

Issues and Comments

The Book of *Bereishit* (Genesis)

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Note: all quotations and comments refer to the interpolated translation unless otherwise indicated. All comments are by Moshe Wisnefsky unless otherwise indicated.

Introduction

CONCEPTS: The following are some of the specific issues where science and Torah are commonly considered to contradict each other.

I have not included spontaneous generation, because (1) the issue is not raised in the written Torah, and (2) it would have unnecessarily made us look totally wacko.

CONCEPTS: ARCHEOLOGY: In most cases, it is the lack of archeological attestation of particular event or period that is purported to refute the Torah's account.

I have not used the לא ראינו אינו ראיה argument here because we use the argument of לא ראינו against the missing links in the fossil record.

Bereishit

OVERVIEW, INNER DIMENSIONS: There are some desires for which no logical reason can be given.

Unusable quote: "The heart has its reasons which reason knows nothing of." Blaise Pascal (1623-1662), *Pensees*.

[Before 1:1] The creation account establishes God, the creator, as the true "owner" of the entire world. This sovereignty would allow Him, when the time would come, to expropriate the future Jewish homeland from the people whom He had allowed to settle there in the meantime.

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The Rebbe says: It would appear that the non-Jewish nations shouldn't be able to claim that the Jews are robbers, because nations conquer and re-conquer territories from other nations constantly and this is not considered robbery since the conquering nation does not change anything intrinsic in the territory they conquer, the proof being that another nation can come along tomorrow and conquer it again from *them*. But what, then, happens when something *is* robbed from someone? A second robber can always come and rob the robbed article from the first, no? Thus, the difference between robbery and conquest is simply that, as the Alter Rebbe says in *Hilchot Lulav* §649, conquest confers complete ownership of the conquered territory to the conqueror, whereas robbery (at least as long as the owners haven't given up) does not, and if caught, the robber must return the robbed object to its rightful owner. But why should there be this difference? Isn't conquest just robbery on a grander scale? The answer to that, the Alter Rebbe says, is that the sages learned this out from *midrash*. Thus, really, conquest and robbery are the same thing, but there's a special *limud* that makes acquisition by conquest permanent while

acquisition by robbery isn't. So, now that we have that distinction, we can say that the non-Jews apparently cannot justifiably accuse the Jews of robbing the Land of Israel. So, why does God need to have an excuse for taking it from them and giving it to us? Because there is another aspect about conquest: a normal conquest does not change the essence of the conquered territory, only its ownership – as evidenced by the fact that a third nation can come along tomorrow and conquer it from the second. In contrast, the Jewish people's conquest of the Land of Israel *does* forever alter the essence of the land, making it irrevocably theirs, such that even if it is conquered and they are exiled from it, this is only a *temporary* aberration. This being the case, the non-Jewish nations can indeed accuse the Jews of being robbers, since by conquering the land they render it intrinsically *unconquerable* by any other nation henceforth for all time. Seeing how complicated all this is, and how abstruse some of the links in the logic, I elected to omit it.

Inside this are the spheres designated for the five planets visible to the naked eye (Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Venus, and Mercury).

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Are the other planets (Uranus, Neptune, Pluto [Oops, sorry, Pluto's not a planet anymore]) fixed in the sphere of the stars? What about comets, asteroids, etc.?

All elements of creation are conscious, both as collective "species" and as individual entities. They also possess a certain degree of free choice.

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If so, what is the preeminence of mankind? I.e., what is the quantitative or qualitative difference between man's free choice and that possessed by every other creature that defines man as being a *ba'al bechirah* and them not? Furthermore, God consulted with the angels before creating man because they, too have some free choice and it was therefore proper for Him to consult with them before creating other creatures with free choice. But He did not consult with the rest of creation, so this indicates that there is also a quantum difference between the rest of creation's free choice and that of the angels. What is it? See 2:7, below.

RYG says in his lecture on Evolution that there are sources that say that sub-human species only possessed free choice until then next higher level of creation was created. That would mean that the moon lost its free choice when vegetation appeared, and vegetation lost its free choice when humanity appeared. That would solve the whole problem nicely, but the question is if this is Rashi's opinion.

They also possess a certain degree of free choice.

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On the other hand, only man and (in the beginning) the snake could talk, so maybe that's the distinction we're looking for. But on the other hand, the creatures can articulate their thoughts in some way (for we see that the water complained to God, the moon complained, etc.). So, if they can think and communicate, what is their inferiority to man? In other words, what exactly is so special about audible speech above and beyond thought-communication (telepathy)?

1:12 Although the trees' intentions were honorable, the ground was later punished....

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Why was the *ground* punished for the *trees'* disobedience?

1:14 Let there be luminaries in the heavenly sky to separate between day and night.

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If they were originally equal in size, there wouldn't have been any difference between day and night, unless we can assume that the original plan was to have them both shining during the day

and only the stars shining at night (this seems to work, since God assigned the moon to the night only once it was smaller, v. 16). But if they were both the same size and were both to shine during the day, wouldn't that have made things twice as hot on earth (unless they were both half the size of the present sun and God made the sun bigger the same time He made the moon smaller)?

1:16 In the messianic future, the light of the moon will again be as great as the light of the sun.

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But doesn't Rashi hold that the primeval light will be restored in the messianic future? What need will there be then of sunlight and moonlight, even restored moonlight? For that matter, if the primeval light was shining during the creation week, what was the original sunlight and moonlight all about? Were they like "a candle by day" until the second week?

1:21 He immediately killed the female and preserved her flesh for the redemption feast....

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What happened to the male? Did it die sometime? When?

1:21 God created **every particular species of living being that swarms....**

Page: 3

I translate here *remes* as "swarm" – because here only marine life is implied, and later as "crawled" – because there land life is implied.

1:25 He did not bless the beasts to be fruitful and prolific.

Page: 3

But they seem to have been fruitful and prolific anyway, no? What would animal life be like if God *had* blessed them?

1:26 Let us make a human in our image.

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I will be translating *Adam* as "human" or "human being" as long as he is both male and female, i.e., until Eve is separated from him. Specifically, whenever the Hebrew has the definite article in front of it, even after *Adam* has a name, I will translate it as "the human." Only when *Adam* is without the definite article will I consider it a proper name, Adam.

1:30 He also prepared Moses' grave.

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Why did this have to be created at twilight? What was there about Moses' grave that transcended nature? The fact that if you were on the mountain it looked like it was in the valley and vice versa (*Sotah* 14a)? This is not brought in Rashi; Rashi only says "to atone for the incident of Peor."

2:5 After having created the beasts and livestock on the sixth day....

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The Talmud and Midrashim detail (with significant variations) the hourly events of the sixth day. The Rebbe, however (*Hitva'aduyot* 5745, vol. 1, p. 452; *Sefer HaSichot* 5749, vol. 1, pp. 23-24), holds that Rashi does not follow this description, since it violates *peshuto shel mikra* on several counts.

2:5 So that human bodies would decompose and revert to earth when they died, no matter where they would be buried.

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Animals' bodies also decompose no matter where they are buried. ?

2:5 He used earth from the future site of the altar of the holy Temple in Jerusalem.

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But the Rebbe says that according to *peshuto shel Mikra* (and such can be inferred in Rashi, too) Adam was not actually created at the site of the Altar (*Sefer HaSichot* 5749, vol. 1, p. 357, note 25).

2:7 Using this mist, **God then formed the human....**

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Rashi says here that the extra *yud* in *vayitzer* indicates that God will again form the body at the resurrection. Does this mean that God formed the body *now* with the capability to be resurrected? If so, wasn't man originally intended to live forever? Did God put the ability to be resurrected in man's body "just in case?" Or, perhaps the Torah just alludes to the fact that God will resurrect the body in the future and does not imply that God "programmed" this into the body *ab initio*.

2:7 But also possessing the faculties of understanding and speech.

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Animals also understand; how would Rashi define the difference between human and animal intellect?

2:10 A river issued from somewhere in Eden.

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I had to add "somewhere in" in order to jibe with Rashi's assertion that *b'Eden mikedem* means "in the east part of Eden." Without them, it sounds like the river left Eden and then watered the garden.

2:18 It is not good that the human be alone, without a helpmate, for this gives the impression that he is a self-sufficient deity, since I, too, have no mate.

Page: 4

Angels have mates? If not, why would the fact that God has no mate make it look like someone without a mate is a deity?

2:18 If he is deserving, she will help him do good; if not, she will oppose his will.

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The Biale Rebbe has a wonderful peshat here: if he merits, that is, if he's into doing the right thing, she helps him; but if he's into doing the wrong thing, she will oppose him, because she's by nature into doing the right thing and she will oppose his will to do the wrong thing, trying (consciously or unconsciously) to put him back on track. Is there a Chabad source for this?

2:19 In order to make him realize that his unitary state was unnatural.

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It is slightly implied by the Rebbe's comment in vol. 5, p. 20, note 32 that God had arranged for Adam to already feel the need for a helpmate before he started naming the creatures, and that the process of naming them was his search for a helpmate. This would imply, however, that God had already made Adam into half a person *before* he started naming the animals, which goes against the straightforward reading of the text (unless we differentiate between the removal of the "feminine consciousness" from Adam and the physical removal of the female part of his body, which occurred after he went to sleep—but this is farfetched).

Therefore, we must say that Adam's imperfection was driven home to him only *after* the naming process and after he was put to sleep and awoke to find Eve. He sought a mate only because he noticed that the animals had mates, not because he felt any intrinsic lacking in himself yet. God showed him how "happy" the other heterosexual animals were, making him want to be like them *even though this would mean forfeiting his self-sufficiency* as a bisexual creature.

2:20 And examined them.

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This is how I am translating Rashi's comment that Adam "had relations" with all the animals, because (1) if we are to understand that Rashi indeed means this literally, "examines" can carry that meaning, and (2) if not, then it can just mean "look at," "consider," etc.

If Rashi does mean it literally, that Adam tried to have relations with the giraffe, the bison, the mouse, the iguana, the hippo, etc., (1) how was this possible in so short a time – even if we assume Adam was super-virile? (2) how was this physically possible with regard to creatures that are not anatomically similar to man, e.g., ants, birds, squirrels, etc.?

2:23 Thus Adam completed the process of naming all creatures.

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When Adam calls Eve "Eve," later, is this considered a continuation of the naming affair? Had there been no sin, would Adam have named her this?

2:25 Eve gave birth to twins....

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There are Midrashic sources (*Bereishit Rabbah*) that Eve also gave birth to Abel and his two sisters on the first Friday, but we are not forced to say this according to the Rebbe's understanding of *peshuto shel mikra*. According to Rashi, we just know that Adam separated from Eve because of the sin, and the Rebbe holds that the sin could have happened quite a while after the first creation week.

So we may therefore assume that Eve became pregnant and gave birth to her first brood on the first Friday (and this is additionally borne out by the fact that Adam & Eve's marital relations are mentioned *before* Rashi explains why the Torah makes a diversion from the events of the first Friday in order to discuss the sin of the Tree of Knowledge), and then conceived again some time after the first creation week and gave birth another time, presumably also on the same day she conceived, since the curse of pregnancy hadn't been given yet. (?) Thus, the five kids were born as babies and grew up at a normal pace. Sometime after the five kids were born (or maybe just the first two and Eve was only pregnant with the second brood), the serpent did his thing and got them to eat the fruit, and then God expelled them from the Garden of Eden. Once they were expelled, Adam separated from Eve, as Rashi says on 4:1, and they had no more kids for 130 years.

