and shall break down your high places;] they shall strip you also of your clothes, [and shall take your pretty jewels, and leave you naked and bare].” Regarding Yosef it is written (Gen. 37:24), “And they took him, and threw him into a pit; [and the pit was empty, there was no water in it],” and regarding Tzion it is written (Lamentations 3:53), “They have cut off my life in the pit, [and have cast stones upon me].” Regarding Yosef it is written (Gen. 37:24), “[And they took him, and threw him into a pit;] and the pit was empty, there was no water in it,” and regarding Tzion it is written (Jeremiah 38:6), “[Then they took Jeremiah, and cast him into the pit of Malchiah the son of Hammelech, that was in the court of the guard; and they let down Jeremiah with ropes.] And in the pit there was no water, but mire; [and Jeremiah sunk in the mire].” Regarding Yosef it is written (Gen. 37:25), “And they sat down to eat bread; [and they lifted up their eyes and looked, and, behold, a company of Ishmaelites came from Gilead with their camels bearing gum, balm and myrrh, going to carry it down to Egypt],” and regarding Tzion it is written (Lamentations 5:6), “[We have given the hand to the Egyptians,] and to the Assyrians, to be satisfied with bread.” Regarding Yosef it is written (Gen. 37:28), “[Then there passed by Midianite merchants;] and they drew and lifted up Joseph out from the pit, [and sold Joseph to the Ishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver; and they brought Joseph to Egypt],” and regarding Tzion it is written (Jeremiah 38:13), “And they pulled up Jeremiah with ropes, and took him up out of the pit; [and Jeremiah remained in the court of the guard].” Regarding Yosef it is written (Gen. 37:34), “And Jacob tore his clothes, [and put sackcloth upon his loins, and mourned for his son many days],” and regarding Tzion it is written (Isaiah 22:12), “And in that day the L-rd G-d of hosts called to weeping, and to mourning, . . .” Regarding Yosef it is written (Gen. 37:35), “[And all his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him;] but he refused to be comforted; [and he said, For I will go down to Sheol to my son, mourning. Thus his father wept for him],” and regarding Tzion it is written (Isaiah 22:12), “[Therefore said I, Look away from me; I will weep bitterly,] do not try to comfort me, [because of the destruction of the daughter of my people].” Regarding Yosef it is written (Gen. 37:36), “And the Midianites sold him in Egypt [to Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh’s, and captain of the guard],” and regarding Tzion it is written (Joel 4:6), “And the people of Judah and the people of Jerusalem have you sold to the Yavanim, removing them far from their own border.” [Similarly,] the good which occurred to Yosef, occurred [as well] to Tzion. Regarding Yosef it is written (Gen. 39:6), “And Joseph was handsome and good looking,” and regarding Tzion it is written (Psalms 48:3), “Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, [is Mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King].” Regarding Yosef it is written (Gen. 39:9), “There is none greater in this house than I; . . .,” and regarding Tzion it is written (Chagai 2:9), “The glory of this latter house shall be greater than that of the former, [says the L-rd of hosts; and in this place I will give peace, says the L-rd of hosts].” Regarding Yosef it is written (Gen. 39:21), “But the L-rd was with Joseph, [and showed him mercy, and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison],” and regarding Tzion it is written (Chronicles II 7:16), “For now have I chosen and sanctified this house, that My name may be there forever; and My eyes and My heart shall be there for all time.” Regarding Yosef it is written (Gen. 39:21), “[But the L-rd was with Joseph], and showed him mercy, [and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison],” and regarding Tzion it is written (Jeremiah 2:2), “[Go and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, Thus said the L-rd;] I

remember you, the devotion of your youth, [your love like a bride, when you went after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown].” Regarding Yosef it is written (Gen. 41:14), “[Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they brought him hastily out of the dungeon;] and he shaved himself, and changed his garment, [and came in to Pharaoh],” and regarding Tzion it is written (Isaiah 4:4), “When the L-rd shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, [and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from its midst by the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning].” Regarding Yosef it is written (Gen. 41:40), “[You shall be over my house, and according to your word shall all my people be ruled;] only in the throne will I be greater than you,” and regarding Tzion it is written (Jeremiah 3:17), “At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the L-rd; [and all the nations shall be gathered to it, to the name of the L-rd, to Jerusalem; nor shall they walk any more after the stubbornness of their evil heart.” Regarding Yosef it is written (Gen. 41:42), “And Pharaoh took off his ring from his hand, and put it upon Joseph’s hand, and arrayed him in cloaks of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck,” and regarding Tzion it is written (Isaiah 52:1), “Awake, awake; put on your strength, O Zion; put on your beautiful garments, [O Jerusalem, the holy city; from now on there shall no more come to you the uncircumcised and the unclean].” Regarding Yosef it is written (Gen. 46:28), “And he sent Judah before him [to Joseph, to show the way before him to Goshen; and they came to the land of Goshen].,” and regarding Tzion it is written (Malachi 3:1) “Behold, I send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before Me; [and the L-rd, whom you seek, shall suddenly come to His Temple, and the messenger of the covenant, whom you delight in, behold, he shall come, says the L-rd of Hosts].” **Midrash Tanchuma Parshas Vayigash 10**