

THE JEWISH BIBLE QUARTERLY



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The Punishment of Job's Friends

The Rape of Dinah

The Satanic Verses - Part II

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From Yerushalem to Yerushalayim

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THE PUNISHMENT OF JOB'S FRIENDS

JULIUS B. MOSTER

This issue is dedicated in loving memory of my beloved Mother-In-Law, Grace Lefkowitz.

The Book of Job is one of the most brilliant literary and religious documents in existence. It is also one of the most confusing. Surprisingly, much of the confusion emanates from the presence, in the last chapter (the Epilogue), of the following three verses:

After the Lord had spoken these words to Job, the Lord said to Eliphaz the Temanite, 'I am incensed at you and your two friends, for you have not spoken the truth about Me as did My servant Job. Now take seven bulls and seven rams, and go to My servant Job and sacrifice a burnt offering for yourselves. And let Job, My servant, pray for you; for to him I will show favor and not treat you vilely, since you have not spoken the truth about Me as did my servant Job.' Eliphaz the Temanite and Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite went and did as the Lord had told them, and the Lord showed favor to Job (42:7-9).

In this passage, God doles out punishment to Job's three friends, an act that is totally unexpected. The surprise is not only due to the issuing of the punishment itself, but also to the degree of its severity (an elaborate sacrifice is demanded), and to the reason given for its imposition (because the friends did not speak the truth as did Job). This development generates confusion because it does not seem justifiable, based on what is related in the main body of the text that precedes it.

Job starts with a Prologue which consists of two chapters written in prose. Therein, Job is presented as a super-righteous person. When Satan challenges Job's motive for being so righteous, God puts Job to a test: He allows Satan to subject him to a devastating loss of family, wealth and health. While he is

Julius Moster has a Ph.D. in Biochemistry from Purdue University. He published several articles in scientific journals before leaving that field. He recently retired from private business as the president of a corporation which he founded in 1959.

wallowing in misery, his wife tells Job to curse God and die, but he rejects her advice and blesses God instead. Three friends come from afar to visit and comfort him. Witnessing his predicament, they weep, tear their clothes, put dust on their heads, and sit with him in silence for seven days

The Prologue is followed by the Dialogue, 39 chapters (plus a few verses), which contain a cycle of speeches and is written in poetic form. Therein, Job argues that he is a sinless person and that therefore God should not have subjected him to suffering. The friends defend God; He is a just and merciful deity Who does not punish without reason. They recommend that Job confess his sins and ask for God's forgiveness. Stubbornly, Job maintains his innocence. The Dialogue climaxes with God addressing Job out of a whirlwind, admonishing him for having spoken out of ignorance, explaining that mortals are not in a position to comprehend the mysterious ways of God. Job agrees that he was at fault and repents.

The drama of Job is set in two locations, heaven and earth. The players on earth -- Job and his friends -- are never made aware of what is transpiring in heaven, thus they never know why Job is being made to suffer. The reader, however, is privy to this information from the beginning. So the reader knows that in this instance God had His reasons for imposing suffering on a righteous person, but that such reasons usually are beyond human understanding. What is here, then, is an attempt to explain why the doctrine of Reward and Punishment, so ardently promoted throughout the Bible, is not always found to be the case in real life, and that even though God may appear as being unjust at times, He has His reasons for behaving as He does.

The Book of Job could end sensibly at this point, but it does not. Instead, it contains an Epilogue (42:7-17), which is full of surprises. The first surprise to be encountered is the abrupt change in literary style. The text goes from a long, verbose cycle of flowery orations written in poetry, to a very short, easy-to-follow statement of facts, written in prose. It appears that after entertaining his readers with deep, philosophical and thought-provoking hermeneutics, the author wanted to leave them with a clear understanding of his concluding message. So what is the message in the Epilogue? This leads to another surprise. The preceding 41 chapters have just finished explaining why the doctrine of Reward and Punishment is not always applicable in real life. In the

Epilogue, that doctrine is upheld -- someone is punished and someone is rewarded.

As might be expected, the righteous Job is the one who is rewarded, but who is punished is another surprise. This time, as pointed out above, it is a threefold one. The punishees are Job's three friends, the sympathetic trio who came from a long distance to comfort and console Job, who took the expected and respected position that God is a just deity Who would not punish without good cause. With a little imagination, one could reason that the three friends should have sided less with God and more with Job, that by insisting that God would not punish Job without good reason they were, in effect, accusing Job of being a sinner and thus adding to his burden. But such a scenario would call for the friends' punishment to be directed mainly towards seeking forgiveness from Job. This does happen; God instructs the friends to ask Job to intercede on their behalf. However, this is only a small part of the punishment. The main emphasis is for the three to make elaborate sacrifices to God, which implies that the three friends, hitherto considered to be ardent defenders of God's reputation, are being punished extensively because they have sinned egregiously against God. But how could that be? The reason given, in God's own words, is that they "...have not spoken the truth about Me as did My servant Job." But earlier in the text, when God spoke out of the whirlwind, He did not admonish the friends; rather He indirectly accused Job of not having spoken the truth (38:2, 40:8).

What do commentators have to say about the punishment of the friends? The article on Job in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*¹ starts with a 15-line summary that does not even mention the punishment. Because Job's Prologue and Epilogue are written in prose, whereas its Dialogue is written in poetry, many prominent scholars believe that two authors are involved. The prose portion (Prologue/Epilogue) is considered to be a single unit (an old folktale) that the author of Job (the Poet) used to frame his poetic Dialogue.

This old folktale -- the combined Prologue/Epilogue -- contains the following: Prologue: The righteous Job is subjected to suffering; he refuses to follow his wife's advice to curse God and die; he is visited by the three friends. Epilogue: The three friends are sentenced to punishment; Job's health and fortunes are restored. We have here a tale that could very well exist on its own,

independent of the poetic Dialogue. Its story line flows smoothly except in one place. There is no reason for the friends to be punished. To explain this, supporters of the folktale hypothesis suggest that in the original story the friends, like Job's wife, also advised Job to curse God and die, but that this was left out in the final version. Thus the "punishment" passage in the Epilogue is superfluous. So why then was it not also left out? Because at the time it was so well known, so fixed, that the Poet could not eliminate it. But if that is the case, then why was he able to drop the passage in which the friends supposedly advised Job to curse God? A more likely explanation is that the Poet eliminated it because it portrayed the friends in a way that was not suitable for the role he had in mind for them in the Dialogue, that of staunch supporters of God. But he did not leave out the "punishment" passage because it suited his purpose to retain it.

Robert Gordis² has proposed that the old folktale, when first written, did not have the three friends in it; that the last three verses of the Prologue, which tell about the arrival of the friends, and the first four verses of the Epilogue, which deal with their punishment, were not part of the original tale. But this shorter version of the old folktale only had two characters -- God and Job -- which were not enough for the Poet's intended extensive Dialogue. So he introduced three more characters -- the friends -- by adding three verses to the Prologue and four to the Epilogue. Why did he have the friends punished? To introduce an "exquisite" ironic twist: One of the friends had assured Job that if he repented he would then be able to intercede for other sinners (22:26-30), and now Job has to intercede for the three friends.

Marvin H. Pope³ seems to support the "folktale" hypothesis, but also gives an alternate explanation: The friends believed that they had to defend and flatter God no matter if they told the truth or not in doing so, whereas God really "values the integrity of the impatient protester and abhors pious hypocrites who heap accusations on a tormented soul to uphold their theological position." Yehezkel Kaufmann proposes a similar reason.⁴ The friends followed the easy path without regard to the actual truth. Thus, they postulated empty phrases of conventional cliché the truth even when it challenged orthodox conventions.

An entirely different approach is taken by David Wolfers. Most critical

scholars identify Job as an Edomite. Wolfers is among those who identifies Job as a Jew.⁵ He identifies the three friends as Kenizzites, better known as Calebites, a minority group within Judah who were subject to discrimination and contempt.⁶ While they offered comfort to Job, secretly they were glad to see the downfall of a leader of the smug majority and to take the opportunity to preach back at him what his people had been preaching to them all along. The reason for their punishment was to serve as a general warning to non-Jews not to attempt to interpret the Jewish God or to intervene between Him and His people.⁷

In the sample of commentaries surveyed above, there is a lack of consensus on the interpretation of the passage dealing with the punishment of Job's friends. The wide diversity of opinion among some of the most eminent scholars in the field adds emphasis to the confusion normally associated with the passage.

The fact that there are so many surprises in the Epilogue is not a surprise in itself. Authors often strive to come up with surprise endings. Not only do such endings have great entertainment value, but they also are a very effective tool in achieving emphases. In this respect, "surprises" are like "repetition," which the Epilogue also features. Twice it is stated that the friends did not speak the truth as did Job. Could it be that the author of Job purposely used special literary techniques in the Epilogue -- surprise-ending, repetition, easy-to-understand prose -- in order to present his message in a dramatic and emphatic manner?

Considering that the friends' punishment is located in a prominent position (at the end of the book) and considering that we have here an author of superior talent, it may very well be that this passage is an essential component of the author's main message. If that is the case, then to understand Job truly, the three verses dealing with the punishment of Job's friends should be scrutinized very carefully.

The passage relates that God is angry with the friends because they did not speak the truth about Him. The degree of His anger is considerable, as indicated by the severity of the punishment He imposes on the three friends. They are obviously wrongdoers of major proportions. But if this is so, then why do we readers not perceive them as such in the preceding chapters where they

are featured extensively? One of the techniques of surprise-ending authors is to present the clues leading to the identification of their villain in a way that is not obvious to the reader until revealed at the end of the book. Otherwise, there would be no surprise. This technique is present in Job. The book has a built-in impediment that tends to keep its readers from understanding its intended meaning.

The impediment arises from the marked difference in literary style and form between the Prologue and the Dialogue. The former is written in prose that is easy to read and understand. It is short and contains a smooth-flowing story line that is easy to follow and remember. In contrast, the Dialogue is very long and is written in poetry that is difficult to read and understand. It is not story-oriented. Rather, it contains a series of complicated dissertations that are not always as sequential as one would expect in normal argumentative dialogue. As a result, the reader tends to remember the Prologue in detail while retaining only a general recollection of the Dialogue.

For example, the expression "the patience of Job" emanates solely from the Job of the Prologue. There, throughout his suffering, Job never complains, never questions God's behavior, accepts the bad with the good, and blesses God rather than curse Him as his wife advises. But in the Dialogue, Job is anything but patient. In fact, there, he is the epitome of impatience. He complains bitterly about his condition, accuses God of punishing him for no good reason, asks to be let alone so he can die in peace, demands that he be judged by a third party, and so on. Pope describes Job's rantings against God as being "near blasphemous tirades."⁸

A similar misperception occurs with the three friends. In the Prologue they are portrayed as true comforters. When they witness Job's horrendous condition, they weep, they tear their clothes, put dust on their heads, and sit in silence with him for seven days. However, in the Dialogue, the three friends, while passionately defending the doctrine of Reward and Punishment, repeatedly accuse Job of being a sinner. Why else would God allow him to suffer? These accusations are often accompanied with brutal insults. For example, in their first responses, Bildad characterizes a speech of Job's as being a big wind, and declares that his children died because they sinned and thus got what they deserved (8:2-4); and Zophar charges Job with talking nonsense endlessly so as

to keep others from stating their piece (11:3). In his second speech, Eliphaz declares that Job is a fool, brandishing useless and deceitful words and arguments and that his own mouth condemns him (15:2-6). With each succeeding speech the friends' antagonism towards Job builds. In his final oration, Eliphaz accuses Job of immense wickedness:

*You know that your wickedness is great,
And that your iniquities have no limit.
You exact pledges from your fellows without reason,
And leave them naked, stripped of their clothes;
You do not give the thirsty water to drink;
You deny bread to the hungry.
The land belongs to the strong;
The privileged occupy it.
You have sent away widows empty-handed;
The strength of the fatherless is broken (22:5-9).*

This portrayal of the three friends as critical and heartless is supplemented by Job's rantings against them. They are disloyal, fickle, cowards, liars, quacks, unjust, deceitful, full of empty platitudes, mischievous, mockers, unwise, aggrieved, humiliators, abusers, overbearing, deserters, maligners, offerers of empty consolation, and talkers of nonsense. Did the author put these words in Job's mouth only to reflect Job's utter frustration or did he intend them also as a true characterization of the three friends? A good argument to support the latter is the revelation in the Epilogue that Job speaks the truth.

The image of the three friends that emerges from a careful survey of the Dialogue is not one of sympathetic comforters, but rather one of rigid fanatics who are your friends as long as you accept their religious beliefs but who turn on you viciously if you do not.

A shortcut technique often used in analyzing literary compositions is to start at the end of the work and ask two questions: What is the message revealed therein? To whom is it addressed? So far this article has concentrated on only the first three verses of the Epilogue. Let us now look at the whole chapter and ask those two questions.

Job ends on a high note! The very last event reported is the restoration of his fortunes. He is given back his health; he acquires a new family with sons and

exceptionally beautiful daughters; his wealth is replaced twofold; and he lives to a ripe old age enjoying four generations of descendants. The obvious message here is one of hope to anyone who can identify with Job: Just as Job ended up in highly favorable circumstances so can they.

Who can identify with Job? Job is portrayed as the "ultimate sufferer." Therefore everyone who is suffering can identify with him. If Job recovered from his extreme adverse condition then there is hope that any sufferer can recoup too. Many readers are disturbed by the fact that God took Job's children just to prove Himself right in an argument with a subordinate. But the author had to portray God in this way in order to enable those who lose children to be included in the group that identifies with Job.

When people are subjected to suffering that they do not believe they deserve, there is a tendency for them to become angry with God and to utter negative remarks about Him, words that later may evolve into feelings of guilt which then add to their burden. It appears that the author of Job understood this. In addition to sending a message of hope for the future, he also wanted to ease sufferers' guilty feelings. This is why he portrayed Job as the "ultimate complainer," but one whose tirades against God were not held against him, but rather were judged by God to be legitimate complaints. Thus, all complaining sufferers could expect God to understand and disregard their angry utterances, just as He did in the case of Job.

In addition to giving comfort and hope to sufferers, the Epilogue, in the three verses that inspire the title of this article, projects a second message. It warns rigid fanatics that even though they may hold the majority view (there are three friends against one Job) they should not denounce those who do not accept their religious beliefs or try to impose those views on them. To do so is a major sin that arouses the anger of God.

The Book of Job was written for more than one readership. The main body is directed towards a universal readership whom the author wanted to entertain and educate. To them he presented an exhausting review of the doctrine of Reward and Punishment and an attempted explanation -- the best he could do with a difficult subject -- of why it is not always applicable in real life. But, contrary to what most readers have assumed, this is not the Book's principal message. Rather, it is only preparatory to the latter. The main messages -- there

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are two -- are presented in the Epilogue, a very effective showplace at the end of the book. Here, the author used simple prose language and a surprise-ending technique to further entertain his readers and to emphasize the ultimate purpose of his work: To warn dogmatic fanatics to be more tolerant of others, and to bring comfort and hope to sufferers.