For interest's sake, I will discuss now how things would work out if we were to adopt the Talmudic/Midrashic view that the births took place on the first Friday:

In *Sanhedrin* 38b, it says, "...two ascended the bed and four descended from it." This can be understood to mean either (a) Cain and Abel, but no sisters were born with them (this is how Mizrahi understands it), (b) Cain and his sister, but Abel was born later (this is how Tosefos understands it), or (c) Cain and Abel, but the daughters are included, sort of being self-understood that the twin sisters were secondary to the boys (my bochsvora). The second opinion goes along, apparently, with a Midrash I saw quoted in a few places that Adam waited two weeks after Cain's birth to copulate again with Eve.

But Rashi holds explicitly that (a) Adam separated from Eve after the sin, so Cain and Abel *both* had to be born before the sin, and (b) twin sisters were born with both boys. So, his opinion cannot jibe with this passage from *Sanhedrin* (unless you understand according to my bochsvora); he follows the Midrash (*Bereishit Rabbah* 22:1) where the quote goes "...two ascended the bed and *seven* descended it."

3:1 He also possessed the means to express his cunningness.

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The snake was like this from its creation (LS 10, p. 13). If so, why is man singled out as being capable of speech (*nefesh chayah* = *deah v'dibur* according to Rashi) if the snake already had it?

3:3 In fact, God had not forbidden them to *touch* the fruit, but Eve thought....

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There is no mention in Rashi about Adam having added a "rabbinic" prohibition to the command and not having told Eve about the difference.

3:5 **God knows that on the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened** to your own potential.

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This "opening of the eyes" cannot mean "knowing good and evil subjectively," since that is mentioned separately, both in this verse (the snake's beguiling) and the next one (Eve's succumbing). UNLESS we assume that in both case, the phrases are to be read, "your eyes will be opened, i.e., you will know good and evil subjectively." In the *following* verse (7) Rashi defines "their eyes were opened" to mean that they realized they had transgressed the one commandment God gave them, but its hard to apply that meaning to vv. 5 & 6 ("Eat the fruit, 'cause if you do, you'll realize that you've transgressed your commandment." And Eve saw that, indeed, she'd realize this if she ate the fruit, so she ate it). BUT if we interpret this Chassidically, to mean that they will descend from full God-consciousness to self-awareness, it could mean that the snake said, "Eat this and you'll be an independent being (this actually goes well with his ploy, 'you'll create your own worlds')" and Eve saw that this would happen and liked the idea. And so she ate it, and indeed, she moved down to this type of consciousness, etc. etc.

3:5 **You will thus be like God** and be able to create worlds, just as He did.

Page: 6

Did the snake mean this literally? After all, as the Alter Rebbe points out, everything else he said was true, so we must presume this is true, too. I understood this, therefore, to mean "create *personalized versions* of the world," something akin to the subjective knowledge of good and evil I've been bantering about. Mrs. Zornberg brings sources that this means this, too.

3:6 ...and she didn't want to die and leave Adam alive to marry someone else.

Either another wife God would create, or his daughter, or eventually his granddaughter.

3:6 She also fed the fruit to the animals....

Page: 6

why? what was she thinking?

3:6 ...but it did not have any effect on them.

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right?

3:8 Attempting to quickly cover their remaining nakedness....

This is a "fringe benefit" from the Rebbe's explanation that they would have clothed themselves further had they had the opportunity to do so. It helps us answer the question of whether Adam and Eve thought they could "hide" from God in the trees.

3:17 It will produce flies, fleas, and ants....

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These did not exist beforehand? They're not included in 1:24-25, above?

3:23 CHASIDIC INSIGHTS: ...the soul experiences the pristine Divine consciousness it worked for during its lifetime in the physical world, unencumbered by the spiritual limitations imposed by the self-awareness and self-orientation it acquires upon incarnation into this lower, physical world.

So is the flaming fire of the cherubs the "threat" of communicating with God (a la Tabernacle), which scares off the yeshus of the nefesh habehamis?

4:2 When they matured, the boys married their twin sisters.

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There does not seem to be any reason, *al pi peshuto shel mikra*, to assume that Cain and Abel and their sisters matured miraculously quickly. So this whole episode could have been, say, in the year 15 or thereabouts.

4:11 Because it opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood....

Page: 7

What was wrong with this? Should it have refused to absorb the blood? Why? What would have that accomplished?

4:12 It will produce even less for you than before.

Page: 7

This is what "it will no longer give you its strength" means, right?

4:12 I will not allow you to settle in one place.

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So says Rashi, but maybe he means that since the land will not give its strength, it will not produce enough to sustain Cain in any one place, and therefore he has to wander like a Bedouin in constant search of new arable land?

4:14 You have banished me from the face of the earth....

Page: 7

What does *this* mean? God did not banish him from the earth, only from staying in one place.

4:14 But can I be hidden from Your presence?!

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What did Cain mean by this? How was Cain hidden from God's presence because of God's punishment? Is someone who lacks a permanent home somehow thereby prevented from being in God's presence? Maybe it has something to do with v. 16: "Cain left God's presence..." but what does *that* mean? If the implication is that some locales are considered "in God's presence" and others not, what are they? Eretz Yisroel vs. the rest of the world? But were they in Eretz Yisroel then? Or: the rest of the world vs. the land of Nod?

4:14 When I sinned, my Divine image was diminished and the animals no longer fear me.

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Above, the most precise explanation for the nebulous term “Divine image” I could come up with was “standing erect with a hierarchy of powers, mirroring the Divine hierarchy of powers.” So, does that mean that Cain here became sub-human (until God restored the Divine image to him), sort of like Gollum in *The Lord of the Rings* (who also became sub-human after having murdered someone – this is probably where Tolkein got the idea.)? See also 4:23, below, that Tuval-Cain thought Cain looked like a beast.

4:16 Instead of wandering the earth as he was commanded to.

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Yes?

4:17 Cain knew his wife, his twin sister....

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What happened to Abel’s twin sisters? Did Cain marry them in the end, or Seth, or did they live out their lives as spinsters?

4:24 Lemech’s wives refused to cohabit with him....

Mrs. Zornberg makes a nice point about the wives’ foreknowledge of the Flood, that they saw the world partially inundated and assumed, since the morality of the world was getting worse rather than better, that a flood was imminent. The problem with this is that Rashi says the partial inundation occurred in Enosh’s time, and at this point, neither Enosh nor his father Seth had been born yet (since they were born only after Lemech complained to Adam, etc.). UNLESS these are two different midrashim that operate on different timelines, but I don’t want to get into that if possible.

4:26 Then, during Enosh’s lifetime, the name of God was invoked profanely.

Rashi says that *likro beshem Hashem* means idolatry. Rambam’s description seems to just flesh this out and make the whole subject more understandable. After all, when we learn as kids that the ancients bowed down to idols of stone and wood, that makes them look pretty stupid, no? If they can do that, then how can they be held responsible for anything they do? So, unless there is some reason to assume otherwise, I would assume that Rashi would concur with Rambam’s description of how idolatry came to be, and in fact I would say that it does a lot toward taking the Chumash out of fairy-tale realm and move it more toward a believable book.

6:1 Now when humanity began to increase on the face of the earth and daughters were born to them....

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Until now daughters were *not* born to them? Interesting, there is no explicit mention of daughters being before this (with the sole exception of Cain knowing his wife). It almost makes one want to presume that there was some kind of asexual reproduction for a while. The causative הווליד is not used until Terach; before that it’s only the simple ילד or יולד, almost implying as if the males had their kids by themselves. Weird!

Barring this weird peshat, it must mean that “[v. 1] and daughters were born to them [v. 2] that did not disguise their beauty,” i.e., were immodest??

6:2 They would take brides from their wedding ceremonies....

Here we have the Biblical origin of the custom of *Droit de seigneur*, a.k.a. *ius primae noctis* (also *jus primae noctis*). See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Right_of_the_first_night,

<http://www.petalk.com/humanist/jpn.html>, and
<http://www.snopes.com/weddings/customs/droit.asp>, etc.

6:2 They also practiced forbidden extramarital relations:

Did they masturbate? practice coitus interruptus? or were Er and Onan the first that did this?

6:2 Shamchazai and Azael.

According to the Rebbe, who says (according to Rashi) that the descendants of Shamchazai and Azael survived the flood, we cannot say that it is *their* behavior that inspired God to bring the flood – for the flood did not accomplish anything regarding them. (Did it keep them in check somehow? Were they afraid to do anything wrong after the flood? After all, we don't hear about them again until the time of the spies, and never again after that, right?)

Noach

OVERVIEW: Nor was He admitting that by flooding the earth, He had made some kind of blunder that He would never again repeat.

In the non-frum discussions of the Torah, this is a favorite perception.

6:13 As deep as can be reached by a plow.

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Noah was the one who invented the plow for them, and they were so corrupt that they used this technology (aimed at rectifying the sin of Adam!) for evil.

6:16 I want it to be especially well-lit.

The Rebbe does not here explain *why* God wanted the ark to be especially well-lit.

6:19 The demons.

There are male and female demons? Are there specific “species” of demons, of which Noah had to bring 2 each? And finally, had Noah not brought them into the ark, would they have perished in the flood?! What’s going on here?

7:1 It is not appropriate to enumerate all a person’s merits when addressing him directly.

Why not? So he won’t get a swell head? Then maybe we shouldn’t praise him at all to his face.

7:2 **You shall take for yourself seven pairs....**

Below, on 8:20, Rashi implies that Noah *assumed* that the 6 extra pairs of each type of *tahor* animal was meant to be sacrificed. Here, Rashi implies that God told this to Noah explicitly.

7:20 **Above** Mount Ararat, the highest of **them** in the region.

It seems obvious that this must be the peshat here, because if Mt. Ararat was not the highest mountain in the region and the water was 15 cubits higher than some other, higher, mountain, how could Rashi’s calculation in his comment on 8:4 make any sense?

7:23 The descendants of the giants Shamchazai and Azael, however, survived the floodwaters, and eventually settled around Hebron.

See excursus, “The Giants”

8:7 On the next day, the 11th of Elul, **he sent out the raven**

If this indeed occurred 40 days after the mountaintops became visible, it would mean that only 10 cubits of mountaintops were dry by then. Why wouldn’t Noah be able to see this himself? (Was it still overcast? In Elul (late summer)? And, why wouldn’t the raven find a mountaintop to dwell on, proving nothing about whether or not the water had receded enough for everyone else? And why didn’t Noah calculate the estimate date of total recession using the 1/4 cubit per day formula? Did he not know the figures, or not assume the rate of abatement would stay constant?

Ditto for sending out the dove a week later. By then, even more mountaintop was revealed. Why didn’t the dove find a place to rest its feet? All of this makes better sense if we understand the 40 days Noah waited before opening the window to begin from the 1st of Sivan, when the water starts to abate, as *Seder Olam* does. Then the dove stops coming back only when the mountaintops

become visible. But I guess Rashi found it difficult to accept that from this time until 1 Tishrei, i.e., 2 months, Noah was content to just wait.

8:11 Noah then knew that the water had subsided.

The Rebbe asks: maybe the dove got the leaf from a tree situated on another mountaintop, in which case there would be no proof that the water had subsided elsewhere yet? But he doesn't seem to answer this, unless the answer is that since the leaf was fresh it means that enough time had elapsed for the water to subside everywhere, even if the tree from which the leaf was plucked was on a mountaintop.

8:13 In the year 1657...the waters had drained off the earth.

From 1 Menachem Av, when the peak of Mt. Ararat became visible, until 1 Tishrei, when the abatement was complete, 2 months, or 60 days, passed. If the rate of abatement was constant, i.e., 0.25 cubits per day, this means that Mt. Ararat was only 15 cubits high! Present day Mt. Ararat is 5165 meters above sea level, i.e., 10,760 cubits. If the water level went from this height to sea level in 60 days, it means the average rate of abatement during that time was 179 cubits (86 meters) per day. Quite a change from 0.25 cubits per day during the previous 60 days!

