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# בראשית ת GENESIS

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## INTRODUCTION

The *Book of Genesis*, meaning *Origin* (the first of the five books of the Torah), covers the time from the Creation to the beginning of the Israelite sojourn in Egypt. The Hebrew name, בראשית, means simply, “*In the beginning*,” and is the first word of the Bible.

There are significant differences between the three major text sources: the *Masoretic Text*, the Greek *Septuagint* (*LXX*) and the *Samaritan Pentateuch*, most notably in the chronology of the early (pre-Flood) patriarchs. The *LXX* adds 100 years (compared to the *MT*) to the ages of each of the patriarchs from Adam through Noah at the time of the birth of their primary descendants (but maintains their overall life-span); thus, according to the *LXX*, the Flood was 700 years later than its date according to the *MT*. These *MT/LXX* differences are noted in the footnotes but a thorough discussion of their origins is beyond the scope of this collection.

Textual evidence of the *Book of Genesis* from the *Qumran Scrolls* is, unfortunately, fragmentary; though the 19 scrolls, collectively, represent much of the book’s text, they differ widely in their dates, styles and languages (some are in the paleo-Hebrew script, others are more ‘commentaries’ than accurate copies of the canonical text).

## AUTHORSHIP AND DATES

The composition, authorship, and date of origin of the Torah (Pentateuch) have become the subjects of much debate between (and among) scholars and religious leaders. There are, essentially, two vastly different (and seemingly irreconcilable) opinions.

Since at least the early Christian era, the traditional, Jewish/Christian view is that the entire work was written by Moses, having been dictated to him by God during the Israelites’ 40-year sojourn in the desert, and neither Jesus nor his apostles question this (Jn 1:45, 5:45–47, Rm 10:5). Indeed, it is an article of faith for Rabbinic Jews that the current, ‘received text’ of the Torah is letter-perfect to that originally given/written.

However, many (if not most) biblical scholars today accept (to varying extents) the so-called, ‘Documentary Hypothesis’, first proposed in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. According to this theory, the Pentateuch is an amalgam of four documents, issuing from different places and times (but all much later than Moses). The first two documents are the Yahwistic Source (J) and the Elohist Source (E); the former uses the Divine Name, ‘Yahweh’ and was supposedly written in Judah in the 10<sup>th</sup> Century BCE; the latter uses ‘Elohim’ and originates in Israel, a little later. After the fall of the Northern Kingdom, these two documents were combined into what is generally now known as the Old Epic Tradition (JE). After the reign of Josiah, the Deuteronomic Source (D) was added and, after the Exile, the Priestly Code (P) was further added, to give the work form and sinew. Though we do not, in this project, necessarily subscribe to this documentary hypothesis, we nevertheless colour the English text according to the source assigned by those scholars who do so: the [OLD EPIC](#) (JE) sections are in blue text, the [DEUTERONOMIC](#) (D) in brown and the [PRIESTLY CODE](#) (P) in purple.

## בראשית פרק א

א בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ:  
ב וְהָאָרֶץ הִיְתָה תֵהוֹ וּבְהוּ וַחֲשָׁךְ עַל־פְּנֵי תְהוֹם  
וְרוּחַ אֱלֹהִים מְרַחֶפֶת עַל־פְּנֵי הַמַּיִם: ג וַיֹּאמֶר  
אֱלֹהִים יְהי אֹר וַיְהי־אֹר: ד וַיֹּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת־  
הָאֹר כִּי־טוֹב וַיַּבְדֵּל אֱלֹהִים בֵּין הָאֹר וּבֵין הַחֹשֶׁךְ:  
ה וַיִּקְרָא אֱלֹהִים | לָאֹר יוֹם וְלַחֹשֶׁךְ קִרְא לַיְלָה  
וַיְהי־עֶרֶב וַיְהי־בֹקֶר יוֹם אֶחָד: {פ}

ו וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים יְהי רָקִיעַ בְּתוֹךְ הַמַּיִם וַיְהי מַבְדִּיל  
בֵּין מַיִם לַמַּיִם: ז וַיַּעַשׂ אֱלֹהִים אֶת־הַרְקִיעַ וַיַּבְדֵּל  
בֵּין הַמַּיִם אֲשֶׁר לְמַתַּחַת לַרְקִיעַ וּבֵין הַמַּיִם אֲשֶׁר

## GENESIS 1

<sup>1</sup> In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. <sup>2</sup> Now the earth was a formless void, and there was darkness over the deep, and a divine wind hovered over the waters. <sup>3</sup> God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. <sup>4</sup> And God saw that the light was good, and God divided the light from the darkness. <sup>5</sup> God called the light 'Day', and the darkness he called 'Night'; and there was evening and there was morning: one day.