NOTES

1. *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, Vol. 3 (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1992) p.858.
2. Robert Gordis, *The Book of Job* (N.Y.: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1978) p. 574.
3. Marvin H. Pope, *Job* (N.Y.: Doubleday, 1983) p. LXXX.
4. Yehezkel Kaufmann, *The Religion of Israel*, tr. Moshe Greenberg (N.Y.: Shocken Books, 1960) p. 335.
5. David Wolfers, "Is Job After All Jewish?" *Dor-le-Dor*, Vol. XIV/1 (1985) p. 39.
6. David Wolfers, "Three Singular Plurals, Job 18:2, 3," *Jewish Bible Quarterly*, Vol. XXII/1 (1994), p. 21.
7. David Wolfers, "Job, A Universal Drama - II," *Jewish Bible Quarterly*, Vol. XXI/2 (1993) p. 80.
8. Pope, p. XV.

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THE RAPE OF DINAH

ERNEST NEUFELD

What is the intent of the story of Dinah? How does it fit in or not fit in with the Jacob saga? Is it but another of the series of troubles and tribulations Jacob has to endure, with a moral lesson to be drawn from it?

The outrage of the rape of Dinah and the subsequent slaughter of the Shechemites occur as Jacob re-enters the Promised Land under the protection vouchsafed to him by The Lord (Gen. 31:3, 34:1-2). He has been subjected to 20 years of deceit and exploitation in Haran by his uncle Laban. While in flight from him, he has emerged transformed from an encounter with a mysterious man-angel. Having then escaped unharmed from a dreaded meeting with his brother, Esau, he suffers a new blow. His only daughter, Dinah, is ravished by Shechem. This misfortune is followed by another, the treacherous revenge visited by Dinah's brothers on Shechem and his father, Hamor, and all their people (29:15-23; 32:25-32; 34:25-29).

Disjunctive as the Dinah episode may appear in the progress of the Jacob story, it is very much part of the web which the narrator has constructed to tie the threads of Jacob's life into a pattern, one whose strands are formed from the actions of men but somehow serve the over-arching purposes of God.

The story of Dinah is a segment of a whole, and to trace the linkages among the segments we must review prior events. After Jacob flees from Laban's household to return to the land of his birth, his route is the old caravan trail that Abraham took when he answered The Lord's call to leave Haran for a land that He would show him. Relieved to be quit of Laban after the latter caught up with him in the mountains of Gilead, Jacob travels slowly, to spare the women and children and to permit his flocks and herds to graze along the way. When he reaches Succoth, in the magnificent highlands east of the Jordan, he tarries, building a house, and booths for his animals. He resumes his journey, traveling through the mountain country toward the pass at Shechem, the old fortified city

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guarding the gateway westward to the sea and south toward the heart of the Promised Land.

At Shechem, he buys a parcel of land from Hamor, to use for his encampment. His sole daughter, Dinah, seeking companionship among the local girls, has no problem socializing with them (33:17-19; 34:1). He erects an altar there and calls it *El-elohe-yisrael* [God-of-Israel] (33:20).

The friendly relations with the inhabitants are disrupted by the rape. But Shechem, Dinah's assailant, falls in love with her and wants to marry her. His father, Hamor, approaches Jacob and his sons on Shechem's behalf. He expresses the friendliest attitude toward the strangers, suggesting not only the marriage of Dinah and his son and intermarriage generally, but also trade, and residence anywhere Jacob and his family might desire (34:8-11). Shechem then offers any bride price Jacob and his sons care to name.

It is Jacob's sons who now take over the negotiations,

... speaking with guile because he had defiled their sister Dinah -- and said to them, 'We cannot do this thing, to give our sister to a man who is uncircumcised, for that is a disgrace among us. Only on this condition will we agree with you: that you will become like us in that every male among you is circumcised. Then we will give our daughters to you and take your daughters to ourselves; and we will dwell among you and become as one kindred (13-16).

Jacob is silent through all the negotiations. The discussions are reminiscent of those for the hand of Rebekah, in which Laban, her brother, is the controlling authority (Gen. 24:1-58). Nahum M. Sarna attributes the brother's dominant role with respect to the sister's marriage to the institution of patriarchy, which existed in the Hurian society that was the milieu of Laban and his family in Haran.¹ E. A. Speiser shared this view.² If such a tradition existed in Jacob's family as a result of the long sojourn in Haran, it would help to explain the role of principals played by the sons in the negotiations with Hamor and Shechem.

Still, one wonders how Jacob, who had just emerged transformed from a life of deception, bearing his new name, Israel, could have stood by without intervening when his sons made their deceitful proposal on circumcision to Hamor and Shechem. Should not Jacob have grasped that his sons spoke with guile? Was he deluded, or did he think that in any case the Shechemites would

Ernest Neufeld is retired, after a career in journalism, law, and municipal government. His last position was Director of the N.Y. City Council's Division of Finance staff.

not agree to wholesale circumcision? If they refused, Shechem, who already held Dinah (34:26), could have kept her without marrying her, and that would have been a greater dishonor. Jacob should have realized that his sons were being deceptive, and if he did, then he should have tried to intervene or at least delay matters long enough to determine what they were up to.

The perplexing nature of Jacob's silence is magnified by what he says when he does speak. When he learns of the massacre and looting perpetrated by his sons, his reaction is not what one might expect from a man who recently underwent a moral regeneration. He voices only his concern over the difficulties created for him and his family by his sons' deeds. He tells Simeon and Levi, the leaders in the slaughter and plunder:

You have brought trouble on me, making me odious among the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites and Perizites; my men are few in number, so that if they unite against me and attack me, I and my house will be destroyed (34:30).

There is no expression of revulsion, no sense of moral indignation. Jacob is concerned, to all appearances, only with the safety of his household. While there may be an implication in Jacob's statement of his repugnance to violence in that he fears its consequences, his statement may be couched as it is to bring home to his sons the dangers which their vengeful conduct may have precipitated. That is something they could grasp more readily than the moral principles which he did not express but which nevertheless were present in his mind. Jacob's true feelings surface when he is near death. He reveals it in his last testament when, turning to Simeon and Levi, he says:

Simeon and Levi are a pair; Their weapons are tools of lawlessness. Let not my person be included in their council, let not my being be included in their assembly. For when angry, they slay men, and when pleased, they maim oxen. Cursed be their anger so fierce, and their wrath so relentless. I will divide them in Jacob, scatter them in Israel (49:5-7).

That Jacob did not give vent to such feelings at the time of the degrading events at Shechem evidently had its source not only in his recognition of the possible physical danger in which his sons' conduct had placed him and his family, but also in his genuine abhorrence of his sons' actions. In this he is the Jacob we would expect after his transformation into Israel. However, if moral

considerations indeed entered into Jacob's reaction, the question of why he did not act to prevent the egregious conduct of his sons still remains unanswered and rings even more insistently.

It is quite obvious, of course, that in the deceitful behavior of Simeon and Levi, who led the discussions with Hamor and Shechem, the text once again hearkens back to Jacob's own transgressions -- his deceptions with respect to his brother, Esau, and his father, Isaac. Just as Laban, Bethuel's son, deceives Jacob in substituting Leah for Rachel in the darkness of Jacob's wedding night, two of his sons by Leah behave with "guile" in connection with the proposed marriage of Dinah, their sister and Leah's daughter! It is the theme of measure for measure that recurs throughout Jacob's heavy-laden life.

(Thus, the Dinah story, in relating the roles of Simeon and Levi points back to the story of Jacob in Haran. It also points to the future, to the story of Joseph. Simeon and Levi participate in the conspiracy against Joseph. It is with them that Joseph is tending the flock and of whom he brings bad reports to Jacob (37:2). And it is Simeon whom Joseph, now grand vizier of Egypt, detains and has bound when the brothers first visit Egypt for food during a famine [42:24].)

To return to the question of Jacob's silence: Is it possible that he stands mute because of guilty feelings? Is he reminded by their duplicity of his own guile in assuring himself of extensive herds and flocks of the stock of Laban by using imitative magic to induce the birth and increase of the spotted, speckled and dark-coated animals that Laban agreed could be his?

As for the violence of his sons against the Shechemites, Jacob is silenced by recalling the violence that hung over him, his family and his possessions because of his own deviousness toward Laban that exposed him to his uncle's vengeance, from which he was saved only through the intervention of God. Laban was warned by The Lord in a dream not to do anything to Jacob (31:22-24, 29).

The thematic continuity and relationship of the Dinah episode in the Jacob cycle are demonstrated further in the purchase by Jacob of a field at Shechem, which carries an allusion to another field that figures in the Jacob story -- the field where Joseph gets directions to find his brothers, who are tending his father's flocks, and who, upon spotting him, plot to kill him (37:15-20),³ even as they plotted at Shechem against the Shechemites.

The thematic web of which the Dinah story is a part can be discerned,

furthermore, in the ultimate destinies of Simeon and Levi. The covenant with Abraham provided that every male Israelite be circumcised and that any not circumcised *shall be cut off from his kin* (17:9-14). Simeon and Levi are cut off. Simeon is not mentioned in Moses' last blessing of the tribes (Deut. 33). When Canaan is conquered, no territory is assigned to the Simeonites, who are scattered among the tribe of Judah (Josh. 19:1-9). The house of Levi is assigned no territory. The Levites come to constitute the sacerdotal class and are spread out among the other tribes in cities appointed to them (21:1-3). Thus was Jacob's last testament fulfilled.

Simeon and Levi were the most culpable in the slaughter at Shechem, but all the brothers were guilty of deception. Simeon and Levi were two of the six sons Leah bore to Jacob. Reuben, her firstborn and the first of Jacob's children, did not take a leading part in the Shechem massacre. In this the narrator plants a clue to how Reuben will act later when the brothers plot to kill Joseph (Gen. 37:18-22). How the brothers plot violence against Joseph and practice deception on their father to account for Joseph's disappearance is foreshadowed by the events at Shechem.

The threads connecting the various stories in the Jacob-cycle extend even into the distant future. The bloody events at Shechem recur at a later time in the bloody history of that city, in the reign of Abimelech son of Gilead, who through intrigue became the King of Shechem (Jud. 8).

The Dinah story, rather than being an interruption in the Jacob chronicle, is an integral and integrated element in it. It is a link between past and future, calculated through the biblical narrator's art to demonstrate the inscrutable ways The Lord weaves His design for the destinies of men out of the material of their actions.

NOTES

1. *Understanding Genesis* (New York: Shoken Books, 1974) p. 174.
2. *Genesis, The Anchor Bible* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1964) p. 267.
3. The brothers consider Joseph as bent on the deceit of spying on them.

SATANIC VERSES - PART II*

ARON PINKER

When we encounter the post-biblical Satan as an independent personality, we can discern among his traits reflections of and implications drawn from certain of the biblical texts that employ the noun *satan*. Yet, the image of Satan as we know him now is nowhere to be found in the Bible. The conception of Satan as the one who brings all the evil to mankind does not agree with ancient Israelite thought, according to which everything whatever, good and bad alike, was the act of God. The current notion of Satan does not appear to have been an original theological concept developed by the biblical Hebrews. They had, as all humans have, a notion of a "spoiler" to whom they attributed the doings when things "don't go right." The word which they used to describe this "spoiler" (i.e., Satan) had also some other connotations (i.e., "hate") which well fit the concept of a celestial evil-doer, that was borrowed from Zoroastrianism and grafted onto early Judaic thought with the purpose of unburdening God of evil, so to speak.

The Zoroastrian Angra Mainyu/Ahriaman, the hostile spirit, the enemy of Ahura Mazda's holy spirit, Spenta Mainyu, appears to have traits that the biblical Satan was vested with in the post-exilic times, in particular in Christian theology. Angra Mainyu brought death into the world; he has the *daevas* or evil spirits under his control; the demon of the lie, personification of deceit, is on his side against Ahura Mazda. Zoroastrian influence may well be recognizable in the shaping of the New Testament's concept of Satan.¹ In its extensive interaction with the Babylonian-Persian culture, Judaism absorbed the belief in angels as embodying the highest spiritual personalities, the belief in demons and evil spirits, the belief in Satan and Asmodaeus.²

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Persian influence on the Satan figure is possible, but we have to bear in mind also the essential differences between Satan and the Persian Angra Mainyu. In the Hebrew Bible and Jewish theology, the Persian influence is substantially curtailed by the obvious supremacy of God. Only in Satan as the adversary of the Messiah in late Jewish writings, and in the New Testament, can Angra Mainyu be recognized as the prototype of Satan.³

The confrontation between the biblical monotheistic faith and the dualistic Persian religion, which believed in the existence of two powers confronting each other, the power of good and the power of evil, evoked the natural reaction of the Hebrew prophets that everything comes from one and the same source. This protest gave rise to a new difficulty. There is evil in the world -- this is a fact that cannot be denied; how then could we understand evil as originating in God?⁴ During the period of the Second Temple, a purified religious consciousness of Judaism started to emerge according to which it was impossible to attribute the evil to God, who is the source of good only.⁵ This view was expressed in various talmudic sayings and legends: "Man should train himself always to say, Whatever the Merciful One does, is for the good" (Berachoth 60b). The sages stressed that "No evil descends from above" and "...the goodness of God may rule on earth as in heaven, the Angels of Destruction are assigned a place at the far end of the heavens, from which they may never stir, while the Angels of Mercy encircle the Throne of God, at His behest."⁶

God's goodness to mankind came into play at the very first stages of Creation, when He experimented with various models of the world. To quote Ginzberg:

But even this last world would have had no permanence, if God had executed His original plan of ruling it according to the principle of strict justice. It was only when He saw that justice by itself will undermine the world that He associated mercy with justice, and made them to rule jointly. Thus, from the beginning of all things prevailed Divine goodness, without which nothing could have continued to exist. If not for it, the myriad of evil spirits had soon put an end to the generations of men. But the goodness of God has ordained, that in every Nisan, at the time of the spring equinox, the seraphim shall approach the world of spirits, and intimidate them so that they fear to do harm to men.⁷

There was a need to load the evil in this world on the shoulders of a known and appropriate entity. Satan fits the bill. He was known as a spoiler and the verb *s-t-n* could also mean "hate." What better candidate for an evil-doer could there be? The wish to divest God of evil led the sages to the convenient solution that evil comes about by the incitements of Satan, as in the Book of Job, or by means of "evil spirits which were created on the eve of Sabbath between the suns."⁸ Once the biblical Satan was identified as a suitable agent of evil, he was imbued with all the evils of this world. Indeed, in the opinion of an early Amora (the opinion itself is undoubtedly much earlier than the period of the Amoraim), "He is called Satan. ... He is called the evil prompter... The same is also Angel of Death" (Baba Bathra, 16a). And a Baraita says of Satan, "He comes down to earth and seduces, then ascends to heaven and awakens wrath; permission is granted to him and he takes away the soul" (Baba Bathra 16a).⁹

The Talmud frequently calls Satan "Sammael" and the Midrash says of him that he is "the chief of all the accusing angels" (literally "Satans," Deuteronomy Rabbah XI:10). There are few references to Satan in the tannaitic literature. In one instance, the Tosefta Shabbat 17 (18):3 states:

If you see a wicked man setting out on a journey and you wish to go the same route, anticipate your journey by three days or postpone it by three days, because Satan accompanies the wicked man.