8:21 I hereby swear....

The Rebbe asks what affirmation does an oath add to something *God* says. I.e., a human being needs to take an oath to keep him from going back on his word. But since God doesn't do this, what need is there of an oath?

9:1 God blessed Noah and his sons....

The promise not to destroy the world in the preceding two verses was said by God "to Himself," i.e., Noah didn't hear about it. So Noah's concern was still in force. But the Rebbe says that God did not *command* Noah to procreate until He first promised him that He would not destroy the world again (LS 25, p. 34). Since the command is stated in v. 7, God must have informed Noah about His promise before this.

9:5 ...I will punish you in the afterlife.

From *The Bible Unauthorized*. Grafstein says he heard it from Nechama Leibowitz.

9:5 I will settle the account from the hand of every wild beast that kills one of you, by killing it in turn.

What does this add that is not included in v. 2: the dread of the animals will be upon you?

9:15 ...when no part of society is behaving that immorally, it will not be necessary for me to cause a rainbow to appear.

A rainbow can be seen only if the sun, the observer, and the cloud/mist are aligned. So presumably this means that in those generations God makes sure that no one is ever lined up with the sun and any mist or cloud that could make him see a rainbow.

9:25 And I no longer want you to tend to me.

It would seem that this must be added, for otherwise, why doesn't Noah just make Ham the slave, or at least say that Canaan must serve all three brothers?

10:5 Each with its language...

See comment on 11:1, below.

10:20 According to their...languages....

See comment on 11:1, below.

10:22 The sons of Shem were Elam, Assyria, Arpachshad....

Arpachshad was born 2 years after the [beginning of the] Flood (11:11), and Shem did not start to have children until after the Flood. He could have only had Elam in Menachem Av of 1657 (9 months after Marcheshvan), Assyria in Iyar of 1658 (9 months later), and thus Arpachshad would have been born a year late, in Shevat of 1659. Perhaps Elam and Assyria were twins. It would be nicer if Arpachshad was the firstborn, for then the whole line from Shem to Abram would be firstborns, but nobody says this, and in fact, *Agadat Esther* (*Panim Acherim* version 2) 1:2 (also found in *Yalkut Shimoni Esther* 1045) says "Shem had five sons, but he only gave greatness to Arpachshad, for he foresaw that Abraham would descend from him...Elam was Shem's firstborn..."

10:29 Chavilah.

If, as the Rebbe suggests on LS vol. 5, p. 287, Chavilah of Genesis 2:11 is the same Chavilah of Genesis 10:29, then how can Chavilah of Genesis 2:11 be Egypt (the place where flax grows), which was settled by Mitzraim, a son of Ham, while Chavilah of Genesis 10:29 is a son of Yokton, son of Japheth? Any ideas? There is also a Chavilah who is the son of Kush, i.e., Mitzraim's nephew (Genesis 10:7).

10:31 According to their...languages.

See comment on 11:1, below.

11:1 Speaking one language.

We heard above (10:5, 20, 31) that the Japhethites, Hamites, Semites had languages. But as Hirsch points out, the word there was "lashonot" and here it is "safah." So, he says, there were many dialects but still one language. It could also be that this incident occurred before the language-divisions of 10:5, 20 and 31.

11:1 Furthermore, he convinced them....

Can we assume that these two interpretations are related: i.e., that when people said to him that if he challenges God, he'll get punished like the generation of the Flood was, he replied that, bah, humbug, the Flood is just a natural occurrence that occurs every 1656 years, etc. ??

11:2 When they migrated....

Who migrated from the East? Everybody? Rashi quotes 10:30 to prove that they were in the east before this, but 10:30 is talking only about the descendants of Yoktan! (--which, by the way, are placed by Kaplan and JPS in Yemen, which can hardly be considered east of Shinar). For a moment I thought that Rashi was indicating that the dispersion happened only to the Semites, but from his comment on v. 3 that the Hamites were the main instigators here, led by Nimrod. So Rashi evidently understands 10:30 --if not to apply directly to everyone-- to at least be indicative of what everyone was doing, i.e., settling in "the east." The picture thus formed is of everyone living around Ararat after the flood, multiplying into clans and nations together, and then migrating en masse to Shinar (this is supported by Rashi's comment that Assyria defected from the Nimrod when he started the tower), from whence they dispersed only afterward.

11:2 From the mountains in the east....

Presumably the Ararat and Zagros ranges.

11:26 His eldest son was Nachor...

Sefer HaYashar and *Seder HaDorot* say that Terach had Nachor and Haran when he was 38, in the year 1916. The Talmud (*Sanhedrin* 69b) and Midrash (BR 38) say that Terach had Nachor the year after Abram and Haran the year after that. The problem with the latter version is that it means that Haran got married and had Lot at 6, had Milka at 7, and had Sarai at 8, which is a little weird. If we go according to the first version, then we need to assume that this verse is patterned after 5:32 ("Shem, Ham, and Japheth"). It mentions Abram first because he was the most important, and then follows with the first child to be born (Nachor), and then the next child (Haran).

11:26 Nachor, named after his father....

Nachor I died in 1997, when Terach was 119, so he could have named his son Nachor after his dead father. Or, he could have been a Sefardi and named him after his living father.

11:30 And according to Abraham's astrological calculations, he would never have any children through her.

If Abram knew enough astrology to be able to figure out that he and Sarai would not have kids, it would stand to reason that he would have checked this out before marrying her, no? Maybe he didn't think to figure it out until he saw that they weren't having kids, but why wouldn't he have thought of that?

11:31 Heading toward Canaan.

Why *davka* there? Was there some sort of tradition about this earth being a family inheritance? Was it in order to be free of Nimrod's empire and be able to serve God freely? Maybe Abram was looking for the original teachings of God preserved in the yeshiva of Shem and Eber?

11:31 They left Nachor and Milkah behind in Ur.

Although we find Nachor's child Besuel later in Haran.

Lech Lecha

13:4 The site of the altar that he had built there at first and where Abram had invoked God. And now again, Abram invoked God there.

When he was here the first time, he invoked God, meaning that he prayed for his descendants. What does invoking God mean now? Did he pray again? for what?

13:13 INNER DIMENSIONS: Their sinfulness caused the Divine Presence to retreat from the fifth firmament to the sixth.

Although the Egyptians caused the *Shechinah* to ascend from #6 to #7, we may presume that the inhabitants of Sodom had been behaving wickedly for some time before this.

14:15 Abram attacked before midnight, and pursued them as far as Dan—also known as Chovah—which is north of Damascus.

Identifying Chovah as Dan makes things a little problematic, because it means that Abram pursued them until Dan, where (1) his strength failed him because of the future sin, but (2) that didn't matter because this is precisely where he overtook them so he didn't have to pursue them any further anyway.

14:18 Noah's son Shem, who was also known as Malki-Tzedek ("My King is Righteousness"), King of Salem came to Open Valley and brought forth bread and wine.

Otherwise we must assume that the King of Sodom came forth to meet Abram at the Open Valley, and then Abram went to Salem to meet Shem, and then either the Torah backtracks to continue the story of the meeting between the king of Sodom and Abram, or that the King of Sodom accompanied Abram to Salem and spoke with Abram there.

15:1 INNER DIMENSIONS: I am a shield for you....

This whole comment contradicts the comment on 12:9 ("Toward the south"), above.

15:7 When he was in the Land of Israel the first time, on the 15th of Nisan of the year 2018, God appeared to Abram....

Besides all the proofs from *Seder Olam*, Rashi on Exodus 12:40, and the Rebbe's sichos, there is another contextual proof that this passage (15:7-21) is not a continuation of the previous one (15:1-6): We read there that God took Abram out of the tent to look at the stars. In other words, it was already night. Here, in this passage, we are told that the sun was setting, and later that the sun actually set and it became dark. So the two passages seem to have taken place on two different occasions.

15:10 Dividing the animals thus indicated that the gentile nations will eventually cease to exist as nations.

Since the Rebbe says that the non-Jews will not die out in the future (sicha on Balak, karkar kol bnei Shes).

15:17 The sun set....

So what? Abraham was already in the midst of a dream anyway, no?

16:12 But although his offspring will be numerous, they will live harmoniously with one another, so **he will dwell near all his relatives.**

If all this means is that he will have many offspring, what is the *chidush* over v. 10? And how could “dwelling near one’s relatives” necessarily mean that one will have a lot of offspring? Can’t one have a lot of offspring who then spread out over a large area so everyone is far away from each other?

17:1 You are still not in control over five of the 248 parts of the body.

Problem here: Ohalot 1:8 lists the 248 parts of the body, and they are all bones. The ears, eyes, and bris are not enumerated. And there are no ear-bones, eye-bones, or bris-bones!

17:1 Nor over how your body reacts to erotic stimuli.

It is somewhat implied by Rashi on Nedarim 32b (the source for this) that the issue here is how what a person sees and hears stimulates him sexually. This should be compared with, for example, the vort on “Judges and policeman you shall appoint over all your *gates*,” which is interpreted to apply to the nose and mouth, as well. I.e., here, there’s no mention of not being able to control loshon hora, etc. ALSO, the sign of this covenant, i.e., the granting of this power, is circumcision, which is definitely about sexuality. But there is the matter of smell: it would seem that normally a person is just as much not in control of what he smells as he isn’t in control of what he sees or hears, and there is definitely a prohibition against smelling a woman’s perfume. Maybe it has something to do with the fact that smell is a more spiritual sense than the other four, as witnessed by the laws of Yom Kippur. BUT I could be wrong in all this and “eyes and ears” here refers to *all* forms of bad stimulus, including hearing loshon hora, for example. That would take care of my next comment, too.

17:1 You will be able to ignore inappropriate sights and sounds, and control your erotic drive.

If we can selectively ignore, or train ourselves not to see, inappropriate sexual stimuli, then why is there any need to further control the erotic drive? In other words, if we’re not being inappropriately aroused, what is left to control in the bris? Imagination?

17:3 Inasmuch as the uncircumcised procreative organ indicates the lack of control over erotic urges, he had to “hide” his organ by lying on the ground.

Did Abram disrobe when he received prophecy, like the later prophets did? If not, wouldn’t his clothing be as good a hiding as the ground?

17:17 Abraham threw himself on his face.

I thought he was already on his face? v. 3.

Vayeira

18:1 This occurred in the Plains of Mamre.

Where else *could* it have occurred? Is Mamre's "reward" the fact that he was specifically mentioned here?

18:1 INNER DIMENSIONS: The fifty gates of understanding.

As to what these gates are, the Raavad on *Sefer Yetzirah* says they are the fifty questions that God asked Job at the end of his book; the *Zohar* and Ramak say they are the fifty times the Exodus is mentioned in the Torah (but you have to know how to count because there appears to be dozens more than 50); the Arizal lists 8 different "locations" (2 in *da'at*, 2 in *Ima*, 2 in *Z'eir Anpin*, and 2 in *Nukva*) of them, and RYG has his own system based on the 50 idioms in the Torah in which the construct form is used before the Name *Havayah* ("the eyes of G-d," "the mercy of G-d," etc.).

18:1 INNER DIMENSIONS: We thus undergo numerous processes of spiritual growth throughout our lifetimes, each one leading us to and through fifty gates of Divine consciousness.

I'm basing this "brash" assumption on the idea that every "spiritual growth process" is a process of going out of Egypt and receiving the Torah on a new level, which, as we know, requires 50 steps.

18:4 Pagans who worship the dirt of their feet....