<sup>6</sup> And God said, "Let there be a vault in the waters to divide the waters in two." <sup>7</sup> And God made the vault, and it divided the waters above the vault from the waters under the vault; and so it was <sup>8</sup> And God called

### GENESIS 1

- <sup>1</sup> The name here used for God (אֱלֹהִים) is a plural form of a common noun (gods); when it refers to the one true God, the singular verb is normally used, as here. It is a plural of majesty; the name stresses God's sovereignty and incomparability – he is the 'God of gods'. Note that the very first letter of the Book (and of the Bible) is extra large in almost all MSS (and here); there are around 11 such 'large letters' in the Hebrew Bible, the exact number varying between MSS.
- <sup>2</sup> 'Formless void' comes from תֵהוֹ and וּבְהוּ – 'trackless waste' and 'emptiness'.
- <sup>3</sup> The prefixed verb form with the *vav* consecutive introduces the narrative sequence: ten times in this chapter, the decree of God in creation is so expressed; these ten decrees anticipate the Decalogue (Ex 20:2–17).
- <sup>4</sup> Light was one of God's creations; darkness, being negative, was not. The creation of light comes first, since the succession of days and nights is to be the frame in which the work of creation takes place. Since the Jewish day began with sunset, the order is 'evening' then 'morning'.
- <sup>5</sup> Seven times in this chapter, naming or blessing follows an act of creation; a point is being made beyond the obvious idea of naming; in the Bible, the act of naming can be an indication of sovereignty (cf. 2K 23:34). In this verse, God is sovereign even over the darkness.
- <sup>6</sup> The 'vault' was a solid dome holding the upper waters in check (Ex 20:4, Ps 148:4); the waters of the Flood came down through holes in it (7:11).
- <sup>7</sup> The NJB, following the LXX, moves the phrase, 'and so it was' to the end of v. 6; here, we follow the MT (and NRSV); cf. vv. 9 & 11.
- <sup>8</sup> The word here translated as 'Heaven' can also mean 'the sky'.

מֵעַל לָרָקִיעַ וַיְהִי־בֹקֶר: <sup>ח</sup> וַיִּקְרָא אֱלֹהִים לָרָקִיעַ  
שָׁמַיִם וַיְהִי־עֶרֶב וַיְהִי־בֹקֶר יוֹם שֵׁנִי: {פ}

<sup>ט</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים יִקְוּ הַמַּיִם מִתַּחַת הַשָּׁמַיִם אֶל־  
מָקוֹם אֶחָד וְתִרְאָה הִיבָשָׁה וַיְהִי־כֵן: <sup>י</sup> וַיִּקְרָא  
אֱלֹהִים לַיַּבֵּשָׁה אֶרֶץ וּלְמִקְוֵה הַמַּיִם קָרָא יַמִּים  
וַיִּרְא אֱלֹהִים כִּי־טוֹב: <sup>יא</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים תִּדְשָׂא  
הָאָרֶץ דָּשָׂא עֵשֶׂב מִזֵּרִיעַ זֶרַע עֵץ פֶּרִי  
לְמִינֹו אֲשֶׁר זֶרְעוּ־בֹו עַל־הָאָרֶץ וַיְהִי־כֵן: <sup>יב</sup> וַתּוֹצֵא  
הָאָרֶץ דָּשָׂא עֵשֶׂב מִזֵּרִיעַ זֶרַע לְמִינֵהוּ וָעֵץ עֵשֶׂה־  
פֶּרִי אֲשֶׁר זֶרְעוּ־בֹו לְמִינֵהוּ וַיִּרְא אֱלֹהִים כִּי־טוֹב:  
<sup>יג</sup> וַיְהִי־עֶרֶב וַיְהִי־בֹקֶר יוֹם שְׁלִישִׁי: {פ}

<sup>יד</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים יְהִי מֵאֲרָת בִּרְקִיעַ הַשָּׁמַיִם  
לְהַבְדִּיל בֵּין הַיּוֹם וּבֵין הַלַּיְלָה וְהָיוּ לְאֹתוֹת  
וּלְמוֹעֲדִים וְלַיָּמִים וּשְׁנָיִם: <sup>טו</sup> וְהָיוּ לְמֵאוֹרוֹת בִּרְקִיעַ  
הַשָּׁמַיִם לְהָאִיר עַל־הָאָרֶץ וַיְהִי־כֵן: <sup>טז</sup> וַיַּעַשׂ

the vault 'Heaven'; and there was evening and there was morning: the second day.