In TB Berachot 9a the general advice is given "Open not your mouth to Satan." R. Joshua states in TB Baba Bathra 16a that the verse "the earth is given into the hands of the wicked" (Job 9:24) refers to Satan. R. Akiva was tempted by Satan in the form of a woman, but Satan relented. R. Meir spent three days trying to reconcile two quarrelers, on which Satan complained, "he has drawn me out of my home" (TB Gittin 52a). During the amoraic period Satan became much more prominent in the Talmud and Midrash.

According to one account, Satan was created on the sixth day, at the same time as Eve (Bereshith Rabbah XVII). This tradition attempts to create a link between Satan and the fall of man. However, the more prevalent tradition is that Satan is a fallen angel. Fusing a number of legends, Ginzberg describes the downfall of Satan thus:

In particular, Satan was jealous of the first man, and his evil thoughts finally led to his fall. After Adam has been endowed with a soul, God invited all the

angels to come and pay him reverence and homage. Satan, the greatest of the angels in heaven, with twelve wings instead of six like all the others, refused to pay heed to the behest of God, saying, "Thou didst create us angels from the splendor of the Shekhinah, and now Thou dost command us to cast ourselves down before the creature which Thou didst fashion out of the dust of the ground!" God answered, "Yet this dust of the ground has more wisdom and understanding than thou." Satan demanded a trial of wit with Adam, and God assented thereto saying: "I have created beasts, birds, and reptiles. I shall have them all come before thee and before Adam. If thou are able to give them names, I shall command Adam to show honor unto thee, and thou shall rest next to the Shekhinah of My Glory. But if not, and Adam calls them by the names I have assigned to them, then thou wilt be subject to Adam, and he shall have a place in my garden, and cultivate it."¹⁰

Satan fails in the naming test, but Adam with some cues from God succeeds. Nevertheless, Satan refuses to pay homage to Adam. It is interesting to note that the good angel Michael sided with Satan in his objections to man's supremacy. Thus, Satan's argument hit a sympathetic note even among the good angels. When Michael sees that they lost, he is the first to prostrate himself before Adam and urges Satan to do likewise not to earn God's wrath. Satan, however, is stubborn and unyielding, replying: "If he breaks out in wrath against me, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God, I will be like the Most High!" God casts Satan and his host out of heaven, down to the earth, and from that moment dates the enmity between Satan and man.

This is an obvious attempt by the legends to explain the hatred between Satan and man.¹¹ But it goes deeper, it attempts even further to dissociate God from Satan's acts. The legends imbue Satan with a logic, will, feelings and pride that he is free to exercise. Thus, God is not responsible for his machinations as much as He is not responsible for a man's acts of free will. If our reasoning is correct, then "free will" is God's ultimate means for dissociation from the evil caused by His crowning creation -- man. Satan, by means of his free will, can bring about natural disasters and personal afflictions. The evil effects of man's free will are more localized and mostly manifest in his social interactions.

Once a popular culprit for the evil in this world had been found, folklore gave vent to its imagination and creativity. Typically, Satan is cast in the role of

an accuser, seducer, and destroyer. These satanic traits are clearly exhibited in the Binding of Isaac (Gen. 22). Satan first accuses Abraham of selfish piety; forcing God to test Abraham's piety by commanding him to sacrifice Isaac. Then Satan appears in the role of a seducer attempting to seduce Abraham from his loyalty to God, and also to persuade Isaac to rebel against the ordeal. Failing to achieve this, he told Sarah that Isaac had been slain. The news so terrified her that she died.¹²

In most of the legends we cannot fail to be impressed by Satan's logic. For instance, Satan's purpose in challenging Job stems from good theological logic. God should not forget the greater loyalty of Abraham (TB Baba Bathra, 16a). The well-known phrase "open not thy mouth to Satan" also indicates that he is a very sharp fellow, quick to catch on and exploit each word uttered. Satan sneers at such laws as *sha'atnez* and the prohibition of the pig for which no rational reason can be given (Yoma 67b). It appears as if the folklore fully tuned-in to the biblical notion of Satan as a logical spoiler but added to it a mean streak. The legends even try to rationalize this mean streak, because they simply cannot admit an illogical Satan.

Most of the homiletics on Satan in Talmud and Midrash eventually found an expression in the New Testament, which was written by Jewish Christians. In addition to these sources they reflect also the speculations about Satan in the Jewish apocrypal and apocalyptic literature.¹³ In several Jewish sources the final destruction of Satan is foreshadowed. The destruction of the evil impulse, and of the other evil angel, that is, Satan is anticipated in Tractate Succah (TB Succah 52a). In Yalkut Jesaj it is implied that in the days to come Satan will be overthrown by the Messiah. Probably a similar meaning can be given to the midrash that at resurrection Gabriel will fight against Leviathan and will overcome him (TB Baba Bathra 75a). Leviathan is sometimes called Nachash [serpent] and there are references to Satan as "the old serpent" or "the primeval serpent" (Bereshit Rabbah XXII).

The exclusive use of the name Satan as the designator for the head of the forces of evil is a relatively late practice. Even at the end of the Second Temple, Satan was neither the exclusive nor the most popular name for a celestial power of evil. The Talmud calls often Satan "Sammael"¹⁴ and it credits him with challenging God to put Abraham to the test of the Akedah. However, in

retelling the sacrifice of Isaac in Jubilees (Jub. 17:16) it was Prince Mastema who suggested that Abraham's piety required testing.¹⁵ According to Jubilees, it was also Prince Mastema who attacked Moses on his return to Egypt (48:2). In the Talmud, R. Simeon, son of Lakish, says: "The adversary [satan], evil inclination [*yetzer ha-ra*], and the angel of death, are one and the same being." This view is echoed in a non-canonical Psalm of the Qumran Psalms Scroll 11QPs: "Let not Satan rule over me, nor an unclean spirit; neither let pain nor the evil inclination take possession of my bones."¹⁶ At Qumran, the leader of the forces of darkness was named Belial, or the Angel of Darkness. In the apocalyptic work "The Ascension of Isaiah," the names Beliar (i.e., Belial) and Samael occur side by side as names or synonyms for Satan. In the parables of Enoch (I Enoch 37-71), dating from the Herodian period, *satanas* is pluralized. The leader of the *satanas* is Shemihaze or Azazel (apparently a mix of several versions). The names Shemihaze and Azazel were also found in Qumran. In I Enoch 40:7 it is said that the fourth arch-angel (Phanuel) had the task of fending off the satans and forbidding them to accuse human being before God. As late as the Herodian period, therefore, we have evidence for a plurality of heavenly accusers.

In the Septuagint, *satan* is translated by the Greek common noun διάβλος. In the English translations of the New Testament, Satan is referred to as "Satan," "devil," "the great dragon," "the old serpent," "the wicked one," and "the god of this world."¹⁷ By far the most popular term for Satan, following the Septuagint, is "devil," occurring approximately 57 times. Satan itself occurs 34 times, "wicked one" 6 times, the combination "great dragon...old serpent" twice, and "god of this world" occurs once. Compared to the Hebrew Bible, Satan has a very significant presence in the New Testament, reflecting the shift in Jewish theology during the period of the Second Temple. Still, in Jewish theology to this day, Satan never achieved a position of eminence.

In his *Guide for the Perplexed*, Maimonides deals with the image of Satan not as an issue of itself but in an attempt to resolve the perplexing problem of a simple and perfect person, Job, afflicted with horrible misfortunes. Maimonides¹⁸ focuses on the Satan and makes the following observations:

-- Satan is an angel, but not of the same kind and rank as the other angels. He deduces this from the words *and the adversary came also among them and*

their number (Job 1:6, 2:1). Such a phrase is only used in reference to one that comes without being expected or invited; he only comes among others whose coming has been sought.

-- Satan's *Lebensraum* is the earth. Satan is described as going to and fro on the earth, and walking up and down thereon. He is in no relation to the beings above, and has no place among them. Satan's "going" and "walking" can only take place on the earth.

-- Whatever evils and misfortunes befell Job, were all caused by Satan not by God.

-- Job, as well as his friends, were of opinion that God Himself was the direct agent of what happened, and that Satan was not the intermediate cause.¹⁹

-- Satan has no power over the soul; while power has been given to him over all earthly affairs.²⁰ Maimonides deduces this from the words *But keep away from his soul* (Job 2:6). "Soul," [Hebrew: *nefesh*] designates that element in man that survives him; it is this portion over which Satan has no power.

Maimonides believes that these observations about Satan have been succinctly captured in R. Simeon's saying: "The adversary [satan], evil inclination [*yetzer ha-ra*], and the angel of death, are one and the same being."

There is an unholy trinity, and actions ascribed to these three are in reality the actions of one and the same agent. While Satan is within us and has power over all earthly affairs, he is not an autonomous entity. Maimonides quotes the talmudic saying: "The adversary [Satan] goes about and misleads, then he goes up and accuses, obtains permission, and takes the soul." Satan has to obtain God's permission to take the life. Only life? We do not know. But it is clear that Maimonides, as the majority of Jewish thinkers, considers Satan to be "nothing but the messenger of the good force. Even when he fulfills an unpleasant command, he is still the messenger of the good force - for there is no other force above."²¹

Because Maimonides' observations on the story of Job do not connect Satan with the "bad inclination" he resorts to an etymological analysis of *satan*. In his view, *satan* is derived from the same root as *seteh*, [turn away] (Prov. 4:15). It implies the notion of turning and moving away from a thing, as the evil inclination turns us away from doing good. The same idea is contained in the passage, *And the imagination of the heart of man is evil from his youth* (Gen.

8:21). We are born with the evil inclination; we are born with Satan dwelling within us. As Ben-Sira says, "When a fool curses Satan, he curses his own soul." (21:29).

The good inclination, however, comes when the mind is developed through a proper educational process. Both the evil inclination (or, equivalently, Satan) and the good inclination are according to Maimonides angels, and to them refers the saying, "Every person is accompanied by two angels, one being on his right side, one on his left."²² In TB Shabbath 119b it is specifically stated of the two angels that one is good and one is bad.²³

How is the concept of Satan conceived these days among the Jews? We all know the answer to this question. Satan is a force inside us and outside of us, bent on inflicting upon us all the unthinkable evils. He tempts and deceives us to make us stray from the way of righteousness. Jewish people continue to pray to God that He rescue them from the destructive Satan (or the ArtScroll's invention "*spiritual impediment*"²⁴). And, obviously, Satan continues to serve as an accuser in the High Holiday prayers.

Among modern thinkers, notions of Satan as the arch-evil may appear to be primitive, but Satan as the spoiler is doing just fine. I know it, and I think you know it too.

NOTES

1. Jack Finegan, *Myth & Mystery* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1989) p. 116.
2. Joseph Klausner, *From Jesus to Paul* (Menorah, 1943) p. 117.
3. Rivkah Sharf Kluger, *Satan in the Old Testament* (Evanston: Northwestern University, 1967) p. 157.
4. Shalom Rosenberg, *Good and Evil in Jewish Thought* (Tel-Aviv:MOD Books, 1989) p.13.
5. As a consequence of this theology, interpreters were forced to view the unclear verse *Is it not at the word of the most high that weal and woe befall?* (Lam 3:38), as a question thus: Is not God the one who makes final decision as to what is evil and what is good? See *Ekha* [Lamentations] as interpreted by F. Perles in *The Old Testament with critical commentary*, ed. A. Kahana (Tel Aviv, 5690) p.113.
6. Louis Ginzberg, *Legends of the Bible* (Philadelphia:Jewish Publication Society, 1992) p.2.
7. Ginzberg, p.2
8. That even in the Mishna, which is far from superstition.
9. "The numerical value of the word *ha-Satan*, amounts to 364 (*hei*=5, *sin*=300, *tet*=9, *nun*=50). This is an indication that for 364 days of the year, Satan (the evil impulse) has the capacity to entice people, but on one day, Yom Kippur, he is powerless." (Yoma 20a)
10. Ginzberg, pp. 33-34. See also Bereshith Rabbah XVII and XIX.
11. See also Ginzberg p.47: Thereupon Eve, too, began to weep and cry out: "Woe unto thee, O Satan! Why strivest thou against us without any reason? What have we done unto thee that thou shouldst pursue us so craftily?" With a deep-fetched sigh Satan told them how that Adam, of whom

he had been jealous, had been the real reason of his fall. Having lost his glory through him, he had intrigued to have him driven from Paradise. When Adam heard the confession of Satan, he prayed to God: "O Lord my God ! In thy hands is my life. Remove from this adversary, who seeks to deliver my soul to destruction, and grant me the glory he has forfeited."

12. Edward Langton, *SATAN, A Portrait, a study of the character of Satan through all the ages* (Skeffington & Son, Ltd., 1945) p.11. See also TB Sanhedrin 89b, Pirkei de Rabbi Eliezer XXXII, and the Targum of Jerusalem to Genesis XXII.

13. This section of Jewish literature contains about 30 works authored approximately during the period 200 BCE to 100 CE. The apocryphal books were considered by the sages to contain good orthodox teaching. They are included in the Septuagint but not in the Hebrew Bible.

14. Samael apparently derived from *sami* [blind]. Because of this etymology, several Gnostic sources refer to Samael as "the blind god." In gematria, *Samael* is equivalent to *ofan* [עָפָן], thus connecting his name with his celestial origin.

15. *Satam* is apparently an older, secondary form of *satan*. *Satam* means "to persecute, to pursue," this meaning is evident especially in Genesis 27:41 and 49:23. Originally it probably meant "to entrap," in the sense of setting a snare, or putting fetters on the feet. The only biblical evidence for this basic meaning is in Hosea 9:8.

16. J.A. Sanders, *The Psalms Scroll of Qumran Cave 11 (11QPsa.) Discoveries in the Judean Desert, IV* (Oxford, 1965).

17. The satanic image of Lucifer in Christianity has no connection to Satan. It is based on the Vulgate's translation of Isaiah 14:12, *How are you fallen from heaven, O Shining One, son of Dawn [Hillal ben-Shahar]*! and the verse in Luke 10:18, "I saw Satan fall like a lightning from heaven."

18. Moses Maimonides, *The Guide for the Perplexed* (NY: Dover, 1956) p.297.

19. Maimonides, p.297. Maimonides notes that in the Job story wisdom is not ascribed to Job. The text does not say he was an intelligent, wise, or clever man; but virtues and uprightness, especially in action, are ascribed to him. If he were wise he would not have any doubt about the cause of his suffering.

20. Maimonides may be relying here on R. Joshua in TB Baba Bathra 16a. R. Joshua claimed that the verse *the earth is given into the hands of the wicked* (Job 9:24) refers to Satan; i.e., Satan rules this world.

21. Rosenberg, p.26.

22. Rosenberg, pp. 56-57. Rosenberg observes that Maimonides' version does not appear anywhere. Maimonides did not create here a legend which had not existed before, but he interpolated his own comment into an existing legend. It appears that he used the Hebrew word for *s'mol* [left] in order to explain the etymology of the name Samael.