Is there any corroboration in anthropological or archeological literature about dirt-worship? (True, just about everything else has been worshipped, but I've never heard about this one.)

18:6 Take three *se'ah*....

We would have thought that Abraham had on hand already-sifted flour, in which case he would have said, "take some coarse flour to scrape the scum and 3 *seah* of fine flour to bake." But the words "3 *seah*" come before *kemach*, indicating that they refer to both the fine and course flour. It can mean 3 *seah* of each, since nothing near 3 *seah* of coarse flour would be required to scrape the scum. Hence, I interpolated as I did.

18:7 Ishmael hurried to prepare it.

If we are saying, as the Rebbe does in LS vol. 5, that the angel was just a personification of the natural power of healing, i.e., Abraham would have healed naturally on the third day, then the same would apply to Ishmael, as well. So, if so, why does the Rebbe ask (in *Sefer HaSichot* 5749, vol. 1, p. 48, note 5) why Abraham sent Ishmael even though it was the third day since his circumcision, which is a day of danger? The only way out seems to be that *naturally* only a certain level of healing happens on the third day, and that Raphael healed Abraham *completely*. But that still mitigates somewhat the Rebbe's point in LS vol 5 that the point here is that *mitzvot* must be performed without recourse to supernatural aid.

18:10 The second angel said: "I have come to deliver a message from God to Sarah...."

If they were able to ask Sarah directly about Abraham's health, why here couldn't they address her directly?

18:10 The second angel said: "I have come to deliver a message from God to Sarah...."

The Rebbe says (LS 5 p. 320 note 59) that at this point Abraham realized the men were angels, for if not, why didn't he question how they could promise to be back at the same time next year? BUT Rashi says later, on v. 16, that Abraham still thought they were travelers. Of course, the Rebbe knew about this Rashi, but I have not found any place where he explains it in light of what he says here, so I can't "expunge" that Rashi by taking this statement of the Rebbe's into consideration. Mizrachi, Gur Aryeh, Beer Heiteiv, and Nachalat Yaakov (on Rashi there) say that Abraham *did not* conclude from their prophecy that the angels were in fact angels. Tzeidah LaDerech says Abraham didn't know they were angels even though he referred to their heart with only one *beit*, as Rashi says on v. 5. *Shai LaMora* postulates that the fact that they didn't consider the guests angels explains why Sarah laughed, and that God chastised her for laughing not because he accused her of doubting His abilities, but for not hoping that these (mortal) guests' blessing would come true. *Biur Stumot Rashi* says that Abraham assumed they were (not idolaters, but) prophets of some sort. As for Rashi's statement with the Shunamite woman, Elisha naturally referred to the angels as angels because the Torah had already been given and had revealed to everyone that they were, in fact, angels. But Abraham could have thought that they were prophets of some sort and were conveying God's message that *He* would return to them in a year, at which time they would have a son. On the other hand, Be'eir BaSadeh quotes the Zohar which says that Abraham knew they were angels but escorted them because that was his custom. Fine, but that doesn't fit in with Rashi.

18:12 She laughed at herself....

Although Rashi says בקרבה means "about herself," he seems to also understand it at the literal level, to mean "to herself," "within herself," i.e., "silently," for it is clear he holds that Abraham and the guests did not hear her say "...besides, my husband is old."

18:14 God made a scratch in the wall of the tent....

First of all, didn't they live in tents, as is clear from this whole passage of the narrative? How can you make a scratch in the wall of a tent? Maybe the scratch was made in a supporting beam or pole? Secondly, they were living now in Hebron, and by the time Isaac was born they had moved to Philistia, and didn't move back to Hebron until 25 years later. So if the "scratch" was made in the "wall" of their tent, they would have at least had to set up the tent in exactly the same geographical orientation for the sun to reach it, etc. Maybe they left their Hebron tent where it was—even after they moved away—so *in case* anyone would check they would see that Isaac was born when the sun hit the mark???

18:23 Would You in your anger blot out the righteous along with the wicked?!

In LS 5, p. 190, note 41, the Rebbe says that since the righteous did not protest the deeds of the wicked, they were implicated in their sin and thus culpable; therefore Abraham had to pray for them. Were they not culpable, then Abraham could have gone directly to his next argument (in the next verse): let their *zchus* save the city.

HOWEVER, what about the idea of when there's *znus*, and *androlomusia* wipes out the righteous together with the wicked, as was the case with the Flood? Why don't we say that the righteous perished in the Flood because they didn't protest the actions of the wicked? OR, are these two ideas equivalent? The *nafka mina* seems to be that if we say *androlomusia*, then even if the righteous protest they still get wiped out; if not, not.

19:27 For he had instituted the practice of daily morning prayer....

Rashi says nothing about this, but he says (on 28:10) that Jacob instituted evening prayer, so we can cautiously assume that he holds that Abraham and Isaac instituted *Shacharit* and *Minchah*.

21:1 But before God healed Avimelech and the members of his household, **God had** already **remembered Sarah as He had said** to Abraham that he would: she became pregnant.

How did this work? Abraham prayed, nothing happened, he and Sarah conceived Isaac, and then they all went to the bathroom? I would have thought that they would have been cured as soon as Abraham prayed so it would be clear that his prayer healed them.

21:2 There were scoffers who did not believe that the child was Abraham and Sarah's.

But she was visibly pregnant, no?

21:8 Including Shem, Ever, and Avimelech.

What about Arpachshad (died 46 years later) and Shelach (died 76 years later)?

21:14 She gradually reverted to the idolatrous beliefs with which she was raised.

Or maybe immediately, and this lasted only until the angel spoke to her in the next few verses?

21:17 God answered them that since Ishmael's suffering has already atoned for his sins.

For if this is not the case, how could he be righteous now, when Abraham just kicked him out of the house for murder, adultery, and idolatry?!

22:2 Mount Moriah is to be the site of the future Temple, from where Divine instruction [*hora'ah*] will issue to the world. The Temple is also to be the locus of Divine service, the most intense form of which will be the incense-offering, a key ingredient of which will be the myrrh [*mor*]. It is therefore fitting for you to undergo and pass this test on Mount Moriah, for your precedent will inspire future generations to follow My teachings and serve Me with pure devotion.

I am yammering on about this because it appears Rashi is going to lengths in order to explain why Mt. Moriah is called such, and this must have some bearing on *peshuto shel mikra*, or so it would seem.

22:2 CHASIDIC INSIGHTS: Taking Isaac's life would not have publicized Abraham's devotion to God, since nobody but Isaac was present.

Problem: they could have been told about it, although it is true that if there were no witnesses Abraham's story could always be doubted (maybe he was attacked by a wild animal or fell off a cliff).

2nd problem: G-d asks Abraham to pass this test so no one will think the previous ones weren't real. But if there were no witnesses, how will anyone come to be convinced of this?

I.e., *mimah nafshach*: either they'd believe his story, in which case it could have served to publicize his devotion, or they wouldn't believe his story, in which case how would they know from it that the previous tests were real?

22:3 He took his two young men with him.

Young? Eliezer must have been at least 20 at the War of the Kings (the first mention of him), which would make him 80 now, and Ishmael was 51 now.

22:4 From Hebron to Mount Moriah is less than a day's journey, but it was only **on the third day** of the journey that **Abraham raised his eyes and saw** a cloud hovering over the mountain.

How did this work? Was God telling Abraham where to turn and taking him on a circuitous route? If He was talking to him the whole time, why did Abraham have to deduce that Mt. Moriah was the place by the presence of a cloud over it?

Chayei Sarah

OVERVIEW: Teachers can—and should—always learn from their students, but in order to educate successfully, they must clearly uphold their authority as mentors.

I wanted to say “claim the high ground” but felt that that’s too colloquial.

23:1 CHASIDIC INSIGHTS: The time Sarah spent preparing for her Divine mission....

I’ve spent much time researching the distinction between “to spend time doing something” and “to spend time *in* doing something,” and have yet to find any reference work that explains under what circumstances one is to be preferred over the other. The on-line grammar chat rooms note that in more educated circles the latter usage is found much less.

23:2 Even a small amount of the bread she baked would suffice to satisfy hunger.

According to *Yoma* 39a, this is what “a blessing was found in” means.

24:4 The place where **my family** still lives.

The Rebbe says explicitly that *moledet* means “family” (and not “homeland”). LS 15 p. 158.

24:49 “Now, if you want to act in kindness and truth towards my master, tell me. If not, say so, and I will turn to the right, that is, southwest of my master’s home, to seek a wife for my master’s son from among the Ishmaelites, **or to the left,** that is, northeast of my master’s home, to seek a wife from among the descendants of Lot.”

It seems that the orientation here is that we’re standing in Charan looking southward. That’s the only way Ammon and Moab can be construed to be on the left. Although Ishmael was presumably back in Hebron at this time, maybe he returned to the Paran desert after the akeidah, realizing (again) that he was not going to inherit anything with Isaac around. Or maybe he already had some children before he left the Paran desert and they were still there. (More precisely, we seem to be in Hebron, facing southeast, so “right” is southwest and “left” is northeast.)

24:51 Rebecca is here in front of you; take her and go.

The Rebbe asks here: If the custom of the place was to provide a girl 12 months to outfit her trousseau, why did they say, “take her and go,” implying “immediately?” I don’t see that this question was answered in the sicha, however. (If the reason they said, “take her and go” is because Eliezer showed them the document and from this it was clear that there was enough wealth in Abraham’s household to provide for all her jewelry needs, then what caused them to suddenly insist that she be given a year or ten months for this express purpose in v. 55? Could it be that when he gave her the gifts [v. 53] they thought he was starting to *mefarnes* her, and if so, they understood that she would *not* be getting jewelry from Abraham’s estate, which then led them to request the full [or part of the] time? Or perhaps the Rebbe’s point is that in the final analysis “take her and go” does NOT mean “immediately,” but just that they are agreeing to the shiduch without asking her?)

24:52 In order to prevent him from doing so, the angel accompanying Eliezer killed him.

The Rebbe says this happened already at this point. The Midrash, however, says that the angel killed Bethuel by switching the plate of poisoned food Bethuel had intended for Eliezer with Bethuel’s plate. If so, this was during the meal, which took place only in the next verse.

Apparently, there's no reason in *peshuto shel mikra* to assume that the angel killed Bethuel in this way.

24:59 Along with her former wet nurse.

Deborah?

24:62 Until then, he had been living in the southern region, i.e., in or around Beersheba, but he now moved to Hebron.

When did Isaac move (from Hebron) to the south? Did he stay there after the Akeidah and not go back to Hebron to his mother's funeral? Or did he just go to Hebron for the funeral and return back to Beersheba immediately? Is this why Abraham stopped off in Beersheba – quite out of the way – on his way back from the Akeidah to Hebron, i.e., to settle Isaac there? Or did Isaac move to "the south" (wherever *that* is) only later, e.g., when he heard that his father was sending Eliezer to get Rebecca for him? Did he need some time to himself to introspect or meditate before getting married?

On the other hand, what is the import of 25:11, in which we are told that after Abraham died, Isaac was living around Be'er LaChai Ro'i? Did he move there only then, or is the verse just contrasting where Ishmael dwelt with where Isaac dwelt? And if he was living in Beersheba, why not just call it that, since it was already given its name by this point?

In any case, (1) it seems clear that in our verse he wasn't living in Hebron and just taking an excursion to Be'er LaChai Ro'i, because if so, what does the end of the verse come to tell us? and

(2) Isaac definitely moved to Beersheba at some point, because that's where he sent Jacob to Charan from (28:10).

So, *libi omer li* that for some mysterious reason, Isaac moved to Beersheba immediately after the Akeidah and that's why they went there then.