<sup>9</sup> And God said, "Let the waters under heaven come together into a single place, and let dry land appear;" and so it was. <sup>10</sup> God called the dry land 'Earth', and the gathered waters 'Seas', and God saw that it was good. <sup>11</sup> God said, "Let the earth produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants, fruit trees bearing fruit with their seed inside, on the earth;" and so it was. <sup>12</sup> The earth produced vegetation: plants bearing seed in their several kinds, and trees bearing fruit with seed inside in their several kinds. And God saw that it was good; <sup>13</sup> and there was evening and there was morning: the third day.

<sup>14</sup> And God said, "Let there be lights in the vault of the heaven, to separate the day from the night, and let them be signs and indicators for the festivals, and for the days and for the years. <sup>15</sup> And let them serve as lights in the vault of the heaven, to give light upon the earth;"

<sup>9</sup> Again, the sovereignty of God is revealed: whereas the pagans saw the sea as a force to be reckoned with, God controls the boundaries of the sea; and, in the judgment at the Flood, he will blur the boundaries so that chaos returns.

<sup>10</sup> In place of 'gathered waters', here following NETB, the NJB, following the LXX, has 'mass of waters'; the MT has 'place of waters'.

<sup>11</sup> The NJB, following the Samaritan Pentateuch, adds 'and' before 'fruit trees'.

<sup>12</sup> Vegetation (תִּדְשָׂא – literally, 'grass') was created only indirectly by God, whose creative command empowered the earth to become fertile.

<sup>13</sup> Other options are to translate, 'Evening came, and then morning came' or 'There was night and then there was day, one day'.

<sup>14</sup> Light itself was created before the light-bearers; the order would not seem strange to the ancient Hebrew mind that did not automatically link daylight with the sun (note that dawn and dusk appear to have light without the sun).

<sup>15</sup> In place of 'vault' (throughout this chapter), here following the NJB, the NRSV uses 'dome'; a more traditional rendering is 'firmament'.

אֱלֹהִים אֶת־שְׁנֵי הַמָּאֲרֹת הַגְּדֹלִים אֶת־הַמָּאֹר  
הַגָּדֹל לַמַּמְשָׁלֶת הַיּוֹם וְאֶת־הַמָּאֹר הַקָּטָן  
לַמַּמְשָׁלֶת הַלַּיְלָה וְאֵת הַכּוֹכָבִים: <sup>י</sup> וַיִּתֵּן אֹתָם  
אֱלֹהִים בִּרְקִיעַ הַשָּׁמַיִם לְהָאִיר עַל־הָאָרֶץ:  
<sup>י</sup> וְלַמַּשָּׁל בַּיּוֹם וּבַלַּיְלָה וּלְהַבְדִּיל בֵּין הָאֹר וּבֵין  
הַחֹשֶׁךְ וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹהִים כִּי־טוֹב: <sup>ט</sup> וַיְהִי־עֶרֶב וַיְהִי־  
בֹקֶר יוֹם רְבִיעִי: {פ}

<sup>כ</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים יִשְׂרְצוּ הַמַּיִם שָׂרָץ נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה וְעוֹף  
יְעוֹפֵף עַל־הָאָרֶץ עַל־פְּנֵי רִקְיעַ הַשָּׁמַיִם: <sup>כא</sup> וַיִּבְרָא  
אֱלֹהִים אֶת־הַתַּנִּינִם הַגְּדֹלִים וְאֵת כָּל־נֶפֶשׁ הַחַיָּה |  
הַרְמֵשֶׁת אֲשֶׁר שָׂרְצוּ הַמַּיִם לְמִינֵהֶם וְאֵת כָּל־עוֹף  
כָּנָף לְמִינֵהוּ וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹהִים כִּי־טוֹב: <sup>כב</sup> וַיְבָרֶךְ אֹתָם

and so it was. <sup>16</sup> And God made the two great lights – the greater light to rule over the day and the smaller light to rule over the night – and the stars. <sup>17</sup> And God set them in the vault of the heaven, to give light upon the earth, <sup>18</sup> and to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good; <sup>19</sup> and there was evening and there was morning: the fourth day.