23. Maimonides, p.289.

24. Nosson Scherman and Meir Zlotowitz, eds., *The Complete ArtScroll Siddur* (Mesorah Publications, 1990) p. 21.

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P'SHAT

AN INNOVATIVE METHOD IN TORAH COMMENTARY

JUDAH H. HENKIN

Since medieval times, traditional Jewish biblical exegesis has customarily been divided into four categories: *p'shat, remez, derash and sod*, forming the acrostic *PaRDeS* [lit: orchard]. We will briefly explicate these categories.

Sod [secret] is mystical or esoteric interpretation. As befits secret lore, nothing further will be said here about it, other than that *sod* employs unfettered metaphor and pure symbolism to link events and personages to Divine forces and historic processes.

Remez [hint] finds oblique references in the text to events often far removed from the immediate context. An example follows from my own commentary: In Genesis 30:1, Rachel tells Jacob '*Give me children [banim], or else I die.*' *Banim* translates as "sons," in the plural. So, too, when she eventually has a child, ... *she called his name Joseph, saying 'The Lord add to me another [or: a different] son'* (v. 24). Apparently, one son was insufficient. The *remez* is that Ephraim and Manasseh, the tribes descended from Joseph, would be among the Ten Tribes exiled by Assyria who did not return. Rachel's future would be secured only by her second son, Benjamin.

Derash, aggadic and homiletic exposition, constituted the main non-legal exegetical activity of the rabbis of the Talmud and Midrash. Contrary to misconception, *derash* usually relies on some textual reading. An example is the Midrash Rabbah to Genesis 25:22. On the verse describing Rebekah's pregnancy, *the children struggled together within her [vayitrotzetzu habanim bekirbah]* the Midrash relates: "When Rebekah would pass houses of prayer and study, Jacob would struggle to emerge, and when she would pass houses of idol worship, Esau would run and struggle to emerge." This has not one but two textual pegs. First, the verb *vayitrotzetzu* contains the root letters *ratz* [to run]. Second, *bekirbah* [within her] can just as easily be read *bekarvah* [when she came close] Came close to what? The Midrash follows.

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P'SHAT

Why is this aggadic and not a simple interpretation of the text? It fails three criteria of *p'shat*: necessity, economy and plausibility. It is unnecessary, in that to explain the Hebrew *vayitrotzetzu habanim bekirbah* as simply a description of a difficult twin pregnancy leaves no textual difficulty or unanswered question. It lacks economy, in that it introduces new elements, such as houses of prayer and study which are nowhere indicated in the text. Finally, it lacks plausibility; foetuses do not behave that way, in our experience, and there is no textual evidence that we are dealing with a miracle.

In fact, the Midrash is not talking about Jacob and Esau, Rebekah's children, at all. Talmudic thought rejects the notion that an individual can be an idol-worshipper or a monotheist from his mother's womb. Rather, the political/religious point being made is that the Jewish people from its inception has been God-fearing, while Rome (=Edom=Esau) has been idolatrous.

P'shat is the "simple" or "direct" import of the text. A minimalist interpretation of *p'shat* restricts it to the meaning of the words at the time the text was written (this restriction represents a particular theological viewpoint). This is an inadequate approach, in my opinion. The language often leaves ample room for alternate interpretations. Moreover, the meaning of the words alone is frequently insufficient to provide any clear picture of "what is going on." The reason for this is the extreme terseness of the biblical account. (Erich Auerbach provided an arresting comparison of biblical narrative with that of Homer, in this regard, in the first chapter of *Mimesis*.)

We usually view *p'shat* as being severely limited vis-à-vis *derash*. The master of *p'shat* is constrained by the language and parameters of the story, while the master of *derash* is free to connect seemingly unrelated episodes, to develop original themes, to provide details whenever the text is silent, and, in general, to embellish Scripture as best God inspires him.

Certainly, there are dull and unimaginative works which claim to be *p'shat*. We find no lack of modern commentaries replete with sterile philological analyses, with background descriptions which add but little to our understanding of the text and nothing to our religious sensibilities, and with unpersuasive and unsatisfying interpretations of various kinds.

This description, however, does injustice to the employment of *p'shat*, at least in the narrative sections of the Torah. The power of *p'shat* lies precisely in

that it deals with the "truth" of the narrative. It seeks to determine what actually happened. Had we been there, this is what we would have seen! To accomplish this the master of *p'shat* needs a generous measure of imagination and intuition, as well as a finely-developed detective sense and a sensitivity to nuances in language. In the Torah the cryptic and the elliptic are more prevalent than the explicit. And, even when details are provided, we still do not know why the protagonists behaved in one way and not in another.

What, then, divides *p'shat* from *derash* in this regard? The master of *p'shat* must rely on his "knowledge of people's behavior" [*bekiuto bederech eretz shel bnei adam*] to quote Rashbam on Leviticus 13:2. He is bound by reality as he understands it. But this restriction is, in fact, the source of his strength.

Let me give a number of examples from my Hebrew commentary *Chibah Yeteirah -- Chiddushim beP'shat haTorah*.

THE TOWER OF BABEL

And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded. And the Lord said, 'Behold, they are one people and they have all one language [safah], and this is what they begin to do; and now nothing will be withheld from them, which they purpose to do. Come let us go down, and there confound their language [sefatam] that they may not understand one another's speech [sefat].' So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth, and they left off to build the city (Gen. 11: 5-8).

This story seems hardly susceptible to explanation on the basis of "knowledge of people's behavior." How can we explain circumstances in which inhabitants wake up one morning and discover that they cannot understand each other? That they speak foreign languages?

Even if what took place was miraculous, moreover, it is unclear what exactly happened. Who did not understand whom? Husbands their wives? Or relatives other family members? Or perhaps all members of a family continued to talk to each other, but not to members of other families? How many languages were created? If there were 2,000 families, did they speak 2,000 languages? And why did they not attempt to learn a common language all over again?

One may, however, offer a different explanation: The Torah here is very precise. Regarding the descendants of Noah becoming nations (Gen. 10), the term *lashon* is used three times (*lileshono, lileshonotam, lileshonotam*). But

regarding Babel the term *safah* is used five times (*safah, safah, sefatam, sefat, sefat*). It is clear that *lashon* and *safah* are not the same. In the story of the Tower of Babel *lashon* is not used, but rather *safah achat, sefat re'ehu, sefat kol haaretz*. For God did not mix up their *lashon* but rather their *safah*. According to an opinion in the Jerusalem Talmud, they all understood 70 languages in any case. Rather, *safah* means opinion, as in Zephaniah 3:9, *I will turn the nations to a clear opinion* [safah berurah] to call on the name of the Lord (see Radak). Here in Babel, they were all of the same mind. As the Midrash Bereishit Rabbah states, they all loved each other. Therefore, *and now nothing will be withheld from them, which they purpose to do*. Even God would not be able to control them, as it were, as the sages in Bereishit Rabbah expounded from Hosea (4:17), "If Ephraim is united, [even] in idol-worship -- leave him alone." Therefore the Lord mixed up their *sefatam*, meaning, He sowed dissension among them.

The scene has now been completely transformed. The episode of the Tower of Babel enters the domain of *p'shat*. Far from being a miraculous episode far from our own experience, it emerges as an historical event perfectly easy to imagine. And above all, the commentary is solidly based on the Torah itself -- the differential usage of *lashon* and *safah*.

ABRAHAM'S OATH

The king of Sodom said unto Abram: 'Give me the persons, and take the goods to thyself.' And Abram said to the king of Sodom: 'I have lifted up my hand unto the Lord, God Most High, Maker of heaven and earth, that I will not take a thread nor a shoe-latchet nor aught that is thine, lest thou shouldest say: "I have made Abram rich"' (Gen. 14: 21-23).

The problem with Abraham's statement is that he does not say what the commentators attribute to him. Rashi explained his argument as being that he had no need for goods, since God had promised to enrich him. Ramban wrote that Abraham intended to make the property sacred and set aside for the Lord. Or HaChaim commented that he did not wish others to say that he was motivated by greed.

The king of Sodom, however, said '*take the goods to thyself*', and Abraham rejected his offer '*lest thou shouldest say say: "I have made Abram rich."*' Why was the king of Sodom so ready to give up his wealth? And why would he want to claim, publicly, that he enriched Abraham -- what would he gain by saying

so? One also needs to understand why Abraham would mind if anyone said so. Why did he refuse gifts from the king of Sodom, but not from Pharaoh and Abimelech?

To explain all this, one must note Abraham's emphasis *lest thou shouldest say [velo tomar]* and not "lest people say" or "lest it be said": The king of Sodom wanted Abraham to be indebted to him. The Torah does not say that the four attacking kings were killed, only that Abraham *smote them and pursued them* (14:15). Perhaps they would return and attack a second time. The king of Sodom sought to ensure that Abraham would again come to his rescue, by publicizing that he enriched Abraham and that therefore Abraham owed him a favor. Abraham therefore declined to take anything from him, *'lest thou shouldest say "I made Abram rich."*

Abraham's words, it turns out, are precise and to the point. But we have gained more than merely an attractive explanation. We have uncovered a new facet of Abraham's personality. Not just righteous, faithful, pure and so forth, but also pragmatic and farsighted. One can speculate that were he alive today he would make an excellent secretary of state.

This, too, is the task of the master of *p'shat*: To take the bare bones of the Torah's description of the forefathers, to cover them with sinews and flesh, until it seems that we personally knew them.

REBEKAH AND THE CAMELS

The servant ran to meet her, and said: 'Give me to drink, I pray thee, a little water of thy pitcher.' And she said: 'Drink, my lord'; and she hastened, and let down her pitcher upon her hands, and gave him drink. And when she had done giving him she said: 'I will draw for thy camels also, until they have done drinking.' And she hastened, and emptied her pitcher into the trough, and ran again unto the well to draw, and drew for all his camels (Gen. 24: 17-20).

Eliezer came with 10 camels, capable of drinking altogether 140 gallons of water when they come from the desert. Indeed, there are those who have waxed poetic over Rebekah's display of devotion in filling and emptying her pitcher hundreds of times to let them drink their fill!

But such a description is not credible. First, how does a young girl have the

physical strength for such a task? Second, what kind of a test was this for Rebekah -- was Eliezer looking for a slave-girl for Isaac? And was it not a profanation of the Name to let her labor to such an extent without lifting a finger to help her?

Rather, it seems Eliezer had been careful in his choice of words. He had stipulated: '*And she shall say, "Drink..."*' -- meaning, he should drink from her pitcher. [תְּבַקֵּחַ]. "...*and I will give thy camels drink [fashkeh] also*" (24:14) -- meaning not from the pitcher but from the trough, as in Deuteronomy 11:10: *and didst water it [hishkita] with thy foot, as a garden of herbs*. In Egypt the fields were watered by water-wheels and other machines which were revolved by pedals or by pushing. Here, too, the girl could relatively easily draw water for the camels by machine and not with her pitcher. Haran was a large city on a traveled route and many caravans came there, not to mention the city's own cattle, and they had machinery for drawing water for them as was customary in those days. This is the meaning of *she emptied her pitcher into the trough*. After the men finished drinking, she emptied the water which was left in her pitcher, *and ran again unto the well to draw, and drew for all his camels* using the water-wheel.

Should one feel that this *p'shat* detracts from Rebekah's greatness, the Torah has alternative ways to stress her special qualities. Rebekah established her credentials [*hazakah*] by three times displaying alacrity in acts of kindness: *And she hastened, and let down her pitcher...* *And she hastened, and emptied her pitcher...* *and ran again unto the well to draw*. Abraham had similarly hastened and ran to do acts of kindness: *And he ran to meet them...* *and Abraham hastened into the tent...* *And Abraham ran unto the herd* (Gen. 15:2, 6, 7). That is why Rebekah merited becoming his daughter-in-law.

'LEST WAR BECKON'

He said unto his people: 'Behold, the people of the children of Israel are too many and too mighty for us; come, let us deal wisely with them, lest they multiply, and it come to pass, that, when there befalleth us [tikrena] any war, they also join themselves unto our enemies, and fight against us, and get them up out of the land' (Ex. 1:5).

The problem is well-known. What did the Egyptian empire fear, and why?

To answer this I commented: *Tikrenah*, from the root *k'r'a'*, can mean befall or occur, but it can also mean "call"; that is to say, war will call the Egyptians. The Egyptian army never waited for its enemies to invade Egypt, but marched out to Canaan or Syria or Libya to do battle, as in the war with King Josiah of Judah (II Chr. 35). Therefore, *He said unto his people* -- the people who would be left behind when the army was called to war. Egypt had no fears when its army was at home, but when war beckons and the army leaves to fight, then will '*they also join themselves unto our enemies, and fight against us, and get them up out of the land*' before the army returns to crush the rebellion.

Pharaoh's seemingly exaggerated fears were in fact realistic. One can easily imagine the mood in Egypt when he spoke to his people.

Without need for further examples, one may sum up the special challenges and accomplishments of the master of *p'shat*. If he does his work well, invests imagination and insight and merits assistance from Heaven, he may find himself moved and electrified by his discoveries, no less than is an archeologist who uncovers artifacts from a distant time. The master of *p'shat* walks in the footsteps of the forefathers and ponders their words and actions, until it seems to him that he has stood in their presence. He uncovers facts and details which have been hidden for thousands of years.

The gates of *p'shat* are never closed. Each generation discovers *p'shat* according to its understanding and experience in life. The master of *p'shat*, like his colleague the master of *derash*, finds in the Torah an inexhaustible source for inspiration and discovery.

FROM YERUSHALEM TO YERUSHALAYIM

JOSIAH DERBY

Reading a familiar language involves a mental process psychologists and educators call *gestalt*: words are read as whole units. If the reader had to break down each word into its component parts, reading would become a laborious and near-impossible task. It is this faculty of the brain that makes reading pleasurable. When the eye encounters a long word that is known to the reader, the first syllable alone causes the brain to grasp the entire word instantaneously.

Thus, for example, a person with a knowledge of Hebrew will immediately recognize the word יְרוּשָׁלָם [Yerushalayim] the moment the eye catches the very first syllable יְרוּ [Yeru]. Now, if one is reading a Hebrew printed Masoretic text of the Bible and encounters this word, the likelihood is that the reader will fail to notice that this word contains a rather startling anomaly, as far as Hebrew linguistics is concerned: Namely, it is in most instances spelled יְרוּשָׁלָם, and the *hiriq* [the ee vowel] between the *lamed* and the *mem* is dangling without an associated consonant! This is not possible in Hebrew: every vowel must have a consonant to which it gives sound. (In fact, Hebrew is most properly written without vowel points, except for poetry. The vowel points were invented in a later period as an aid to reading. Thus, the Torah scroll contains no vowels, and Hebrew books and newspapers are printed without them.)

One would expect, then, that there would be a *yod* between the *lamed* and the *mem* which would be vocalized by the *hiriq*, and, indeed, it is so printed -- as in יְרוּשָׁלָם -- everywhere else. In the Bible, of the approximately 700 times that the name appears, in only four instances¹ does it have the *yod*.² With such consistency one could not attribute this anomaly to a whim or a failing on the part of the Masoretes who vocalized the text. There must be some reason, logical or perhaps historical, to account for this peculiarity. It is the purpose of this essay to propose a solution to this problem.