But then, when he married Rebecca everyone seems to imply that he moved to Hebron, because Rebecca restored the miracles to Sarah's tent – even though Rashi does not imply at all that Rebecca lived in Sarah's tent.

It also makes sense that Isaac lived in Hebron after he got married, for then God could tell him, while he was on his way to Egypt and stopping in Gerar, to stay there and not proceed to Egypt. Gerar is on the way from Hebron to Egypt, but not on the way from Beersheba to Egypt.

25:2 She bore him...

A big deal is made about how Abraham fathered children at 140 plus, but Hagar here was quite old herself. Let's say she was no less than 5 when Pharaoh gave her to Sarah in 2023; this means she was at least 15 when Abraham married her the first time and she gave birth to Ishmael. That would make her now, in 2088, at least 70 years old, and she now had 6 kids!

25:6 Abraham also sent away Ishmael together with Hagar's other sons, but he returned some time before Abraham's death.

Ishmael was married already and was probably around 64 when this happened. Funny that Abraham would send away Ishmael just a few years after remarrying his mother.

25:7 He retained the youthful virility that he had regained before conceiving Isaac until his final days, and he died completely righteous and untainted by sin.

I conflated two mutually exclusive sichos here. In vol 20, the Rebbe says that Abraham's physiology was that of the earlier generations, and he had Isaac naturally at age 100 and other

sons at age 140, without recourse to a miracle. The proof is that he had Ishmael at age 86. In vol. 35, the Rebbe says that although Abraham had Ishmael at age 86, he is afterwards described as being old, meaning that he had lost his virility and needed a miracle to sire a son, and that the offshoot of this miracle for Abraham was that he retained his virility until he died. I opted for the later sicha, first of all because it is *mishnah acharonah*, second because Terach had Abraham at 70 so Abraham having Ishmael at 86 is not such a big deal, and therefore not such a proof that he was of the old order physiologically. (I think there's another sicha, that I used also, that says that Abraham and Sarah had to miraculously change back to the old order for them to be a bridge between the old order and the new, Torah-order.) But I used the point from the first sicha that Rashi's comment on this verse includes a reference to Abraham's virility.

Toldot

25:21 CHASIDIC INSIGHTS: she was born without a womb.

This unfortunate medical condition is known as vaginal agenesis, or mullerian agenesis, or Rokitansky syndrome, or Mayer-Rokitansky-Kuster-Hauser (MRKH) syndrome; it affects approximately 1 out of every 4000 girls.

25:22 The prayers of a righteous person who is the child of a righteous parent are more effective than those of a righteous person who is the child of a wicked parent.

Why? because his prayers were backed by both his and his parents' merit, whereas Rebecca's were backed only by her own merit? or because he himself is more of koach because of his yichus? Or is there a difference?

25:22 CHASIDIC INSIGHTS: How could the child of two entirely righteous individuals possibly possess a propensity for evil, even *in utero*?

Why is this a question? In ch. 2 of Tanya we're told that the parents are only responsible for the *levush* of the *neshamah*, and that sometimes a high *neshamah* can descend into the offspring of simpletons, so the opposite should also be true, no? Is the answer that since the *Avos* were a *merkavah* for Divinity, they overrode this principle? Or maybe the *levush* is the predilection?

25:27 Esau, although continuing to don the external trappings of righteousness, secretly pursued a life of unbridled sensualism.

In LS vol. 5, pp. 369-370, the Rebbe asks a good question on this and offers a different solution to the 13-15 problem. But I cannot use it, because it contradicts Rashi on 28:9, where he says that Yishamel was 74 when Jacob was born, which means they were born in 2108 (2034 + 74 = 2108). Which again means that they were fifteen when Abraham died in 2123 (2123 - 2108 = 15). See note on p. 278 of vol. 5.

25:32 Esau foresaw that the day would come when....

Esau had *ruach hakodesh*? or maybe he learned this in his Torah studies. (But that engenders a whole different issue: if it was preordained that the Levites would inherit the sacrificial service, what's the whole hullabaloo over the firstborn losing it in the sin of the Golden Calf and Levi earning it thereby?)

26:1 Even though it has also been somewhat affected by the famine.

This is how I got out of the dilemma: if it was affected by the famine, as Rashi implies in v. 12, then why did he go there altogether?

26:7 When the local people asked about his wife, he said....

Hello? Jacob and Esau were born already! The locals didn't see that she had kids? Maybe Esau already had left home and was roaming the wilds, and Jacob was away in yeshiva with Shem and Ever? Or maybe they came with their parents, but Isaac told everyone, "Yeah, their mother died" or "we got divorced, and this is their aunt." Also, it's not that far from Hebron to Gerar. Wouldn't everyone have known about Isaac & Rebecca?

26:7 Because she is of beautiful appearance.

She was already over 60 by this time, just as Sarah was 65 when she and Abraham went to Egypt. Since the Torah does not make a big deal about the fact that they were still beautiful enough to be enticing then, it must have been not rare for women of this age to be beautiful (or, standards of beauty might have been somewhat different then, and a slightly aged look was not interpreted as detracting from beauty). Whatever the case, we cannot apply the statement that Sarah was “100 like 20 like 7” to explain this, because (a) no such statement is made about Rebecca, and she was also beautiful at the same age Sarah was when she was abducted, and (b) the Rebbe says that this statement does not mean that she retained her youthful beauty throughout her life; rather, it means that *because of the miracle of Isaac’s birth*, because of which she regained her youthful beauty, she was as beautiful at 100 as she was at 20 and at 7.

26:8 The king did not abduct Rebecca at once.

Maybe because he heard (or remembered, if it was the same guy) what had happened before, with Sarah?

26:15 The wells that his father’s servants had dug in the days of his father Abraham.

Although the wells spoken of there were in Beersheba, not in Gerar, which is some distance away.

26:32 CHASIDIC INSIGHTS: the second day of *Rosh HaShanah*, on which Satan’s opposition is less harsh than on the first day—he no longer *contends*, but only *harasses*.

How do we see this? In *Shem MiShmuel* he quotes the Arizal that the first day is on *inyanei elokus* while the second day is on *inyanei olam hazeh*. I think I saw this somewhere in Chabad, too. If so, how is the former “hard” and latter “soft?”

And how is *esek* harsher than *sitnah*?

26:34 Esau called her father **the Hittite** rather than the Hivite, because he wanted Isaac to think that she was a local girl.

And the Hivites had not yet supplanted the Rephaim as one of the seven Canaanite nations (15:20), yes? The Hivites do not appear on the scene until the incident with Shechem (34:2).

27:1 Because of the ministering angels’ tears that had fallen into his eyes when he was bound on the altar.

The Rebbe points out that, at least from one aspect, these three reasons are mutually exclusive, for he understands the teardrops as having made Isaac blind *immediately* after (or at) the Akeidah, not gradually over time or by delayed reaction 86 years later. OR: he could have gone partially blind by the teardrops and only fully blind later because of the incense.

ANOTHER PROBLEM: the Rebbe says Rashi’s reason for explaining why Isaac went blind was because God had blessed him, so this blessing must have included good health. But this blessing took place after Abraham died and Isaac was 75 -- 38 years after the Akeidah. ALSO: why would angel teardrops blind someone, anyway?

27:3 Your sword and the arrows for your bow....

If he was supposed to shecht the animal, what did he need these for? The arrows for protection against wild beasts?

27:15 Which had belonged to Nimrod.

Nimrod must have been born at least by 1965, which would have made him 158 when Esau was 15 in 2123. Not at all implausible.

27:22 The voice—the manner of speaking—is the voice of Jacob.

Rashi on Numbers 20:16 and 20:20 says that these words are a blessing: that Jacob's power is the prayers he says with his voice, and Esau's power is the physical power of his hands. Did Isaac have this in mind when he said this sentence? It sounds like he's stating an already established fact.

27:27 CHASIDIC INSIGHTS: Isaac saw visions of the construction, destruction, and reconstruction.

Unusable adjective before "visions": Hegelian. ☺

27:44 Until your brother's anger has subsided.

Well, which is it? Seven years or until Esau's anger subsides? I.e., what if it takes longer than seven years for Esau's anger to subside?

27:45 I will then send word and bring you from there.

Rashi says that Rebecca sent Deborah to fetch Jacob. When did she send him? If it was at the end of seven years, it means that Deborah hung out for 13 years with Jacob's family until joining them for the return trip. If it was when Rebecca felt that Esau's anger had subsided, then probably Deborah would have told that to Jacob, in which case why all the fretting attending their upcoming meeting? Anyway, it appears *al pi peshat* that Esau did *not* forget about what Jacob did nor forgive him, at least until they met on Jacob's way back. So it appears that Rebecca sent Deborah after seven years. ??? *Sefer HaYashar* says Rebecca sent Deborah after 14 years. Another Midrash says that Jacob didn't want to leave Laban's house (why?) so Rebecca sent Deborah to fetch him. So this would mean that she could have sent her at the end of the 20 years, for a third reason.

28:2 From among the daughters of Laban.

So they were already born at this point. Did Isaac intend for Jacob to go to yeshiva for 14 years now? Evidently not, because otherwise, doing so would not have been considered a potential breach of honoring one's parents. So Isaac intended for Jacob to go straight to Charan and get married. (Rebecca, too, only wanted Jacob gone for 7 years.) So Laban's daughters must have been old enough to get married—following Rebecca's precedent, at least 3. According to *Sefer HaYashar*, they were born in 2164, which would have made them 7 years old now. *Yalkut Shimoni, Vayishlach* 135 has them born in 2170, 1 year before this incident. Rabbeinu Bachaye has Rachel born in 2180, i.e., not even born yet at this point!

28:5 As Abraham had done when he dispatched Eliezer....

The sources just say that Jacob had "possessions" or "wealth" or "money" when Eliphaz caught him. Nothing specifically about camels, jewels, or documents. I wrote what I did because (1) if there were camels and men, what did Jacob do with them for 14 years? (2) if there was just money, why would he cry before Rachel just because he didn't have money? OK, it would have been cause to cry, but not as much as if he was planning on giving her jewels and showing her brother the inheritance document. (3) It would seem there was an inheritance document, because when Eliphaz dispossessed Jacob, Jacob had nothing left and was therefore considered destitute and therefore considered dead, so whatever it was that Eliphaz took had to not only clean Jacob out of what he had on him but also of whatever he had to his name. (Of course, it is possible that there was no document and the money and jewels Jacob had on him were in fact all he had to his name, and then by Eliphaz taking them he could be considered poor. But it would logically seem likely that Isaac would send a document to Charan to impress them just as Abraham had done.)

Vayeitzei

28:10 He therefore returned to the academy of Ever....

Inasmuch as Shem was Malchitzedek, king of Shalem, which would later be Jerusalem, we may assume that his yeshiva was also in Shalem. Yitzchak never left the Land of Israel and his wife Rebecca went to the yeshiva to ask about her pregnancy, so it was probably not far from where they lived. In Tzfat there's a "Cave of Shem and Ever," but I heard that this was an Arab tradition. On the other hand, it's kind of farfetched to think that Jacob spent 14 years in Salem, and then only later realized he hadn't prayed there. Maybe Salem was located where Ir David is now, and Mt. Moriah was the next hill over.

28:10 Mount Moriah, where his father and grandfather had prayed.