<sup>20</sup> And God said, “Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the vault of the heaven.” <sup>21</sup> And God created the great sea serpents, and every kind of living creature with which the waters teem and every kind of winged creature. And God saw that it was good. <sup>22</sup> And God blessed them, saying, “Be fruitful,

<sup>16</sup> Their names are omitted deliberately: neighbouring peoples worshipped the Sun and the Moon.

<sup>17</sup> In place of ‘set’, here following the *NJB* and *NRSV*, many translations have ‘placed’ or ‘put’, as in the *LXX* (ἐθετο).

<sup>18</sup> In days 1–3, there is a naming by God; in days 5 & 6, there is a blessing by God; but, on day 4, there is neither. This could be a mere stylistic variation, but it could also be a deliberate design to avoid naming the sun and moon (see #16) or promoting them beyond what they are, things that God made to serve in his creation.

<sup>19</sup> Here, the *LXX* translates the *MT* literally (see #13).

<sup>20</sup> God’s command for the waters and earth (v. 24) to ‘bring forth’ (a maternal verb) suggests that the animals are immediately bound to the sea or ground and only indirectly related to God, in contrast to human beings. At the end of this verse, the *NJB* (following the *LXX*) adds ‘and so it was’; here, we follow the *MT*, *NRSV* & *WEBBE*.

<sup>21</sup> For the first time in the narrative proper, the verb בָּרָא (‘create’) appears (other than in the summary statement of v. 1.) The emphasis is that these animals are part of God’s perfect creation. The term הַתַּנִּינִם (‘serpents’) is used for snakes (Ex 7:9), crocodiles (Ezk 29:3), or other powerful animals (Jr 51:34); in Is 27:1, the word is used to describe a mythological sea creature that symbolises God’s enemies.

<sup>22</sup> While the translation ‘blessed’ has been retained here for the sake of simplicity, it would be most helpful to paraphrase it as ‘God endowed them with fruitfulness’ or something similar, for here it refers to God’s giving the animals the capacity to reproduce.

אֱלֹהִים לֵאמֹר פָּרוּ וּרְבוּ וּמִלְאוּ אֶת־הַמַּיִם בַּיַּמִּים  
וְהָעוֹף יִרְבַּ בָּאָרֶץ: כג וַיְהִי־עֶרֶב וַיְהִי־בֹקֶר יוֹם  
חֲמִישִׁי: {פ}

כד וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים תוֹצֵא הָאָרֶץ נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה לְמִינָהּ  
בְּהֵמָה וָרֶמֶשׂ וְחַיֵּת־אָרֶץ לְמִינָהּ וַיְהִי־כֵן: כה וַיַּעַשׂ  
אֱלֹהִים אֶת־חַיֵּית הָאָרֶץ לְמִינָהּ וְאֶת־הַבְּהֵמָה  
לְמִינָהּ וְאֶת כָּל־רֶמֶשׂ הָאֲדָמָה לְמִינָהּ וַיֵּרָא  
אֱלֹהִים כִּי־טוֹב: כו וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים נַעֲשֵׂה אָדָם  
בְּצַלְמֵנוּ כְּדִמוּתֵנוּ וַיְרֵדוּ בְּדִגְתַּי הַיָּם וּבְעוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם  
וּבַבְּהֵמָה וּבְכָל־הָאָרֶץ וּבְכָל־הָרֶמֶשׂ הָרֹמֵשׁ עַל־  
הָאָרֶץ:

כו וַיְבָרֵא אֱלֹהִים | אֶת־הָאָדָם בְּצַלְמוֹ  
בְּצֶלֶם אֱלֹהִים בָּרָא אֹתוֹ  
זָכָר וּנְקֵבָה בָּרָא אֹתָם:

multiply, and fill the waters of the seas; and let the birds multiply upon the earth.” <sup>23</sup> And there was evening and there was morning: the fifth day.