We begin by noting that Jerusalem is mentioned in several extra-biblical sources. The most ancient of these -- as of our current knowledge -- is found in

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the Ebla tablets³ dating to the end of the third millennium BCE (about 2000 BCE) where it is called *u-ru-salim* or "the city of Salim". It is also referred to in the Egyptian Execration Texts⁴ from the 19th and the 18th centuries BCE as *rushalimum*. In the Tel el-Amarna Letters⁵ from the 14th and 13th centuries BCE it is known as *urusalim*.

The earliest appearance in the Bible of the name *Yerushalayim* is in Joshua 10:3. Here we are told that Adoni-Zedek, the King of Yerushalayim, organized a coalition of five kings to attack and destroy the city of Gibeon because it had entered into a treaty with the conquering Israelites. Joshua responded to the Gibeonite appeal for help, and the Israelites defeated the coalition. However, for reasons the text does not explain, Jerusalem is left untouched. On the other hand, according to Judges 1:8 the tribe of Judah destroyed Jerusalem and burnt it down. If this is historically true then, it is assumed by scholars, at some later time the Jebusites were able to occupy the site and rebuild the city. They called it by its old name, *Yerushalem*.

Are we to infer from these two references that in the days of Joshua (13th century BCE) and Judges (12th century BCE) the city was known by the name *Yerushalayim*? Probably not, as we shall suggest. Rather, this is an anachronism by the eighth-century historian(s) who wrote the early history of Israel in the form of the Books of Joshua and Judges. By that day, as we suggest, that was the name of the city.

Many modern scholars, as well as the classical Jewish commentators, believe that there is an earlier reference to Jerusalem in the Bible. In Genesis 14:18 it is told that Abram (Abraham), upon returning from his defeat of the four kings who had taken his nephew Lot captive, passed the city of Shalem [English: Salem] and was greeted by its king, Melchi-Zedek, with bread and wine and was blessed by him. Shalem, it is said, was the patron god of the city, that hence was named for him.⁶

Without entering too deeply into the debate over the identity of Shalem,⁷ we might note four points that tend to validate the view that the Bible meant it to be identified with Jerusalem, either as an early form of its full name or an abbreviated form.

First, there is the similarity between the names of King Melchi-zedek of Shalem

and King Adoni-Zedek of Yerushalayim (Josh. 10:3), a similarity that cannot be brushed aside as inconsequential.

Second, why should a city that was already well known long before King David transformed it,⁸ have been given a name that contained the name of another place that had no historical significance whatever?

Third, why would the Bible bother to mention Abraham's pausing at Shalem if this city was to mean nothing in the history of Israel?

And finally there is Psalm 76:3, in which the word Beshalem is surely a place-name parallel (and hence equivalent) to Zion, and not an adjective.⁹

Having made these points, in the end it does not really matter, as far as the name *Yerushalayim* is concerned, whether the Shalem that is associated with Abraham is indeed the same as David's city. For the name of this city as it is found in the extra-biblical sources surely reflect the Hebrew form *Shalem*, and the *u-ru* must be the transformation of the Hebrew *Yeru*. Our conclusion, therefore, is that the city was known in Canaanite (and in Hebrew) as *Yerushalem*. As to the meaning of this word, it is not germane to this discussion whether it means "The City of Shalem" or, as some scholars maintain, "The Foundation of Shalem."

We can now turn to the basic questions: When and why did *Yerushalem* become *Yerushalayim*? In II Samuel 5:6 we read of David's decision to conquer Jerusalem: *Then the king and his men went to Jerusalem* [יְרוּשָׁלָם] *to the Jebusites*. We must conclude from this text that the city's name in David's time was *Yerushalem* which the later historian vocalized according to the accepted pronunciation of the name by the Israelites in his day, as we shall see. Following the conquest of the city, David changed its name, to *Ir David*, David's City (II Sam. 5:9). Why did he do that? Probably for two reasons: First, it was not uncommon for a conqueror to rename a conquered city, especially if he makes it his capital.¹⁰ Second, David intended to make this city not only his capital but the religious center of the nation as well. For this purpose he brought the Ark up to Jerusalem, ensconcing it first in the traditional housing of a tent with the expectation of building for it, and for the people, a more suitable and permanent House (II Sam. 7:1ff.). But could Israel's God be enshrined in a city that was named for a pagan god? By naming the city for himself, David solved this problem while at the same time adding to his own stature with the nation.

What had been a small provincial town now began to grow into a significant center of the country. With Solomon on the throne, and with his building of his palaces and the Temple beyond the limits of what had been David's City, Jerusalem assumed once again an international reputation. Essentially, a new city came into existence on the plateau to the north and west of David's City, in order to service not only the Temple that now stood on that hill but also the expanded arms of government that were created by Solomon's reign. What is the Old City today was the New City then.

In the course of time, the new city continued to expand on the western hill and was known in Hezekiah's time as the *Mishneh* -- the "second" Jerusalem (II Kg. 22:14). It is clear that Jerusalem had become a dual city (as it is today), and recognized as such by the people. We, therefore, agree with those scholars who see *Yerushalayim* as a dual form reflecting the character of the city.¹¹ This conforms well with the dual form of *Mitzrayim*, for Upper and Lower Egypt. Moreover, we have the specific case of the etiology of the dual *Mahanayim*. We are told that Jacob, in anticipation of this encounter with Esau, divided his forces into two camps, and therefore named the place *Mahanayim*.¹²

It is, thus, our suggestion that early on, perhaps even in the latter part of Solomon's reign, the city began to be called *Yerushalayim* by the Israelites, while it retained its original name, *Yerushalem*, in its various translations, among the neighboring nations.¹³ In post-biblical times, both the Septuagint (the Greek translation) and the Vulgate (the Latin translation) maintain the original form of the names in Greek *Hierosolyma*¹⁴ and in Latin *Jerusalem*. The English versions, which were derived essentially from the Greek and the Latin, thus translated the name as *Jerusalem*.¹⁵

NOTES

1. Jeremiah 26:18, Esther 2:6, II Chronicles 25:1, 32:9.

2. In the Aramaic sections of Daniel and Ezra it is written "Yerushlem".

3. In 1974 a cache of 18,000 tablets were found in northern Syria, written in cuneiform, mostly in the Eblaite language, which is similar to Hebrew. Ebla was the capital of a vast empire at about the end of the 3rd millennium BCE.

4. Written in the hieratic script on sherds and figurines, they consist of lists of places whose rulers are cursed because they are presumed to be enemies of Egypt. They were first found in a dealer's shop in Thebes in 1925.

5. In 1887, some 379 cuneiform tablets in Akkadian and Babylonian were found at Tel el-Amarna about 200 miles south of Cairo. They consist of letters to the pharaohs from their Canaanite vassals.

6. Julius Lewy, in "The Shulman Temple in Jerusalem," *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 59 (1940) pp. 519-522, maintains that Jerusalem was the center of worship of the great West Semitic god Shulman or Shalem, long before its conquest by David.
7. For a comprehensive discussion as to the various views on the identity of Shalem see J.A. Emerton, "The Site of Shalem," in *Studies in the Pentateuch*, ed. J.A. Emerton.
8. Pliny called it "the most famous city of the ancient east" (*Natural History*, Vol. 15).
9. There are those who maintain that Jacob is also associated with Jerusalem as implied in Genesis 33:18; that Shalem in this verse is not an adjective but the name of a place, and that the Torah wished to associate Jacob with Abraham's Shalem, namely, with Jerusalem.
10. P. Kyle McCarter, Jr., *The Anchor Bible, A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, Vol. 6, (New York: Doubleday, 1984) pp. 140-1.
11. See, for example, J.A. Montgomery, "Paranomias on the Name Jerusalem," *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 49 (1930) p. 277.
12. The phrase *And he named that place Mahanayim* (Gen. 32:3) is obviously irrelevant at that point, and undoubtedly belongs at the end of 32:8.
13. On the Taylor Prism, the Assyrian King Sennacherib described his siege of Jerusalem in 701 B.C.E. and calls it *ur-sa-li-im-mu*.
14. The Greek form is a kind of midrash on the name, for *hieros* means "holy."
15. In the original text of the King James Version, 1611, the name is spelled Ierusalem, as in all other Hebrew names the initial *yod* becomes an "I." It was not until the 18th century that the "I" became a "J."

BRAIN TEASER

Beginning with this issue we introduce a new feature - a brain teaser, a question that will prove to be a challenge even to our biblical cognoscenti. The question was submitted by Rabbi Saul Leeman:

The instances in the Tanakh where we are given the name of a son and the name of his father are numerous. However, the instances where we can name a daughter and her mother (such as Miriam, daughter of Yochebed) are far fewer. How many such instances can you list?

Our readers are urged to mail their responses to: The Jewish Bible Quarterly, POB 29002, Jerusalem, Israel, 93801.

Those who submit a perfect answer will receive an additional one year subscription, to be given to any person of their choice. All who submit perfect answers will be acknowledged in our next issue, together with the answer.

PRONUNCIATION: A KEY TO MEANING

1 KINGS 3:16-28

HERBERT RAND

Hebrew is a consonantal language based on a system of three root letters per word, utilizing an alphabet of 22 letters. Vowels, among the ancient Israelites, were not considered letters. The appropriate vowel sounds (the "souls of the letters") were understood and were supplied in usage by the reader of the text. Ancient and modern Torah scrolls, as distinguished from printed Bibles, are written without any vowel signs (diacritical marks). Vowel marks did not exist in talmudic times; they were standardized between the fifth and ninth centuries CE by the Masorites, a group of Jewish scholars who investigated every nuance of Hebrew pronunciation and devised the system for indicating it.

IN A MANNER OF SPEAKING

The ancient scribes, who wrote copies of the Bible, as well as their readers, were men of various dialects identified with various tribes or regions. The Jewish philosopher and talmudist, Baruch Spinoza, wrote: "For the most part, we are ignorant of the manner of pronunciation of the ancients."¹ Our printed copies of the *textus receptus* of the Hebrew Bible clearly show by their diacritical marks that a word would sometimes be given different pronunciations depending on the dialect of the speaker or on the requirements of grammar based on the position of the word in the sentence or clause.

For example: In Leviticus 16:5-22, in which Aaron, the High Priest, is directed to take two goats, one to be sacrificed and the other to be released into the desert, bearing the sins of the people. The scapegoat is referred to in verse 21 as the live [*hehoi*] goat and in the very next verse, the same goat is referred to as *hahai*, using the same three Hebrew letters but pronouncing them differently. Unvocalized scrolls do not show that distinction, but the early scribes relied on usage and memory, as do modern readers, to supply the authentic sounds of the words according to the rules of biblical Hebrew and tradition.

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PRONUNCIATION: A KEY TO MEANING

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In an earlier article,² I suggested that the basis for Solomon's final decree in that child custody case of I Kings 3:16-28 was the search for the best interests of the child, foreshadowing the modern juristic approach in such cases. There is an unsolved mystery in that case, an unanswered question. Which of the two prostitutes prevailed, the Complainant or the Accused? Which one of them asked that the child be spared from death?

In the crucial verses, the women are referred to only as *this one* or *that one* or *the other one*. In the reference to *the woman whose child was the living one*, she is not otherwise identified. Anyone who was a participant or an observer at that trial could have followed the action and would have had the opportunity of observing who was speaking. But the reader has no such advantage.

I suggest that the diacritical marks in the printed texts of the Book of Kings may be useful in solving the mystery inherent in the report of that trial. It is the contention of this article that the child was awarded to the Defendant, without regard to whether she was his mother or his kidnapper.

HEAR YE! HEAR YE!

Two prostitutes appeared before King Solomon acting as judge.

There was a dead baby and a live baby; neither of the women claimed the dead one but each of them claimed to be the mother of the living one. The entire record of the testimony in the case consists of seven verses covering the recital of the Complainant, an answer in six words from the Accused, followed by a reply in six words from the Complainant, all of which could have taken less than two minutes.

THE SWITCHING HOUR

The Complainant addressed the King: '*Be adonie!*' [a close equivalent of "If Your Lordship pleases"]. She told that she and her roommate were sleeping, each with her own three-day-old son at her side. When Complainant awoke in the early morning to nurse her child, she saw that it had died but its features seemed somewhat different. She concluded that at about midnight, her roommate must have rolled over, smothered her child, and then stealthily exchanged him for the living child of her sleeping neighbor, the Complainant.

The Accused shouted her immediate denial, insisting that the live [*hahai*] one was her son.

"No!" the Complainant replied. "The dead one is yours. My son is the live [*hehoi*] one."

TAKEN UNDER ADVISEMENT

In those days, when blood- and gene-typing and matching were not available, how was a judge to determine parentage, absent any trustworthy evidence or credible witness?

Solomon mulled over the conflicting claims. It may reasonably be surmised that his thought processes in reviewing the case followed certain lines. Both women are prostitutes, presumptively unworthy of belief. Complainant says she is the mother of the live [*hehoi*] son and the Accused says she is the mother of the live [*hahai*] son. One of these women must be the mother of the live child, but which one...?

Complainant appears to be well versed in grammar, for she has carefully changed the regular pronunciation of the word *hahai* to *hehoi* when she used it at the end of a sentence. Her presentation was concise and well crafted. Is she a conniving woman, scheming to replace her own dead baby with a live one...? Or is she possessed of an evil spirit which sometimes afflicts new mothers so that she really but mistakenly believes that the babies were exchanged? If the Accused is really the mother, there would have been no need for the exchange; but if she had rolled over her child, she would have had a motive for switching the children while it was dark. How can I break this impasse? I will put the parties to a test, as when God tested Abraham in the matter of the sacrifice of Isaac. This live child will be the victim. Which of the women will play the part of the Heavenly Angel and save the child?

"Fetch me a sword," he commanded, "and slice the living boy [*yeled hahai*] in two; one part for one woman and one part for the other."

Up to this point, the parties had referred to the child as "my son" or "your son," more than twelve times in the aggregate. The King had ignored that relationship in his dread decree when he used the term "boy" -- a neutral, objective designation.

A TIME TO KEEP SILENT

The Complainant was shocked by his pronouncement. She kept her thoughts to herself. What good is one half of a child? The King is in a temper because he cannot decide this case. It was a mistake to come before this court. The King is a bloodthirsty tyrant. If I appear to disagree with him, he could consume us all in his fury. If she wants to tangle with the King and she opens her mouth to plead for the child, she'll get what's coming to her for her impudence.

A TIME TO SPEAK

The Accused was stunned by this turn of events. She probably thought: This King is cruel and capricious. Everyone knows that on becoming King, he promptly had his elder brother as well as David's general Joab murdered. The boy is an innocent soul who doesn't deserve to die. It may be worth my life if I resist the King's decree but I fear God. And if my effort fails and I am bereaved, then I will be bereaved; and if I perish, then I will perish. She raised her hand and spoke: "If it please Your Lordship, give the infant to her and don't cut it up."