The Talmud implies that Mt. Moriah was the place where Isaac prayed "in the field." But it is highly unlikely in *pehuto shel mikra* that he was living around Be'er LaChai Ro'i and went to *daven* at Mount Moriah and then came back to Be'er LaChai Ro'i or thereabouts and that's where Rebecca's caravan met him. Note that Rashi's statement at the end of his comment on 28:17, where he quotes the Midrash about "Abraham called it a mountain, Isaac a field, Jacob a house" is deemed spurious by Artscroll and Rashi HaShalem. We can therefore, *b'pashtus*, take Rashi's statement here that "my fathers prayed at that place," i.e., Mt. Moriah, to refer to when Abraham and Isaac were both there at the *Akeidah*. Presumably Isaac also prayed when Abraham made the ram-sacrifice.

28:11 CHASIDIC INSIGHTS: The "stones" of "that place" thus refer to the lowest element of physical reality, that which displays no sign of Divine life at all.

Is there a level of *physical* reality that *does* display divine life?

28:19 This place was already known as Bethel.

It is possible that it was in fact known only as Luz until this point, and that all the previous references to Bethel are to be understood as "the place that would later be named Bethel" by Jacob. But since it is not so unusual for Biblical characters to "rename" a place with its original name, just adding new or added significance to the existing name thereby, I left it as is.

29:3 CHASIDIC INSIGHTS: Since, Jacob, however, embodied the synthesis of love and fear, as we have seen, he was able to remove the boulder by himself.

By doing so, Jacob prepared himself spiritually for his confrontation with Laban. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 15, pp. 272-273. If only I had access to that volume of *Or HaTorah*....!

29:16 Now Laban had two twin daughters.

There are all kinds of opinions as to when Leah and Rachel were born, and not all of them say they were twins. But (besides the fact that Rashi usually follows *Seder Olam* unless compelled not to) assuming they *were* twins makes it more plausible that Jacob could mistake Leah for Rachel.

29:17 CHASIDIC INSIGHTS: Leah cried constantly....

Comment by Yossi Marcus: In the sicha the Rebbe says that Rachel, in contrast, embodied the role of the innately righteous person, whose saintliness is a given.

Leah and Rachel's children followed in their mothers' respective paths: Leah's children embodied the role of penitents. They sinned in selling Joseph and later repented for it. Rachel's children, on

the other hand, embodied the role of the perfectly righteous who never sinned. Jacob is essentially introverted and is therefore connected to Rachel. This however contradicts our next comment on verse 18 and the vort on yosef Hashem li ben acher (as the Rebbe points out in fn. 38). I therefore left out this part of the sicha. In other words, based on our next comment on the next verse, Jacob should be associated with reaching out and helping an Esau do teshuvah.

In truth, you could make a pilpul connecting Jacob's role as expressed in the next comment with avodas hatzadikim, as the rebbe explains regarding rabbi yishmael Kohen gadol, in contrast to Rabbi Akiva:

Rabbi Akiva embodies avodas hateshuva because of his past, and is therefore focused on ratzo. Rabbi Yishmael, tzadik, is focused on drawing from above to below, like Jacob.

But the vort in the sicha is that Leah was connected to actual outreach, the opposite of the escape of ratzo, and, again, should be right up Jacob's alley, in a manner of speaking.

29:35 CHASIDIC INSIGHTS: The Hebrew names for all the songs of praise in the Bible appear in the feminine gender (*shirah*), with the exception of the last song, composed to be sung at the final Redemption, which is referred to in the masculine (*shir*).

Ten songs of praise (Targum to Song of Songs 1:1):

1. Adam (m!!)
2. Moses (Song of the Sea) (f)
3. Well (f)
4. Moses (Haazinu) (f)
5. Joshua (not *shir*)
6. Deborah (vatashar, no noun)
7. Chanah (vatispalel, not *shir*)
8. David (f)
9. Solomon (Song of Songs) (m!!)
10. The Messiah (m)

30:1 Identical in all aspects....

The fact that two sisters are identical twins doesn't preclude the possibility that one can be fertile and the other infertile for purely physical reasons, does it?

30:32 And belts.

These are not mentioned until later, but I had to include them here also, unless we make the unlikely assumption that goats started having white belts only later.

30:32 Remove from there every white-speckled or white-blotched he-goat....

1. Why does Jacob mention the he-goats and she-goats separately, and separate them by the lambs?
2. Why, when he mentions the he-goats, does he mention the speckled ones before the blotched, while when he mentions the she-goats, he mentions the blotched ones before the speckled? Is he mentioning them in the order of their frequency of occurrence?

30:38 Placing them **in the water running through the troughs where the flocks came to drink....**

Rather than stuck in the ground next to the running water, for if that were the case, there would be no opportunity for the animals to be "startled" by seeing the sticks; they would see them long before they approached the watering troughs.

30:38 They were startled.

It is tempting to translate the root *yacheim* as “to be in heat,” but it appears that it doesn’t mean this, because (1) nobody says the sticks caused the animals to go into heat, only that the sticks influenced how (not when or if) they conceived, or that the sticks impregnated them (but not that it made them ovulate), and (2) later on (v. 41), the first *yacheim* could indeed mean “go into heat,” but the second can’t mean this, for why would Jacob try to put them into heat if they were already in heat? Therefore, it must mean simply “mate.” In v. 38: “the animals mated when they came to drink”; v. 39, “the animals mated via the sticks”; v. 41: “when the robust animals mated, Jacob put the sticks...to have them mate by the sticks.”

30:40 After a few mating seasons, Jacob had successfully produced a sufficient quantity of white-marked animals to regulate the breeding naturally, no longer having to resort to the use of the sticks.

I had to say this (rather than implying that Jacob used both the stick-method and the model-method to breed the desired goats), for otherwise, if Jacob continued using the sticks, why did he have to use the technique of parading the properly-patterned models in front of the mating animals? On the other hand, I couldn’t imply that he only used the sticks for one mating season, because v. 41 uses the idiom “whenever,” which implies more than once.

31:10 Bucks.

I would have used the word “buck” before to refer to the he-goats, but in most cases I could not, since the word “goat” was in bold (being a translation of *eiz*) and the “he” was not.

31:23 Catching up with him....

There are two different words used for “catch up” here and in v. 25: *d-b-k* and *n-s-g*. Is there a difference? It would seem so, since after *dbk* Laban paused overnight and only *nsg*’d the following morning, right?

Vayishlach

OVERVIEW: Closing the curtain on Esau's relevance to the Torah's narrative until the messianic future.

The cliché version of this would be: "consigning Esau to the dustbin of history."

OVERVIEW: Who possessed the breadth of vision and intricate knowledge of God's will.

All this is supposed to convey the idea of "*da'as torah*."

OVERVIEW: As faithful emissaries, devoted to the study and implementation of the Torah's teachings, we can safely appropriate the untamed, raw power and youthful impetuosity of Esau and channel it into....

Unusable quote here: "Youth is wasted on the young" —George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950).

32:5 Thus shall you say to my master, Esau....

Be'er Mayim Chaim and the *perush* on *Devek Tov* say that Jacob was telling Esau that he shouldn't think that he can throw off his yoke and cease being subservient to Jacob, since according to Isaac's blessing, he can do this only when Jacob doesn't keep the commandments. But this explanation makes little sense, since Rashi has just said that Jacob is trying to convince Esau that Isaac's blessing has not come true yet, so if so, Esau is not yet subservient to Jacob in the first place.

Nachalat Yaakov gets around this by taking these two explanations as mutually exclusive: Either "*garti* — I'm still a nothing and the blessing hasn't come true yet," or "*garti* — it has come true, you are my servant, and because I'm still *frum* you have no right to free yourself from my service."

I based my paraphrase of Rashi here on the Rebbe's *sichah* of 14 Kislev 5737 (*Biurei HaChumash* p. 104).

The *Kli Yakar* has a wonderful way of reading these two explanations of Rashi: "Evidently my trick didn't work, and since Isaac thought he was blessing you, his blessing is going to affect you and not me. The proof is that, as you see, I'm still a nobody. If you argue that this blessing *will* take effect on me and that the reason it hasn't yet is because I have not been worthy of it, then you should know that I kept all the 613 commandments even while I was sojourning with Laban, so that can't explain it. Rather, it must be as I said." But, as the *Kli Yakar* admits, this does not sit well with the fact that Rashi introduces the second comment with *davar acher*, and it is a bit of a kvetch seeing that Rashi does not openly allude to such an understanding. Therefore, I left it as it stands.

32:31 Face to face.

Non-hyphenated, according to American Heritage Dictionary

32:32 The sun rose upon him earlier than it naturally should have.

Was this supposed to make up for that? In other words, did the sun rising early now restore the imbalance that was caused by the sun setting early then? If we consider the movement of the sun in the sky, it appears that things just got worse. After Bethel, the sun was *x* hours ahead of where it should be; after Peniel, it was *y* hours *more* ahead of where it should be.

33:4 For joy.

The only source for this I could find was SR Hirsch; the *midrashim* only say that Jacob wept because Esau was trying to bite his neck and Esau wept because his teeth hurt. But since Rashi does not mention this *midrash*, I obviously can't use it. As to why Rashi does not mention why they wept, we can presume that once he says that Esau did kiss him at least part-heartedly, it's understood that he cried out of being emotionally overwhelmed (and that Jacob was either similarly overwhelmed or overwhelmed at seeing Esau overwhelmed). Yossi Marcus gave the source from *Torah Or*.

33:16 By sparing four hundred of Esau's descendants....

Were these 400 Amalekites their reincarnations? their descendants (a little rough since the Amalekites came from Esau himself not the 400, but anything's possible)? If not, how is sparing them a reward for Esau's 400 men?

33:18 Once Jacob arrived in the Land of Israel....

It would have seemingly made more sense to assume that Jacob paid off Esau when Esau was with him, rather than offering it to him after they parted company, which would have involved sending messengers back and forth, etc. But (1) the Rebbe (LS 25, pp. 168-173) makes no mention of this transaction in the context of this meeting. (2) Jacob himself said to Esau that he couldn't accompany Esau because it would kill all his flocks! (3) Jacob built *sukot* for his livestock when he was in Sukot, so he still must have had it (he couldn't have worked at something else and bought all that livestock in one or two seasons.) (4) The Torah tells us that he came "safely" (*shalem*) to Shechem, and Rashi tells us that he had as much livestock then as he had before his gift to Esau, and the Rebbe says that it was his prolific flocks that replenished themselves after the gift.

It makes sense that getting rid of his Diaspora-flocks would occur to Jacob when he had just crossed the Jordan into the Land of Israel, rather than while he was still at Sukot, which was outside the Land of Israel. We can presume that when he entered the land, Jacob felt its holiness and only then realized that possessions acquired outside the land were not on the same spiritual level, or some such thing. *Nachalat Yaakov* says that once Jacob had some Eretz-Yisrael flocks, he decided he no longer wanted those from *chutz la-aretz*.

This also affords a nice transition into the next verse, in which Jacob demonstrates his *chibat ha-aretz* by buying a plot of land and paying for it with fancy coins.

According to *Shemot Rabbah* 31:17, the transaction occurred when Jacob and Esau were burying Isaac, i.e., exactly 20 years later. But this might not work in *peshuto shel mikra*, because would the same sheep and goats and cows still be alive 20 years later?

33:18 The wealth he had acquired outside the land....

On the one hand, Rashi says *nichsei chutz laAretz*, meaning anything. On the other hand, he just sold the animals. Or did he also sell all the clothing, pots and pans, tents, etc., too? What did he leave himself with?

33:20 God augmented His earlier promise.

This—God calling Jacob *El*—happened in Shechem. Was this perhaps a portent of how God would soon, in Bethel, give Jacob the name *Yisrael*?

33:20 The same dominion over the entire world.

What is this, exactly: the righteous' power to work miracles? or nullify Divine decrees? Or the power we all possess to conquer our physical urges (which is quite a miracle even if we don't always perceive it as being so)?