<sup>24</sup> And God said, “Let the earth bring forth every kind of living creature: cattle, and creeping things, and every kind of wild beast of the earth;” and so it was. <sup>25</sup> And God made every kind of wild beast of the earth, every kind of cattle, and every kind of creeping thing. And God saw that it was good. <sup>26</sup> God said, “Let us make man in our own image, in the likeness of ourselves, and let them be masters of the fish of the sea, the birds of heaven, the cattle, all the wild animals and all the creatures that crawl upon the earth.”

<sup>27</sup> God created man in the image of himself,  
in the image of God, he created him,  
male and female he created them.

<sup>23</sup> The instruction God gives to creation is properly a fuller expression of the statement just made (“*God blessed them*”), that he enriched them with the ability to reproduce. It is not saying that these were rational creatures who heard and obeyed the word; rather, it stresses that fruitfulness in the animal world is a result of the divine decree and not of some pagan cultic ritual for fruitfulness.

<sup>24</sup> ‘*Creeping things*’ is a general term for small mammals, reptiles, amphibians, and insects.

<sup>25</sup> There are three groups of land animals described here: the cattle or livestock (mostly domesticated), things that creep or move close to the ground (such as reptiles or rodents), and the wild animals (all animals of the field); the terms are general and without specific details.

<sup>26</sup> Note the plural of majesty: the common name for God in Hebrew is אֱלֹהִים (*Elohim*), a plural form. (But possibly the plural form implies a discussion between God and his heavenly court – the text was thus understood by the LXX version of Ps 8:5.) Man, ‘*Adam*’, is a collective noun; hence the plural in, “*Let them be masters of ...*” ‘*Wild animals*’ here follows the Peshitta (and NRSV & NJB); the MT has ‘*the earth*’ (הָאָרֶץ).

<sup>27</sup> In the last line, the distinction of mankind as ‘*male*’ and ‘*female*’ is another point of separation in God’s creation; there is no possibility that the verse is teaching that humans were first androgynous (having both male and female physical characteristics) and afterward were separated.



כח וַיְבָרֶךְ אֹתָם אֱלֹהִים וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם אֱלֹהִים פְּרוּ  
וּרְבוּ וּמְלֵאוּ אֶת-הָאָרֶץ וּכְבֹּשׁוּהָ וּרְדּוּ בְּדִגְתַּי הַיָּם  
וּבְעוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם וּבְכָל-חַיָּה הָרֹמֶשֶׁת עַל-הָאָרֶץ:  
כט וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים הִנֵּה נֹתְתִי לָכֶם אֶת-כָּל-עֵשֶׂב  
זֶרַע זֶרַע אֲשֶׁר עַל-פְּנֵי כָל-הָאָרֶץ וְאֶת-כָּל-הָעֵץ  
אֲשֶׁר-בּוֹ פְּרִיעֵץ זֶרַע זֶרַע לָכֶם יִהְיֶה לְאֹכְלָה:  
ל וְלִכְלַח-חַיֵּית הָאָרֶץ וְלִכְלַעוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם וְלִכְלֹל רֹמֶשׁ  
עַל-הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר-בּוֹ נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה אֶת-כָּל-יֵרֶק עֵשֶׂב  
לְאֹכְלָה וַיְהִי-כֵן: <sup>לא</sup> וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת-כָּל-אֲשֶׁר  
עָשָׂה וְהִנֵּה-טוֹב מְאֹד וַיְהִי-עֶרֶב וַיְהִי-בֹקֶר יוֹם  
הַשְּׁשִׁי: {פ}

<sup>28</sup> And God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it. Have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over every living animal that moves upon the earth.” <sup>29</sup> And God said, “See, I have given you all the seed-bearing plants that are upon the face of the whole earth, and every tree with seed-bearing fruit; you shall have them for your food. <sup>30</sup> To every wild beast of the earth, every bird of heaven and everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I give all the foliage of plants for food;” and so it was. <sup>31</sup> And God saw all that he had made, and indeed, it was very good; and there was evening and there was morning: the sixth day.

The mention of male and female prepares for the blessing to follow.