She had used a new word, *yalood* [infant], a neutral word having no reference to parentage. It contains the sound "oo" resembling the cooing of an infant, which could arouse the King's sympathy.

Expecting the testy King to react in anger, the Complainant was quick to align herself with the King. In substance, she concurred: "Fair is fair. Fifty-fifty. Cut him up."

THE END OF THE MATTER -- ALL THINGS CONSIDERED

Turning to his guard, the King announced his final order. "Give the *yalood hahai* [living infant] to her [probably pointing to the woman who had made the plea using the same two words]. She is the mother." She was the same woman who could have been identified as the one who had used the word *hahai* (as distinguished from *hehoi*) during the trial.

The use of *yalood* (so vocalized) as a noun having the meaning of "new-born infant" does not appear to have any precedent in the Bible. I suggest that the accused woman may have adapted the familiar adjective *yilod* and converted it to a noun, changing the vocalization to arouse the sympathy of the King.

The vocalization of the crucial words by the two parties may have played a significant role in arriving at the final conclusion.

NOTES

1. *Hebrew Grammar*, English trans. M.J. Bloom, [New York: 1962] p. 13.
 2. Herbert Rand, "Justice in Solomon's Court: Anonymous vs. Anonymous," *Dor-le-Dor*, 10:3 (Spring 1982) pp. 170-176.
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ESAU'S WIVES**JED H. ABRAHAM**

The name variations of Esau's wives have long puzzled biblical commentators. As the following illustrates, they appear as stark inconsistencies in the text.

Genesis 26:34-35: When Esau was forty years old, he took to wife Judith daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and Basemath daughter of Elon the Hittite. And they were a source of bitterness to Isaac and Rebekah.

Genesis 28:8-9: Esau realized that the Canaanite women displeased his father Isaac. So Esau went to Ishmael and took to wife, in addition to the wives he had, Mahalath daughter of Ishmael, sister of Nebaioth.

Genesis 36:2-3: Esau took his wives from among the Canaanite women -- Adah daughter of Elon the Hittite, and Oholibamah daughter of Anah daughter of Zibeon the Hivite. And also Basemath daughter of Ishmael, sister of Nebaioth.

This article will briefly review the extensive but, to this author, unsatisfying efforts of both ancient and modern exegetes to explain the name variations of Esau's wives. It will then propose a literary, plain-sense solution to the problem.

THE SOLUTIONS OF TRADITIONAL JEWISH EXEGESIS

Traditional Jewish commentators all believe the Pentateuch was written under Divine inspiration, entirely, or almost entirely -- and consistently -- by Moses. On Esau's wives, they resort to one or more of three related propositions: (1) that they were renamed; (2) that they had more than one name at a time; and/or (3) that Esau had more than three wives.

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Rashi

Rashi argues that Esau's wives acquired new names.¹ *Adah daughter of Elon the Hittite* is the original name of *Basemath daughter of Elon the Hittite*. She was called Basemath to indicate that she was wont to offer sweet-smelling spices [*besamim*] as incense to idols.

Oholibamah daughter of Anah daughter of Zibeon the Hivite is the original name of *Judith daughter of Beeri the Hittite*. Esau called her Judith so as to deceive Isaac his father into thinking that she had abandoned idolatry. Judith is taken to be the feminine form of Judah from *odeh* [I will praise (the Lord)].²

Basemath daughter of Ishmael is the original name of *Mahalath daughter of Ishmael*. She was called Mahalath to confirm the midrashic tenet that one's sins are forgiven [*maha!*] as one enters upon marriage.³

Rashi felt compelled to identify the Adah and Oholibamah of 36:2-3 with the Basemath and Judith of 26:34, because 36:2 states: *Esau took his wives from among the Canaanite women*. Had Adah and Oholibamah been different from Basemath and Judith, or had they been additional wives, the text would have employed the standard formula "And Esau took as wives," rather than "Esau took his wives." The latter formulation implies that the wives had already been presented to the reader.⁴

There are, however, three major problems with Rashi's solution: (1) There is a contradiction in the motivations behind Esau's renaming of Adah and Oholibamah. Adah was renamed Basemath to underscore that she offered sweet-smelling spices [*besamim*] as incense to idols. Whereas, Esau changed the name of Oholibamah to Judith to conceal that she worshipped idols. (2) It taxes credulity that Esau -- even Esau -- should have blatantly broadcast the idolatry of Adah=Basemath to his parents. (3) The wives' idolatry is not otherwise apparent in the narrative.

Ibn Ezra and Rashbam

Ibn Ezra dissents in part from Rashi's position.⁵ He agrees that *Adah daughter of Elon* is *Basemath daughter of Elon*; she had two names. Likewise, *Basemath daughter of Ishmael* is *Mahalath daughter of Ishmael*; she also had two names. "There are hundreds of such instances in Scripture....[Therefore] do not be surprised [at this phenomenon]," and it needs no further explication. But

ESAU'S WIVES

Oholibamah daughter of Anah daughter of Zibeon the Hivite is not *Judith daughter of Beeri the Hittite*. Judith did not qualify for mention in the genealogical lists of Genesis 36 because she died childless and the lists are concerned primarily with Esau's offspring. Oholibamah, who takes Judith's place in the lists, was Esau's fourth wife.

Ibn Ezra does not tell us when Esau married Oholibamah. This lacuna is filled by Rashbam,⁶ who maintains that Esau married Oholibamah after Judith died, after he had already married Mahalath.⁷

According to Ramban, Ibn Ezra departed from Rashi's interpretation because Rashi does not explain how Esau can have accomplished a change in the name not only of Judith but also of her father. Moreover, Rashi's interpretation results in Basemath being the unobjectionable original name of the pedigreed and acceptable daughter of Ishmael (which Esau changed to Mahalath only to connote his own repentance), while at the same time it is the derogatory epithet pinned on the unpedigreed and unacceptable daughter of Elon the Hittite. This is an inconsistency that Ibn Ezra regards as untenable.⁸

Ibn Ezra's solution, however, does not alleviate these objections. Rather, it actually opens the possibility that the father of Judith=Oholibamah simply had two names also, and there is no need to conclude that Judith and Oholibamah are different women. And it, like Rashi's solution, leaves Esau married to two women each bearing the same half of a double name: Basemath=Adah and Mahalath=Basemath.

Ramban

Perhaps because of these difficulties, Ramban offers a modified version of Ibn Ezra's explanation. He maintains that both *Judith daughter of Beeri* and *Basemath daughter of Elon* died childless, perhaps as punishment for the bitterness of spirit they caused Isaac and Rebekah. Esau then married the deceased Basemath's sister, *Adah daughter of Elon*, as well as another woman, *Oholibamah daughter of Anah daughter of Zibeon*. When, later, he married *Mahalath daughter of Ishmael*, he changed her name, which has a repugnant connotation in Hebrew [*holi*=sickness], to Basemath, which has a pleasant connotation [*besamim*=spices]. By this name change, he articulated his love for Mahalath=Basemath -- that she was of the family and, as a non-Canaanite, not

evil in the eyes of Isaac his father (Gen. 28:8). Mahalath=Basemath was Esau's fifth wife.

Critique of the Solutions of Traditional Jewish Exegesis

Unfortunately, all these interpretations rely upon conjectural events that do not emerge from the plain sense of the biblical text, and none comports with the major themes of the narrative.

According to Ibn Ezra and Rashbam, Esau married yet another Canaanite woman after he married Mahalath=Basemath daughter of Ishmael. This is most unlikely because Esau married Mahalath=Basemath specifically to repent of his previous marriages to Canaanite women!⁹

According to Ramban, Esau was bereaved of his original Canaanite wives as punishment for the bitterness they caused his parents; then, unchastened, he promptly married two more Canaanite women (including a sister of one of the deceased). Then, to mollify his parents for his many Canaanite marriages, he married Mahalath daughter of Ishmael; but he renamed her Basemath after one of the deceased Canaanite wives who had caused his parents so much bitterness! This, too, is most unlikely.

THE SOLUTION OF MODERN BIBLICAL CRITICISM

The consensus of modern critical scholarship is that significant, unexplained name variations generally derive from different textual sources. According to this theory (the "Documentary Hypothesis"), the received pentateuchal text was compiled long after the time of Moses from proto-biblical documents which preserved differing traditions of names and events. The biblical "redactor" was respectful of these traditions and was reluctant to alter them entirely, even as he dissected and interwove them into the present composite text.

Critique of the Solution of Modern Biblical Criticism

The Documentary Hypothesis does not adequately account for the variations in Esau's wives' names. Apart from the obvious differences in the names, the criteria it employs to discern documentary sources have led most critics to the paradoxical conclusion that both sets of Esau's wives' names derive from the very same source ("P", the "Priestly Document") as follows:

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Genesis 26:34-35, which introduces Judith daughter of Beeri and Basemath daughter of Elon, is considered to be an interrupted preface to 27:46-28:9, which introduces Mahalath daughter of Ishmael. Read together, these sections appear to comprise a consistent, self-contained narrative that relates how Isaac and Rebekah sent Jacob to Rebekah's family in Mesopotamia out of fear that he may marry unfit local women after the pattern of his brother Esau. Based on its chronological and genealogical orientation, it is presumptively assigned to "P."¹⁰

Genesis 36:2-3, which introduces Adah daughter of Elon, Oholibamah daughter of Anah daughter of Zibeon, and Basemath daughter of Ishmael, is a part of a series of genealogical lists, and so it, too, is presumptively assigned to "P."

Confronted with this conundrum, Speiser concludes, somewhat desperately, that Esau's wives' name variations seem to represent conflicting compilations within the same documentary tradition.¹¹

TOWARDS A LITERARY, PLAIN-SENSE SOLUTION

Taking the text as a consistent unity, a plain-sense solution to the problem of Esau's wives' name variations must build upon the textual cues and the major themes of the biblical narrative.

As the text reports, Esau decided to take a third wife because his first and second wives, who were Canaanite, displeased his parents. He chose his cousin, the daughter of his uncle Ishmael. Although her pedigree was acceptable to his parents, her name happened to be identical to that of his second wife -- Basemath. Therefore, he renamed her Mahalath.¹² The name Mahalath derives from the biblical verb *halah* [piel: *hillah*], meaning "to make [the face of someone] sweet or pleasant," and by extension, "to induce to show favor in place of wrath and chastisement."¹³ Aptly chosen by Esau, Mahalath retains a shared meaning with Basemath [sweet-smelling spices, incense] while at the same time implying, as Rashi suggested, a new meaning: *mahal* [to (bring) forgive(ness)].¹⁴

Esau hoped that his third marriage would mark a new beginning for him and that his earlier choices of wives from unacceptable backgrounds would be forgiven. Therefore, he did not rest content with renaming only his third wife. Lest this name change appear to have been opportunistic -- to ameliorate the untenable coincidence of his being married to two women each bearing the same

name Basemath -- he also renamed his other wives. The change of their names, from Judith and Basemath to Oholibamah and Adah, further signaled to his parents that his change of heart was sincere.

Oholibamah may be rendered "my tent [*oholi*] is a shrine [*bamah*=high place, altar, shrine]."¹⁵ Adah may be derived from *adah*, [to cross over, pass on, advance].¹⁶ However, the significance of this name does not lie solely in its meaning but also in its history. Adah was the name of Lamech's first wife who bore him *Jabal*, *the ancestor of those who dwell in tents...* (Gen. 4:19-20).

In the biblical narrative to this point, Jacob, Esau's younger twin brother who was ultimately favored by their parents, is described as a humble dweller of tents; Esau, by contrast, is portrayed as a fierce man of the field (25:28). Esau now renamed his first wives so as to associate them with the theme of "tents."¹⁷ Esau, *the man of the field* the hunter, thus gave notice to his parents that he was forsaking the wildness of the field and would join his brother Jacob as a humble dweller of tents.

The text supplies additional clues that Judith and Basemath were the wives' original names. The preceding episode told of Isaac's experiences in the field (26:13 ff.). He entered into a treaty with a local potentate, Abimelech the Philistine, and his servants dug wells. The text specifically relates that his servants told him *about the well* [*al odot ha-be'er*] which they dug near Beersheba (26:32-33; see also, 26:15,18-23,25). This phrase mimics the name, Judith daughter of Beeri [*Yehudit bat-Be'eri*]. Likewise, the text calls the oath, which bound Isaac and Abimelech to their treaty, an *alah* (26:28). This term mimics the name of Basemath's father, Elon.

These wordplays are designed as notices to the reader of an essential connection between Isaac's adventures in the field and Esau's improvident marriages. Esau married women from the cultural milieu in which his father circulated in his public role: Judith daughter of Beeri [from *be'er*= well -- i.e., "the well-man"], and Basemath daughter of Elon [resonant with *alah*=oath -- i.e., "the treaty-maker"]. Isaac, whose father Abraham had arranged for him an acceptable marriage to a kinswoman (Gen. 24), neglected to do the same for his own son. In tending to his activities in the field, Isaac shirked his responsibility for the affairs of the tent.

For this fateful neglect of Esau, Isaac was punished measure for measure:

Esau duly neglected Isaac's sensibilities in the matter of his marriages, which caused bitterness of spirit [*morat ruah*] to Isaac (26:34). And for this insensitivity, Esau, too, was punished measure for measure: When confronted with Isaac's confirmation of the birthright blessing to his rival twin Jacob, Esau in turn cried bitterly [*marah*] (27:34). The wives who had caused bitterness of spirit to Isaac would not bear the beneficiaries of Isaac's blessing (28:1-4).

This analysis also helps explain the variation in the name of Judith's=Oholibamah's father, Beeri=Anah the Hittite (26:34) / Hivite (36:2) / Horite (36:20,24). The text states that Anah [from *ayin*=wellspring] was renowned for discovering well-water [*yemim*]¹⁸ in the wilderness (36:24). He was also called Beeri ("the well-man")¹⁹ apparently to distinguish him from his uncle who was also named Anah.²⁰

Similarly, the varying usages Hittite, Hivite and Horite, may be explained as follows: Hittite is a metonym for Canaanite. Thus, Joshua 1:4 uses the term *land of the Hittites* to refer to the entire expanse of Canaan.²¹ Hivite means *yoshev havot* [dweller of tent-villages],²² while Horite means *yoshev horim* [troglodyte, cave-dweller].²³ Read together, these designations convey that Anah=Beeri the Hittite=Canaanite was a cave-dweller when he lived in the mountainous Horite country of Seir (Gen. 36:20), and he was a tent-dweller when he lived in the less rugged land of Canaan (36:2).²⁴ Both terms serve to associate him generally with the theme of "tent" in contrast to the theme of "field". They consequently strengthen the association of his repentant son-in-law Esau with the theme of "tent" also. In effect, the text is suggesting that the father of Esau's Canaanite wife Judith=Oholibamah ["my tent is a shrine"] was a cave/tent-dweller, notwithstanding he was also associated with the wells of the field. Esau hoped this ideal pedigree would further commend Judith to his parents, especially after her name-change to Oholibamah.

CONCLUSION

The upshot of this interpretation is a thoroughly consistent rendering of the biblical text. Far from being discordant documentary deviations, the name variations of Esau's wives emerge as subtle supports for a unifying theme of the narrative: the superiority of the "tent" of Jacob over the "field" of Esau, and the ultimate repentance of Esau after his traumatic loss of the birthright blessing to Jacob.