33:20 In this sense, **the God of Israel appointed** Jacob the representative of **God** in the world.

I would think that included in this is the fact that since Jacob was the bearer of the message of Divine consciousness in the world, God called him "God," but I haven't seen this explicitly anywhere yet.

The bit about God now augmenting His earlier promise of *ufaratzta* is my own *bochsvora* in order to put things in context.

I have also taken the liberty of combining Rashi's two explanations, again, in order to help put things in a contextual framework.

Meam Loez's peshat about God giving the righteous the power to annul Divine decrees doesn't seem to fit into *peshuto shel mikra*, since why would God give this to Jacob now, and how do we see that Jacob used it?

34:7 For Shechem had committed an outrage to their father Israel.

"Israel" at this point did not mean anything other than "Jacob."

34:17 We will take our daughter.

Dinah was their *sister*. Perhaps they said "daughter" here since everyone was talking about "daughters" during this negotiation.

34:31 A prostitute.

Rashi says *hefker*, meaning "acting with *hefkeirut* with regards to her sexual relations." See LS vol. 5, p. 191.

35:8 So that no one would be reminded of her name and thus be inclined to curse her for having brought him into the world.

But the Torah does mention the death of Isaac. What are we to learn from this, another indication of the pivotal role of women in raising kids?

25:11 I swear to you by My own eternal self....

Rashi on Exodus 32:13 sees this as an oath promising that the Jewish people will be numerous and survive eternally and inherit the land. In context, however, he makes no mention of these ideas here. I have included it anyway, but could it be that, even *al pi peshat*, a verse can assume additional meaning retroactively when there is occasion for it to do so?

35:14 Wine-libation.

Yes?

35:19 God will then promise her that, in her merit....

Wasn't the Babylonian exile limited to 70 years? What was Rachel's merit needed for?

35:21 Instead of proceeding on to his father's home in Hebron.

When did Isaac move to Hebron from Beersheba?

35:22 Although he did not confess his misdeed publicly....

Why should he have? Are we supposed to confess our sins to everyone in public?

35:26 Their half-sisters.

Jacob had fifteen daughters. If we assign ten of them to the ten tribes (besides Judah and Joseph), we have 5 left. Subtract Dinah, 4 left. The Rebbe (LS vol 5 p 269 n 25) says that when Rashi says that [some] of the twins died, it could mean according to the opinion that the twins didn't marry their brothers at all, and the brothers married Canaanite girls, which we are ignoring for the purpose of this Chumash, so far.

36:20 Seir the Horite.

But in v. 2 Tzivon (here a son of Seir) is called a Hivite.

36:22 Lotan's half-sister was Timna.

She was also the (half-) sister of Tzivon, Shoval, Dishan, Eitzer, and Dishan; why is Lotan singled out?

36:25 Dishon.

Dishon is also the name of Anah's half brother, the son of Seir. Is there some hanky-panky here, too?

36:31 These kings were not true kings.

How do we see this? And, what about Rome? Can't get any more king-like than them!

36:39 Meheitavel was also known as **the daughter of Mei-Zahav.**

The other possibility is that Matreid was a lady and *she* was the daughter of Mei-Zahav. The way I put it, however, accords with *Bereishit Rabbah* 83:4 and Targum Yonaton, which say that Matreid was Meheitavel's father.

According to Baal HaTurim's and *Be'eir BaSadeh*'s reading of *Bereishit Rabbah* 83:4, the reason the Torah is telling us that Hadar's wife was Meheitavel and she was the daughter of a rich guy was because the rich father spent a lot of money getting Hadar to be crowned as king. My editions of BR don't seem to have this, however.

Vayeishev

37:2 Leah's sons shunned Bilhah's and Zilpah's sons because their mothers had been handmaids.

Meam Loez says that Jacob freed Bilhah and Zilpah before he married them; does Rashi hold this way too?

37:3 Joseph's studiousness was reminiscent of Israel's own studiousness as a youth....

I tried here to (a) relate Rashi's two explanations and (b) explain why Jacob would like Joseph because he resembled him physically.

37:3 This robe aroused the jealousy of Joseph's brothers.

But Jacob also made Judah wear a special garment. Maybe this interpolation is wrong; maybe they weren't jealous at all because of the robe, and the Torah tells us about it only because it was a premonition of his impending misfortunes and that's it?

37:14 Corrective suffering.

I'd have liked to use "payback," but its usage in this sense is too informal.

37:23 They stripped him of his shirt and of the fine woolen robe.

If that's what it means, aren't these two then out of order?

37:26 **And** then have to **conceal** our responsibility for **his death....**

Why would they have to hide the fact of his death from Jacob? In the end, they did not try to trick Jacob into thinking that Joseph was not dead; on the contrary, they tried to trick him into thinking that he *was* dead! They could have killed him and then just tried to trick Jacob into thinking they weren't the ones who did it.

37:32 They sent off the fine woolen robe via an emissary.

Why didn't they just bring it to him themselves?

37:36 **Courtier**.

Hebrew: *saris*. Are all *sarises* eunuchs? JPS says no.

38:6 In the year 2224....

I'm basing all this on *Seder Olam*. However, see LS vol. 5, p. 192 n53, where the Rebbe seems to ignore *Seder Olam* completely! However, the Rebbe there does not address how Judah's grandchildren were numbered among those who went down to Egypt (which is what forces *Seder Olam* to say what it says).

38:7 He did not regret his act....

From the fact that *Seder Olam* gives us a whole year between when Er marries and he dies, and similar between when Onan marries and dies, it sounds like they both committed this sin repeatedly.

38:8 For you will name your first child after him.

I always thought that this meant that the kid would be called “Ploni the son of Almoni the dead brother,” but Mizrachi and Ramban (and everyone else?) take it as meaning that the kid will have the same name as the dead brother. I think my way of understanding it fits better with the next verse, because it does not seem that it was customary in those days to name your kid after yourself (Ploni the second), so why would Onan care if his firstborn from Tamar would be named Er? I *can* see him caring that his firstborn would be called Ploni *ben Er* and not Ploni *ben Onan*. Also, it is hard to construe the words “that the offspring would not be considered his” as meaning “would bear his brother’s name.”

38:8 The Torah does not stipulate doing so as part of the institution of levirate marriage.

Rashi on Deuteronomy 25:5 clearly states that *Yibum* means that the *yabam* marries his dead brother’s widow and receives his dead brother’s portion in their inheritance from their father, *and that’s it*. His children from her are his, not his dead brother’s.

Apparently, Judah understood levirate marriage according to the literal meaning of those words in Deuteronomy. Did Judah not know about chazal’s interpretation? Is this blasphemous?

38:14 So he would not recognize her....

But doesn’t Rashi say on the next verse that Tamar covered her face whenever she visited his house? So if he didn’t know what she looked like, why did she need to cover her face now? I guess Judah must have seen her before she got married, or on some other occasion.

38:26 Once it was clear that Er and Onan had died because of their own sins rather than because of any fault of Tamar’s, Judah married her.

I blended the two contradictory meanings similarly in Numbers 11:25. I wonder if it could mean that he never was intimate with her with the same lust as he had before.

38:26 A CLOSER LOOK: In this case, however, it can be argued that for several reasons the prohibition did not apply to Judah and Tamar

Comment by Yossi Marcus: I deliberately left out the explanation of these reasons, since I believe the reader will be put off by the legal hair-splitting to show that the Torah (on *pshat* level) would allow an act that is today considered repugnant. But here they are:

1) Regarding the prohibition of marrying one’s father’s wife, Rashi comments: “This includes after the father’s death.” That this teaching is necessary proves that in *other* forbidden relationships, the prohibition does *not* extend after death. Thus on the level of *peshat*, there is no indication that a man cannot marry his daughter-in-law after the death of his son.

2) Even if we were to argue that on the *peshat* level forbidden relationships *do* extend after death, this rule would not apply to the prohibition of marrying a daughter-in-law. This is because the reason the Torah provides for this prohibition—so as not to “mix the seed of the father with that of the son”—does not apply once the son has died (or divorced his wife).

3) Even if we were to argue that this prohibition applies even after death of the son (since the daughter-in-law had at one time received the seed of the son), the prohibition would not apply in Tamar’s case, since she never received the seed of Er and Onan.

38:29 Since primogeniture is determined by which baby’s *head* emerges first.

R’ Avraham ben HaRambam, citing R’ Shmuel ben Chofni, as quoted in Ariel Chumash (English, p. 308).

39:6 After being in charge of Potiphara’s house for ten years....

There are two opinions in the Midrash how long he worked in Potiphar's house and how long he was in prison. (They agree that the total was 13 years, and that the incident with the courtiers was 3 years before he was let out.) One, based on the view that אָהַר (40:1) means סְמוּךְ, says that he served Potiphar for 10 years and was in prison for 3 years. The second, based on the view that אָהַר means מוֹפְלֵג, says that he served Potiphar for 1 year and was in prison for 12 years. Since Rashi says that אָהַרִי means סְמוּךְ, we should assume that he agrees with the first opinion.

39:14 Not being Egyptians.

my conjecture.

39:23 Could not find fault in anything that was under Joseph's charge.

Onkelos.

40:14 As I have predicted.

Does the Rebbe mean to imply that Joseph meant to imply that things went well for the cupbearer *because* Joseph so predicted? Certainly what was going to happen would have happened anyway whether or not Joseph would have predicted it, no?

40:15 Kidnapped.

How was he kidnapped/stolen? He was sold. Is it that the brothers "stole" him from their father?

40:23 God postponed Joseph's release from prison from three *days* after the dream to three *years* after it.

Presumably because Joseph had to change, and the word for "year" (*shannah*) comes from the word for "change" (*shinui*), i.e., in order to truly change yourself, you need to apply the new you to a year of (climactic and other) changes.

Mikeitz

OVERVIEW: In such times, it would be crucial for them to follow Joseph's example....

Although not a patriarch, Joseph is one of the seven shepherds. What's the difference between what the seven shepherds give us and what the patriarchs give us? Interestingly, Joseph was removed from the number of tribes, as if he became a quasi-patriarch, an extension of Jacob (*yesod* of *Atzilut* rather than *Beriah*, like the brothers).

OVERVIEW: extricating himself from the depths and soaring to the heights....

Cliché: meteoric rise to fame.

41:8 Pharaoh's advisors assumed that this detail was one of the inaccuracies that inevitably occur in prophetic dreams.

They knew about this characteristic of dreams but Jacob's sons didn't? Evidently so, perhaps because Pharaoh and his courtiers were used to prophetic dreams, since Pharaoh was ruler who was responsible for the affairs of a great empire, while Jacob's sons didn't have such dreams. Pharaoh certainly seem to have no doubts that his dreams here were prophetic, and neither did his courtiers.

41:43 Pharaoh commanded his subjects to only bend their knees to Joseph and not to prostrate themselves before him (as would befit someone with kinglike authority) because he wanted to retain some indication that Joseph owed his position not to his birth but to Pharaoh's goodwill.

True, the Rebbe (LS 5, p. 207-208) does not say that Pharaoh commanded this, only that this is what everyone did. But the Rebbe notes that Rashi quotes v. 43, which is describing what Pharaoh did to Joseph. Pharaoh is the one who appointed Joseph. Rashi uses this citation to explain how *avrech* means bend the knee. So I sort of made a *hekesh* here and understood that Rashi means that the way Pharaoh appointed Joseph was in a way of *avrech*. It also seems a little far-fetched that all the people should go through the exact same reasoning process simultaneously and all individually conclude that they should only say "Bend the knee to him" instead of "Prostrate yourselves before him." (Although my reverse *hekesh* could also be termed far-fetched, too, I guess.)