Although later prophetic and midrashic traditions have generally portrayed Esau [Edom=Rome] as an unredeemed villain and ultimately as the eternal enemy of Jacob [Israel],²⁵ other strands have seen him more sympathetically.²⁶ Indeed, the midrash cited by Rashi that Esau's sins were forgiven when he married Basemath=Mahalath²⁷ is an example of this more sympathetic strand. It is, in fact, the plain meaning of the biblical text.

NOTES

- 1 Rashi to Genesis 36:2-3.
- 2 Cf. Genesis 29:35.
- 3 See Midrash Samuel, 17:1. Cf. Genesis Rabbah, 67:13.
- 4 See Mizrachi to Genesis 36:2.
- 5 Ibn Ezra to Genesis 26:34; 28; 36:1.
- 6 Rashbam to Genesis 36:2.
- 7 Rashbam further suggests that Oholibamah is a Seirite woman of Horite extraction, but Hoffmann, who otherwise follows Rashbam's analysis, rightly insists Oholibamah must be Canaanite, like Adah. See D.Z. Hoffmann, *Sefer Bereshit*, vol. 2, tr. A. Wasserteil (Bnei Brak: 1971) pp. 540-42.
- 8 Ramban to Genesis 36:3.
- 9 Perhaps for this reason, Rashbam preferred to consider Oholibamah to have been Horite, not Canaanite. See note 7.
- 10 It stands in contrast to 27:1-45 ("J" with perhaps some contribution from "E"), the "deception" of Isaac by Rebekah and Jacob, which makes no mention of Esau's wives.
- 11 E. Speiser, *The Anchor Bible: Genesis*, 3rd ed. (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1982) pp. xxiv-xxvi, 279, 281-82. But cf. G. Wenham, *Genesis 16-50* (Dallas: World Biblical Commentary, 1994) pp. 203-04, 335-36.
- 12 Cf. Hoffmann, p. 542.
- 13 See, F. Brown, et al., *The New Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew and English Lexicon*, s.v., II. {halah}, p.318; L. Koehler & W. Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, Vol. 1, s.v., I halah, p. 317; Y. Keil, *Sefer Divrei ha-Yamim*, Vol. 2 (Jerusalem: Da'at Mikra, 1986), II. Chronicles 11:18, s.v., mahalat, p.646.
- 14 See above n.3. Cf. Midrash on Psalms 53:1; 88:1.
- Although the root *mhl* [mahal] [to renounce, forgive] is first attested in mishnaic Hebrew, there is reason to believe that it existed during biblical times also.
- 15 Cf. Exodus. 31:6-7.
- 16 See Job 28:8.
- 17 The name changes also served to neutralize the wives' negative pedigrees and so obviated the need to send them away. Contra Rashi to Genesis. 28:9.
- 18 *Yemim* is a hapax legomenon. There is considerable debate among the commentators regarding its meaning. It is rendered, inter alia, "water," "hot springs," and "geyser."
- 19 Cf. Genesis 26:19, 32; Hoffmann, pp. 540-41 (attributed to Hengstenberg).
- 20 Compare Genesis 36:20 with 36:24.
- 21 Cf. Hoffmann, pp. 540-541.
- 22 See *havva*, Ben Yehuda, *Dictionary*, vol 2, 1460; *hivvi*, *Encyclopedia Mikra'it*, vol. 3, col. 45. The Hivites have not been attested as a national entity in any extra-biblical source.
- 23 See e.g. S.D. Luzzato ("Shadal") to Genesis 36:20 (citing Jerome's commentary to Obadiah: "Throughout the southern region of the Edomites, there are small cave dwellings"). Obadiah 3

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- refers to the Edomites as *you who dwell in the clefts of the rock*. Cf. *hori*, *Encyclopedia Mikra'it*, vol. 3, cols. 57-63; Speiser, *Genesis*, pp. 282-83.
- 24 Cf. Hoffmann, p. 540.
 - 25 See e.g., Amos 1:11; Sifre, Numbers 69.
 - 26 See e.g., Genesis Rabbah 65:16.
 - 27 See note 3.

ERRATUM

In the article "Baruch Ben-Neriah" (July-September 1997 issue), several important lines were dropped out of the text in the process of printing:

Page 156, paragraph beginning "If these or similar phrases . . ." should read:

If these or similar phrases were read to the assemblage in the Temple courtyard, no wonder the princes *turned in fear to one another*. The vision of Judah's future was chilling. And for the present moment, they must tell the King that Baruch and Jeremiah had presented this vision to his subjects with flagrant intent of undermining confidence in his judgment, and had the *hutzpah* to do it in the Temple, that was royal property. They understood the temperament of their master when they hastily warned Baruch: *Go, hide thee, thou and Jeremiah, and let no man know where you are* (v. 19). Baruch was not present at the next scene, so it must have been reported to him by one of the participants.

LARGE NUMBERS IN THE HEBREW BIBLE

J. W. WENHAM

It is notorious that the Hebrew Bible in many places records numbers which seem impossibly large. But how was it that these colossal figures ever came to be used? No-one in his senses would, for instance, invent the story of a bus crash in which all 16,000 passengers were killed. The more absurd the figures the less likely it is that they were invented. Absurdity suggests the likelihood that someone has been trying to transmit records faithfully, in spite of the fact that they do not seem to make sense. Failure to recognize this point has tended to make scholars cavalier in their dismissal of phenomena which are crying out for explanation.

Furthermore, Hebrew Bible study has long been bedeviled by an unsatisfactory methodology. Critical orthodoxy at the end of the last century established a most complex system of documentary analysis, which dates much of the literature many centuries after the events it purports to record. Subsequent study has shown that within the putative documents there is material which must be dated far earlier than the dates originally assigned to these documents.

The resulting picture of the literary history of the Hebrew Bible is too complicated and confused to be regarded any longer as a satisfactory starting-point for study. It seems far sounder to take each narrative as it stands, and only to invoke scribal or editorial mishandling when all other attempts to make sense of the narrative have failed. Only so will the temptation be avoided of cutting knots which with patience might be untied.

THE STATE OF THE TEXT

I have always believed that the Hebrew Bible text has on the whole been marvelously preserved and that merely conjectural emendation is so precarious as to be usually of little value. Furthermore, an apparently corrupt and unintelligible text (as for instance in Hosea) will often prove to be perfectly

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sound and intelligible with growing knowledge. The refusal, however, even to attempt emendation in the face of some intractable difficulty can become a stupid fetish, since the existence of considerable variations between manuscripts and between versions provides inescapable evidence of textual change. It seems to me to be demonstrable that numbers have for various reasons been peculiarly susceptible to corruption, and that we have therefore a duty to explore the possibility of corruption in those cases where the numbers seem to be inconsistent with one another or with other elements in a narrative.

In the case of the Hebrew Bible we have, fortunately, not been left to conjecture on this matter, because there are many parallel passages in which numbers are to be found, and in some of these the numbers do not agree with one another. Seeing that there is a tendency for divergent parallel passages to become assimilated to one another, the likelihood of textual corruption in passages which have no parallels is at least as great as in those that have. And even in the parallel passages themselves there may have been corruption before the second of the two narratives was written.

TYPES OF TEXTUAL CORRUPTION

Study of the numbers in parallel passages and in texts where there are variant readings shows the following types of textual corruption.

1. Extra zeroes can be added to a number.¹

There are three noteworthy examples:

(a) II Samuel 10:18 reads *700 chariots*, where I Chronicles 19:18 reads 7,000.

(b) I Kings 4:26 reads *40,000 stalls* where II Chronicles 9:25 reads 4,000.

(c) II Samuel 15:7 has *forty* years for Absalom to work up his conspiracy.

The Syriac and Arabic translations, the Lucianic version of the Septuagint and Josephus have *four* years which is clearly to be preferred.

Confusion between units and tens could easily result from abbreviations which omit the feminine singular and masculine plural terminations. .

2. A digit can drop out.

II Kings 24:8, *Jehoiachin was 18 years old when he began to reign*, is probably to be preferred to II Chronicles 36:9, where he is said to have been 8.

3. A numeral can drop out.

I Samuel 13:1 reads *Saul was year old*. "Thirty years old," read by some Septuagint manuscripts, is probably correct.

4. Sometimes the corresponding numerals seem to have no particular relation to one another.

For instance, we have 800 and 300 in parallel passages (II Sam. 23:8 and I Chr. 11:11). There are variant readings "30" and "50" for Numbers 26:7 in the Septuagint.

5. Sometimes the noun to which a numeral is attached may be changed.

(a) II Samuel 10:18 speaks of *40,000 horsemen* and I Chronicles 19:18 of *40,000 footmen*.

(b) Sometimes the change is to the obvious detriment of the sense: II Samuel 10:6 speaks of *20,000 footmen* and *12,000 men*, which in I Chronicles 19:7 becomes *32,000 chariots*.

(c) In II Samuel 8:4 and I Chronicles 18:4 there is some multiple corruption. The former reads *1,700 horsemen* and the latter *1,000 chariots*, *7,000 horsemen*.

6. A variant reading may suggest the insertion of a gloss into the text.

I Samuel 6:19 speaks of the smiting of *70 men*, *50,000 men* at Beth-shemesh. Josephus supports three manuscripts in omitting "50,000 men." It has been suggested that the error arose at a time when Hebrew letters were being used for numerals and that 'ayin [y=70] was mistaken for nun [n=50]. At one stage of the history of Hebrew writing these letters were similar, and it seems possible that both readings were current and that 50,000 was a marginal gloss incorporated into the text.

Though there is no direct evidence for a pre-Maccabean use of letters for numerals, G. R. Driver has demonstrated that its origin was earlier. He explains *Saul...reigned two years* (I Sam. 13:1) as a misreading of \beth (20) as \aleph (2).¹²

7. A digit may be increased or decreased by one unit.

A study of the differences between the great census lists of returning captives in Ezra 2 and Nehemiah 7 is fascinating. Confining our attention only to the Hebrew text (although the Septuagint and Vulgate add further interesting

material) we find that 23 out of the total of 142 digits show variants.

In well over half of these cases, one digit differs from the corresponding digit in the other text by one. (That is to say, for example, the digit 2 is much more likely to become 1 or 3 than any other number.)

This (and certain other phenomena in the list) is perfectly explained by H. L. Allrick,³ who refers to the fact that in ancient Aramaic documents vertical strokes are used for units and horizontal strokes for tens. The vertical digit strokes were generally grouped in threes. For the hundreds, a stylized *mem* was used, plus vertical strokes to indicate how many hundred. For the thousands, an abbreviation of the word was used, together with strokes to indicate how many thousand.

"As for the Hebrews themselves," Allrick says, "there is no doubt they too employed the same principles of numerical notation."⁴ It is easy to see how such a system, whether through defects of writing or of the material used or through scribal carelessness, would lead to the misreading of a number, usually making it one too big or one too small. According to Allrick, something of this system is traceable back probably to the eighth century BCE.

Incidentally, in these lists, the names seem to show far less variation than the numbers. This is very remarkable since the names of undistinguished persons and places are themselves peculiarly liable to corruption.

8. The sum of the individual items in a list does not agree with the stated total.

(a) The total number of Levites is given in Numbers 3:39 as 22,000, whereas the sum of the individual items is 22,300. As the figure of 22,000 is used in the subsequent calculations of redemption money, a corruption of one of the individual items may be inferred. Perhaps Kohath (v. 28) should be 8,300 instead of 8,600, reading *וְיָהִוָּה* instead of *וְיָהִוָּה*. There is abundant evidence that the initial letter of a number (in this case *v*) was at times used as an abbreviation.

(b) Ezra 2:64 reads: *The whole congregation was 42,360*, whereas the sum of the individual items is 29,818. (Nehemiah's list gives 31,089.) In Ezra 1:8-11, the individual numbers of vessels add up to 2,499, whereas the total is given as 5,400. These of course may be due not to corruption, but to selective copying of a (partly illegible?) original.

We have thus a good deal of solid evidence of textual corruption in those passages to which we can apply an objective test, and therefore some indication

of the kinds of corruption that are likely to exist in those passages to which we can apply no direct check.

THE MEANING OF אלף

Most of the very large numbers with which we are concerned are in the thousands, and attempted explanations have been much occupied with the possible meanings of the root אלף, usually pointed אלף.

1. Possible numerical meanings of אלף.

- (a) It has a strict numerical meaning of "thousand" (1,000).
- (b) It is used poetically of large numbers. When the Ark rested, Moses used to say: '*Return, O Lord, unto the ten thousands of the thousands of Israel*' (Num. 10:36; cf. Deut. 33:17).
- (c) It is used presumably as a round figure -- the first three large numbers in Judges are all 10,000. This may well be merely a way of saying "a very great number."
- (d) It has been suggested that large numbers are sometimes deliberately used hyperbolically.⁵ In any case, enemy battle casualties can seldom be intended to be anything but rough estimates.

2. Possible collective meanings of אלף for a social unit.

- (a) "family" (e.g., Jud. 6:15)
- (b) "clan" (e.g., Zech. 9:7, 12:5,6)⁶
- (c) F. Petrie suggested that it sometimes meant a "tent group."⁷
- (d) G.E. Mendenhall regards the social unit as being also the basic military unit of the folk army, which went to war by its אלף.⁸

3. Possible individual meanings of אלף.

When pointed אלף, it is used for the "chieftains" of Edom and in the modern Israeli army for "colonel." *Scriptio plena* is not always used and the primitive text was unpointed, so that it is worth investigating whether אלף may not sometimes be אלף.

There may at one time have been a range of such personal uses which have since become submerged in the pointed text. We certainly have it used for:

- (a) The Edomite "chieftain" (Gen. 36:15-43; Ex. 15:15; I Chr. 1:51-54).
- (b) We probably have it (as I shall try to argue) for the chiliarch or captain over a thousand troops, or the commander of a folk אלף of indeterminate size.
- (c) It is probably used for the professional, fully-armed soldier; possibly for officers generally.⁹

Let us see whether the abandonment of the traditional translation of אלף in favor of a different rendering will throw light on some of the notoriously difficult passages.

THE ATTACKS ON GIBEAH AND AI

I have noticed in a number of contexts where thousands of soldiers are mentioned that they appear to be people of special distinction. In Judges 20:2, *the chiefs of all the people ... presented themselves in the assembly of the people... 400,000 footmen that drew sword*. If these were in fact 400 אלף (fully-armed soldiers), the subsequent narrative begins to make sense.

They encamp against the Benjaminites in the small town of Gibeah. The Benjaminite forces (v. 15) consist of 26 (armed with swords) together with 700 chosen men (armed only with slings). At the first attack (v. 21), the Israelites lose 22 אלף. The next day (v. 25) they lose a further 18. (It is again stressed that all of the slain were armed with swords.) The third day (vv. 29, 34), an ambush is set, consisting of or led by 10 אלף. (Could 10,000 men take up their positions in an ambush undetected?)

The losses begin again (v. 31) *as at other times* -- the scale of which is now quite clear. About 30 Israelites (not apparently sword-armed) אלף are killed. The ambush then assaults the city (v. 35). Twenty-five Benjaminites and 100 others are killed. Eighteen of the אלף were killed in the first stage of the pursuit, five were later *cut down in the highways* and two more at Gidom. All 25 were *men that drew the sword, men of valor*. Six hundred men (slingers presumably) took refuge in the rock of Rimmon for four months.

The attack on Ai has similar features. We have on the one hand the dispatch of 3,000 men, followed by the great disaster of the loss of 36 men (Josh. 7:5). Then comes the setting of the ambush (8:2ff.). Thirty thousand mighty men of valor set out by night on the long march up the rough track and take up their position not very far from the city -- *undetected*. If we interpret this figure as

30, we have 30 picked troops for an ambush, which seems to correspond satisfactorily with what was reckoned to be the disastrous loss of 36 men on the first assault.

DAVID'S FEAST

David's feast in Hebron in I Chronicles 12 appears to be attended by enormous numbers, not of ordinary men but of distinguished leaders: *captains of the thousands* (v. 20), *all mighty men of valor* (v. 21), *captains in the host* (v. 21), *bands that were ready armed to the war* (v. 23), *that bare shield and spear* (v. 24). (It was not many years previously that the people had been almost without weapons: *There was neither sword nor spear found in the hand of any of the people . . . but with Saul and with Jonathan* [I Sam. 13:22; cf. Jud. 5:8]).

The expression *that bare shield and spear . . . armed to the war* in I Chronicles 12:24 seems to be synonymous with mighty men of valor for the war in verse 25. *They are famous throughout the house of their fathers' houses* (v. 30), *heads* (v. 32), *such as went forth to battle, except in war with all instruments of war* (v. 33, cf vv. 36-38).

With certain significant exceptions the numbers are colossal: Judah 6,800, Simeon 7,100, Zebulun 50,000, Reuben, Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh 120,000. But in the middle of these we have Issachar, whose cooperativeness is specially mentioned, of which it is said *the heads of them were 200* (vv. 32, 40). In all, the men total 340,800.

All the individual tribal totals are given either in round thousands or in round hundreds. The immediate context seems to give the clue to what has happened. In I Chronicles 12:14 it says: *These of the sons of Gad, captains of the host: he that was least was equal to [RSV: over] an hundred, and the greatest to [RSV: over] a thousand.*

Then in the first verse of the next chapter it says: *David consulted with the captains of thousands and of hundreds, and with every leader* (13:1). It would seem that these are totals composed of a number of captains of thousands and a number of captains of hundreds. By metonymy, or by abbreviation, "thousand" has been used for "captain of a thousand" and "hundred" for "captain of a hundred."

"Thousand" and "hundred" have been treated as numerals and the two figures added together. When these figures are unscrambled we get a total of roughly 2,000 *famous men, heads, captains*, which seems eminently reasonable.

NOTES

1. It is, of course, anachronistic to speak of zero in a text which uses words rather than a numerical notation. But this is a convenient way of describing this type of variant, which (as we shall see) may itself be evidence of the use of a different notation at some stage in the transmission of the text prior to the Massoretic standardization.
2. G.R. Driver, "Abbreviations in the Massoretic Text," *Textus*, 1 (1960) pp. 126ff.; 4 (1964) p. 83.
3. *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, 136 (1954) pp. 21 ff.
4. Cf. A.R. Millard, *Tyndale House Bulletin* 11 (1962) pp. 6-7, for evidence of Hebrew numerical signs.
5. E.g., H. L. Ellison, *New Bible Commentary*, I.V.F., (London:1953) p. 340.
6. R. de Vaux, *Ancient Israel* (London:Darton, Longman and Todd, 1961) pp. 2,6.
7. *Palestine and Israel*, (London:1934) p. 43.
8. *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 77 (1958) pp. 52ff.
9. נ, the first letter of the alphabet (and the first letter of פָּנָן) was used in post-biblical times as a symbol both for "one" and for "one thousand." As there is indirect evidence of this usage (and of the use of the first letter of a word as an abbreviation) in much earlier times; there is here a further rich field for possible confusion.

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DARSHANUT

We encourage readers to contribute to this Darshanut Corner

Based on the Hebrew root *darash*, "to explicate" and "to expound," *Darshanut* will represent the expository, homiletic and sermonic interpretation of the Bible. Its origins are as old as the most ancient aggadic and midrashic teachings and as new as the sermon or *dvar Torah* delivered on last *Shabbat*. Its intent was and remains the challenge to relate the Bible to the problems, issues and goals of daily living. We invite our readers to contribute to *Darshanut*. Your submission should be biblically based, brief, not more than 750 words, and as relevant and current as you would like to make it. Send your article to The Jewish Bible Quarterly, POB 29002, Jerusalem 93801, Israel.

THE UNIVERSAL MESSAGE OF DEATH

HAYIM GRANOT

The theme of Psalm 49, traditionally recited in the house of mourners, can be summarized as the leveling effect of death. The psalm is addressed to all of mankind. Verses 2 and 3 read:

Hear this all ye people; Give ear, all ye inhabitants of the earth.

Both low and high, Rich and poor alike.

The original Hebrew for verse 3 is: *Gam benei adam, Gam benei ish.* How is one to understand this repetition? Is it simple poetic parallelism or is there a more profound message? As the English translator suggests, many see in *adam* ordinary folk and in *ish*, prominent or distinguished individuals. Such a meaning

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is related to the Hebrew *ishim* [prominent personalities] and *ishiut* [personality].

Some traditional commentators, such as Rashi, try to relate the meaning to specific persons referred to in other contexts as *ish*. Few of these make sense in the overall context of the chapter's theme.

I should like to suggest another meaning: Who in the Bible is referred to as *benei ish*? Jacob's sons standing before their unrecognized brother, Joseph, refer to themselves as *Benei ish ehad* (Genesis, 42:11). This would then render our verse: Both gentiles (the sons of Adam), and Jews (sons of Jacob).

To confirm the justification of this rendition one needs but look in the translation of this verse in Targum Yonatan: *Uf benai adam kadmana* [first man], *Uf benai Jacob!* The Targum's connection to Jacob would be incomprehensible without the above cited verse from Genesis.

Finally, note that the last phrase of the verse is usually rendered as above, but that the Targum transmutes the meaning from rich in the ordinary sense to "rich in merit" rendering it innocent and guilty alike.

So we may conclude that the chapter dealing with the universality of death, the equalizer, is addressed to both the righteous and the sinners of all nations.

34th INTERNATIONAL BIBLE CONTEST FOR YOUTH

JOSHUA J. ADLER

Fifty-two young people -- 42 boys and 10 girls -- took part in this year's Annual Bible Contest, that was on the theme of One Hundred Years of Zionism. Four were Israeli students, and the rest came from 26 countries of the Diaspora, including for the first time Poland, Greece, Germany and Kenya. Israel Bak, who represents the Education Department of WZO on the Hidon Committee, is primarily responsible for bringing in contestants from the four corners of the earth. Kudos also go to Mr. Yosef Shaar who over the years has been responsible for composing the questions for the Diaspora contestants.

The International Bible contest is held in two parts; one for Israelis and the other for entrants from abroad. The highest scorers in preliminary competitions are then invited to the culminating International Bible Contest held in the Jerusalem Theater on Independence Day (4 finalists from Israel and 12 from the Diaspora).

The qualifying quiz for the 48 Diaspora students, held on May 7 in Shaarei Tikvah, was won by 15-year-old Moshe Stavsky of Teaneck, New Jersey. This is the third year in a row that students from Teaneck finished in either first or second place. Moshe was followed by Yaakov Yaffeh (United States), Daliah Rotetshtain (Canada), Peninah Spelovitz (United States) and Zvi Mostovitz (Belgium).

The main contest on Independence Day was broadcast on both radio and television. As most often happens, the Israeli youngsters were the highest scorers. This time there were two top winners: a *hatan* and a *kallah*, both from the Negev region -- Aviv Fortal from Netivot and Orit Bernard from Beersheba. (For the past few years, Netivot and the Rosh HaAyin area have been chief producers of Tanakh champions from Israel.) Following the four top Israeli scorers was Moshe Stavsky and a few points behind him was Yaakov Yaffeh. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu asked the closing question and presented the awards to the new International Bible champions.

All contest participants come to Israel for two weeks during which they are taken on various trips to acquaint them with the country. They are also taken to meet all of the top Israeli leaders, including the President, Prime Minister,

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Speaker of the Knesset and Chief Rabbis. All contestants are wined and dined and presented with a variety of mementos, even while engaged in last minute cramming for the contest.

Regrettably, there are still schools in the Diaspora which are not doing enough to encourage their students to try out for local Bible contests as the first step toward this grand opportunity of participating in the annual Bible contest in Israel. Coming here, becoming acquainted with the feel and the geography of the country, meeting with its leaders and making friends with other young Jews from around the world is an unforgettable experience for any youngster. It is something which should be supported by every Jewish educational institution throughout the world.

For further information, get in touch with the WZO office nearest you, or call the WZO Department of Education in Jerusalem (tel. +972-2 6759385, fax: +972-2-675-9230).

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In addition there is a section called **Atlas** which offers historical and other information as background material to the various texts and many other educational features.

The Jewish Bible Association website <http://www.jewishbible.org> will be linked to this site. We recommend **Navigating the Bible** to our readers.

עשיה תורתך קבע

THE TRIENNIAL BIBLE READING CALENDAR

DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY OF
CHAIM ABRAMOWITZ

November 1997

December 1997

| | | | | | |
|----|----|---------------------|----|----|-----------------------|
| 2 | S | Exodus 11:1-12:28 | 1 | M | Leviticus 8:1-9:7 |
| 3 | M | Exodus 12:29-13:1 | 2 | T | Leviticus 9:8-10:20 |
| 4 | T | Exodus 13:2-14:14 | 3 | W | Leviticus 11:1-47 |
| 5 | W | Exodus 14:15-16:3 | 4 | Th | Leviticus 12:1-13:28 |
| 6 | Th | Exodus 16:4-27 | 5 | F | Leviticus 13:29-59 |
| 7 | F | Exodus 16:28-17:16 | 7 | S | Leviticus 14:1-32 |
| 9 | S | Exodus 18:1-19:5 | 8 | M | Leviticus 14:33-57 |
| 10 | M | Exodus 19:6-20:23 | 9 | T | Leviticus 15:1-24 |
| 11 | T | Exodus 21:1-22:23 | 10 | W | Leviticus 15:25-16:34 |
| 12 | W | Exodus 22:24-24:18 | 11 | Th | Leviticus 17:1-16 |
| 13 | Th | Exodus 25:1-40 | 12 | F | Leviticus 18:1-30 |
| 14 | F | Exodus 26:1-30 | 14 | S | Leviticus 19:1-22 |
| 16 | S | Exodus 26:31-27:19 | 15 | M | Leviticus 19:23-20:27 |
| 17 | M | Exodus 27:20-28:43 | 16 | T | Leviticus 21:1-22:16 |
| 18 | T | Exodus 29:1-46 | 17 | W | Leviticus 22:17-23:14 |
| 19 | W | Exodus 30:1-38 | 18 | Th | Leviticus 23:15-25:13 |
| 20 | Th | Exodus 31:1-32:14 | 19 | F | Leviticus 25:14-34 |
| 21 | F | Exodus 32:15-34:26 | 21 | S | Leviticus 25:35-26:2 |
| 23 | S | Exodus 34:27-36:38 | 22 | M | Leviticus 26:3-46 |
| 24 | M | Exodus 37:1-38:20 | 23 | T | Leviticus 27:1-34 |
| 25 | T | Exodus 38:21-39:32 | 24 | W | Numbers 1:1-54 |
| 26 | W | Exodus 39:33-40:38 | 25 | Th | Numbers 2:1-34 |
| 27 | Th | Leviticus 1:1-3:17 | 26 | F | Numbers 3:1-4:16 |
| 28 | F | Leviticus 4:1-6:11 | 28 | S | Numbers 4:17-5:10 |
| 30 | S | Leviticus 6:12-7:35 | 29 | M | Numbers 5:11-6:21 |
| | | | 30 | T | Numbers 6:22-7:47 |
| | | | 31 | W | Numbers 7:48-89 |

January 1998

February 1998

| | | | | | |
|----|----|---------------------|----|----|-------------------------|
| 1 | Th | Numbers 8:1-9:23 | 1 | S | Deuteronomy 2:2-30 |
| 2 | F | Numbers 10:1-11:15 | 2 | M | Deuteronomy 2:31-3:22 |
| 4 | S | Numbers 11:16-22 | 4 | W | Deuteronomy 3:23-4:40 |
| 5 | M | Numbers 11:23-12:16 | 5 | Th | Deuteronomy 4:41-6:3 |
| 6 | T | Numbers 13:1-14:10 | 6 | F | Deuteronomy 6:4-7:11 |
| 7 | W | Numbers 14:11-45 | 8 | S | Deuteronomy 7:12-8:20 |
| 8 | Th | Numbers 15:1-41 | 9 | M | Deuteronomy 9:1-29 |
| 9 | F | Numbers 16:1-17:15 | 10 | T | Deuteronomy 10:1-11:9 |
| 11 | S | Numbers 17:16-18:24 | 11 | W | Deuteronomy 11:10-12:19 |
| 12 | M | Numbers 18:25-20:13 | 12 | Th | Deuteronomy 12:20-13:1 |
| 13 | T | Numbers 20:14-22:1 | 13 | F | Deuteronomy 13:2-13:9 |
| 14 | W | Numbers 22:2-23:9 | 15 | S | Deuteronomy 14:1-15:6 |
| 15 | Th | Numbers 23:10-24:25 | 16 | M | Deuteronomy 15:7-16:17 |
| 16 | F | Numbers 25:1-9 | 17 | T | Deuteronomy 16:18-17:13 |
| 18 | S | Numbers 25:10-26:51 | 18 | W | Deuteronomy 17:14-20:9 |
| 19 | M | Numbers 26:52-27:14 | 19 | Th | Deuteronomy 20:10-22:5 |
| 20 | T | Numbers 27:15-28:25 | 20 | F | Deuteronomy 22:6-23:9 |
| 21 | W | Numbers 28:26-30:1 | 22 | S | Deuteronomy 23:10-21 |
| 22 | Th | Numbers 30:2-17 | 23 | M | Deuteronomy 23:22-24:18 |
| 23 | F | Numbers 31:1-24 | 24 | T | Deuteronomy 24:19-25:19 |
| 25 | S | Numbers 31:25-54 | 25 | W | Deuteronomy 26:1-27:26 |
| 26 | M | Numbers 32:1-42 | 26 | Th | Deuteronomy 28:1-29:8 |
| 27 | T | Numbers 33:1-56 | 27 | F | Deuteronomy 29:9-30:10 |
| 28 | W | Numbers 34:1-35:8 | 29 | S | Deuteronomy 30:11-31:12 |
| 29 | Th | Numbers 35:9-36:13 | | | Deuteronomy 31:13-30 |
| 30 | F | Deuteronomy 1:1-2:1 | | | |