42:1 The Land of Israel, whose inhabitants were going hungry.

Presumably, the inhabitants of Canaan also heard about Joseph's prophecy and his advice to store up grain during the previous seven years. Did they ignore it? Did their grain rot, too? If the latter, did Joseph's curse (if, in fact, he did curse the grain, since we are never told this definitively – it could be that God made the grain rot) not apply to Jacob's grain?

42:2 Alluding to the 210 years that they and their descendants were destined to reside in Egypt.

Did Jacob have this in mind, or was it an unwitting prophecy? He certainly didn't mean to tell the sons that this is what was about to happen, did he?

42:7 He understood that he first had to ascertain whether they regretted selling him and were ready to take the next step in the development of their family into the chosen people.

Why couldn't he just reveal himself to them and just ask them? Probably because he would then never be sure if they were sincere or they just reacted to his being the all-powerful viceroy. I'll bet some *mefaresh* says that.

42:22 And now that it is clear that he is dead, we are being called to account.

The interpolation in this verse is taken from a note in the Artscroll Rashi, which cites no source for it.

42:27 Sack.

Anything about שק – sack – vs. אמתת – pack?

43:7 The man kept asking about us and our families, saying, ‘Is your father still alive?’

Where do we see that Joseph asked them this? Is this a case of the Torah not bothering to tell us everything when it happened, or were the brothers telling the story to their father their own way? The next sentence would seem to imply the latter, i.e., that they hid from Jacob the fact that *they* had told Joseph about Benjamin, preferring him rather to think that Joseph had asked about the possibility of another brother himself. But then, why would they make up the detail about Joseph telling them about their cribs? The Rebbe in LS vol. 35 p. 186 note 61 seems to imply that this occurrence was not made up but actually happened.

43:16 In his youth, Joseph had considered them guilty of transgressing the prohibition of eating flesh torn from a living animal.

Two problems here: (1) The Rebbe says elsewhere that, according to *peshuto shel mikra*, the non-Jews did not become obligated to observe the 7 laws of Noah until the Giving of the Torah. Before that, they were obligated only to observe the general principles of humanitarian behavior, plus whatever stringencies society as a whole adopted, and I don't recall Rashi saying anywhere that humanity undertook to observe *ever min hachai*. So how did *ever min hachai* become one of "the laws they were required to observe"? (2) The Rebbe cites *Parashat Derachim* as explaining Joseph's argument with his brothers being over whether or not they had the *din* of a *benei-Noach* or a *benei-Yisrael*. The brothers opined that they should behave as *benei-Yisrael*, and therefore they were *meikil* in *ever min hachai*. So, if Joseph knew them to hold that they were obligated to behave as *benei Yisrael*, i.e., that was the essence of their *machlokes*, how could he think they had not undertaken to observe the Torah's regular laws and keep kosher?!

43:16 Certainly, voluntary observance could in no way obligate them to endanger their lives (by not eating the meat served them by the viceroy of Egypt himself, thereby possibly insulting him and risking making him angry enough to kill them).

Interestingly, the Torah never mentions that they actually ate the meal (only that they drank). LS 35 p. 183.

43:16 He relied on the brothers to do this themselves when they would be served.

What if it's cooked with the rest of the meat?

43:18 Along with our donkeys.

I always wondered why, *al pi peshat*, OMG they were so worried about their donkeys. ©

44:2 CHASIDIC INSIGHTS: Benjamin personified the glimpse of saintliness that people who are not yet perfectly righteous experience intermittently, during times of spiritual transcendence, such as prayer or meditation.

I'm making up this interpretation of *tzadik tachton*; I hope it's right.

44:3 When the brothers had previously left Egypt, they had taken Simeon's donkey and sack with them....

And were either too stupid or too unbelieving to have thought to bring it along with them now?! I guess they just assumed they'd buy another donkey in Egypt if and when Simeon was released.

In general, are we to understand that on the brothers' trips to Egypt to buy food for their whole household, they only came themselves (no servants), without any extra donkeys (to carry additional sacks of grain), and carried back each time only one sack of grain each? I guess so.

44:3 ...intending to buy another donkey on the way.

For surely he didn't intend to walk on foot all the way back to Canaan, especially if his brothers were all riding donkeys, right?

44:10 For if a stolen object is found in the possession of one member of a group....

The Rebbe (LS 10 p. 156, n30) says that Rashi's use of the word "*ten* among whom is found a stolen object..." is precise even though there were 11 brothers who were "caught," because there were in fact only 10 sacks among them. But if that is the case, then, why was Simeon implicated in the crime, when he had no sack?

44:18 CHASIDIC INSIGHTS: Committees that will deliberately research the matter and then vote on what should be done and how much it will cost, etc.

Unusable cliché: "fiddle while Rome burns."

Vayigash

44:20 He was afraid that if he told him otherwise, Joseph would demand that they bring him before him.

Why? Couldn't they always answer that they just hadn't found him yet, so they don't know if he's alive or dead?

44:32 Both in this world as well as in the afterlife.

In 43:9, Rashi explains Judah's words to Jacob *kol hayamim* to refer (only) to the World to Come; here, he explains the same expression (to Joseph) to mean both worlds.

Maskil LeDavid explains as follows: Judah had to say "both worlds" to Joseph because had he just said "the World to Come," Joseph could have replied, "So sending Benjamin back will not help you, since a *nidui al tenai* needs to be annulled even if the *tenai* was not fulfilled, and a *neder* (such as this *nidui*) cannot be annulled until it takes effect. So if your *nidui* does not take effect until you die, you can't have it annulled during your lifetime, so sending Benjamin back won't help you.

45:9 CHASIDIC INSIGHTS: When Joseph realized that he and his father had been separated from one another for exactly twenty-two years, it became clear to him that this was Divine providence's way of rectifying Jacob's failure to honor his parents during the twenty-two years he was in Charan.

In the *sichah*, the Rebbe does not address the issue of how Joseph knew about the 22 for 22 payback, but just takes it for granted. I therefore had to fudge in this way.

46:26 And who were **his own issue**.

I presume this means other than slaves, admirers, hired help, etc.

46:34 **So that you will be able to settle in Goshen.**

Didn't Pharaoh already say (45:18) he was going to settle them in Goshen?

47:10 **Jacob blessed Pharaoh....**

By making the Nile ascend and overflow at Pharaoh's approach, Jacob was essentially making Pharaoh into the faucet that turned on the water for Egypt, i.e., into a "Pharaoh Faucet." ☺

Vayechi

47:29 I do not want to feel them.

Any precedent or explanation about a corpse feeling what's going on when it's in the grave? Or do we have here a premonition that Jacob knew he would not die, just fall into a deep sleep???

47:29 CHASIDIC INSIGHTS: Swear that you will do me the following act....

Comment by Yossi Marcus: This same sicha is the source for the following. But I took it out since it doesn't teach anything new and is just a diyuk in the Hebrew words.

50:25 And Joseph bound the Children of Israel by an oath: "G-d will surely remember you, and you shall then take up my bones from here: Why do Jacob and Joseph use different words to describe their removal from Egypt - Jacob says unisatani, (carry me) (47:30) and Joseph uses viha'alitem (take up)?

Though both words can mean "to raise," Jacob's word also connotes "exaltedness" while Joseph's means "take up" or "elevate." Jacob remains exalted from Egypt even as he leaves it, while Joseph elevates Egypt and takes the good with him.

48:1 After these above-recounted events....

The Rebbe usually says אחר הדברים האלה means "after these words."

48:8 And now that I am asking you to bury me in the Machpelah cave....

The Rebbe says that Joseph's pain over his mother not being buried in the Machpelah cave was aroused now, i.e., when Jacob asked him to bury him there. But Jacob asked him this not now but some time earlier (47:30), while this discussion took place "sometime afterwards" (48:1). I guess relative to the 47 that had passed since Rachel died, these two incidents can be considered to have occurred at around the same time.

48:12 Joseph then withdrew them from between his father's knees in order to later position them to Jacob's right and left....

Why couldn't Jacob have put his hands on the young men while they were still between his knees?

48:19 CHASIDIC INSIGHTS: But his younger brother will become greater than he:

Comment by Yossi Marcus: I put this sicha in miketz when Manasseh and ephraim are born. Here I added "meat" from the sicha in chelek hey. The sicha is written in a very different style than usual, with many Yiddish words that don't commonly appear in Likutei Sichot. It looks like it was written maybe to appear in a Yiddish paper (???). I have attempted to preserve some of that rhetorical flavor in the translation.

48:19 CHASIDIC INSIGHTS: Jacob therefore wished to give precedence to Ephraim.

Comment by Yossi Marcus: The Rebbe offers another deeper explanation in addition to this, one that explains why Yosef thought Menashe deserved the right hand. But the biur is very deep and complicated so I left it out....

49:4 In doing so, not only were you implying that I had acted improperly, you were also implying that God had misplaced His trust in me.

My conjecture as to how this was a *chilul Hashem*. Is it correct?

49:7 In this way, he will have no land inheritance.

How does that separate him from Simeon. On the contrary, were he to have his own, separate territory, he'd have to live there, separate from Simeon, while this way, he can roam wherever he chooses, including into Simeon's territory!

49:10 The acknowledged rulers of the Jewish people.

The exilarchy continued in Babylonia until the 11th century.

49:11 By loading the donkey up with the grapes of only one vine.

Wouldn't this be better expressed the other way around, i.e., as "tying a vine to a donkey"?

49:32 Only the progenitors of my twelve tribes shall participate in carrying my coffin from Egypt to Hebron.

Rashi also says that the grandchildren should not carry because they were born of Canaanite women, but since I'm not using this opinion, I can't say that here. The Rebbe (LS 5 *Vayechi* #2) goes further, saying that according to the opinion that the daughters were *not* Canaanites, the grandchildren probably *did* participate in carrying the coffin. But since Rashi takes it as *peshat* in Numbers 2:2 that the arrangement of the camp is derived from the way the sons carried Jacob, I had to keep it in.

49:32 CHASIDIC INSIGHTS: Likewise, when the Jews reached the Holy Land, Levi's descendants did not receive a portion of the land, so that they could remain dedicated to serving God and teaching His ways of righteousness to the rest of the nation.

There is an arichus here on why Menashe and Ephraim replaced and correspond to Joseph and Levi respectively, but I believe the reader is better served without this arichus.

50:10 Which is beyond the Jordan.

Why did they enter the Land of Israel from Transjordan, instead of taking the "way of the Philistines?"

50:23 Ephraim's great-grandchildren.

The Rebbe understands בני שלשים to mean "the son of the son of the son," i.e., the great-grandson.

50:25 Since Joseph had been viceroy of Egypt, Pharaoh had to respect the oath he made to his father.

Rashi on Exodus 13:19 puts this explanation into Joseph's mouth, but above he said that the only reason Pharaoh let him bury Jacob in the Land of Israel was the threat that Joseph would reveal his ignorance of Hebrew.

50:26 Thinking that its presence in the river would bring blessing to its waters.

This is the reason given in the Talmud. The Mechilta says that the Egyptians knew that the Jews wouldn't leave without it, and therefore hid it in order to keep them from ever leaving.

The Talmud says that Moses needed Serach bas Asher to tell him where the coffin was, so either the Egyptians sunk it secretly (which would make sense if they wanted to keep the Jews from

leaving without it, but if so, how did Serach know about it?) or everyone just forgot where they had sunk it by then.

Haftarot

For the first Sabbath of Chanukah: If it is the 30th day of Kislev....

It never happens that Shabbos Chanukah falls on 29 Kislev (*only* Machar Chodesh) or 1 Tevet (*only* Rosh Chodesh).