<sup>28</sup> Elsewhere, the verb translated ‘subdue’ means ‘to enslave’ (2Ch 28:10, Ne 5:5, Jr 34:11,16), ‘to conquer’, (Nb 32:22,29; Jos 18:1, 2S 8:11, 1Ch 22:18, Zc 9:13 and probably Mi 7:19), and ‘to assault sexually’ (Est 7:8). None of these nuances meets the demands of this context; for, humankind is not viewed as having an adversarial relationship with the world; the general meaning of the verb appears to be ‘to bring under one’s control for one’s advantage’; here, one might paraphrase it as follows: “harness its potential and use its resources for your benefit.” In an ancient Israelite context, this would suggest cultivating its fields, mining its mineral riches, using its trees for construction, and domesticating its animals.

<sup>29</sup> For ‘see’, the MT has הִנֵּה, archaically translated ‘behold’; it is often used to express the dramatic present, the immediacy of an event.

<sup>30</sup> This verse describes a golden age when human beings and beasts were at peace with one another, having plants for their food. 9:3 marks the beginning of a new era. However, there is nothing in the passage that prohibits the man and the woman from eating meat; Gn 9:3 may thus ratify the post Fall practice of eating meat rather than inaugurate the practice, as is often understood.

<sup>31</sup> For ‘indeed’, the MT again uses הִנֵּה for the sake of vividness; it is a particle that goes with the gesture of calling attention to something.

## GENESIS 2

## בראשית פרק ב

- א ויִכְלּוּ הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהָאָרֶץ וְכָל־צְבָאָם: ב ויִכְלּוּ אֱלֹהִים  
בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי מְלַאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה וַיִּשְׁבֹּת בַּיּוֹם  
הַשְּׁבִיעִי מִכָּל־מְלַאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה: ג וַיְבָרֶךְ  
אֱלֹהִים אֶת־יוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי וַיְקַדֵּשׁ אֹתוֹ כִּי בּו שְׁבַת  
מִכָּל־מְלַאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר־בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים לַעֲשׂוֹת: {פ}  
ד אֵלֶּה תּוֹלְדֹת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהָאָרֶץ בְּהִבְרָאָם בַּיּוֹם  
עָשׂוֹת יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים אֶרֶץ וּשְׁמַיִם: ה וְכֹל שִׁיחַ  
הַשָּׂדֶה טֶרֶם יִהְיֶה בָאָרֶץ וְכָל־עֵשֶׂב הַשָּׂדֶה טֶרֶם  
יִצְמַח כִּי לֹא הִמְטִיר יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים עַל־הָאָרֶץ וָאָדָם  
אֵין לַעֲבֹד אֶת־הָאֲדָמָה: ו וְאָדָם יַעֲלֶה מִן־הָאָרֶץ
- 1 Thus, the heavens and the earth were finished, with their entire array.  
2 And, on the seventh day, God completed the work he had been doing.  
He rested on the seventh day after all the work he had been doing. 3 So,  
God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on that day he  
had rested after all of his work of creating.  
4 Such were the origins of heaven and earth as they were created.  
4a At the time when Yahweh God made earth and heaven 5 there was yet  
no wild bush on the earth nor had any plant of the field yet sprung up,  
for Yahweh God had not sent rain on the earth, nor was there any man  
to till the soil. 6 However, a flood was rising from the earth and watering

## GENESIS 2

- 1 Alternative translations for 'heaven and earth' are 'the entire universe' or 'the sky and the dry land'. This phrase is often interpreted as a merism, referring to the entire ordered universe, including the heavens and the earth and everything in them. The 'heavens and the earth' were completed in six days and are characterised by fixed laws (see Jr 33:25). 'Heaven' refers specifically to the sky, created on the second day (1:8), while 'earth' refers specifically to the dry land, created on the third day (see v. 10). Both are distinct from the sea/seas (1:10 and Ex 20:11).
- 2 The term וַיִּשְׁבֹּת ('he rested') literally means 'he ceased'; this is not a rest from exhaustion but the cessation of the work of creation.
- 3 The Sabbath (שַׁבָּת) is of divine institution: on that day God himself rested. But the word 'Shabbat' is not used here, since the Sabbath was not imposed until the giving of the Law on Sinai, when it then became a sign of the Covenant (Ex 31:12-17).
- 4 This verse is numbered 4<sup>a</sup> in the NJB. The word here translated as 'origins' (תּוֹלְדֹת) means primarily 'lineage', hence the history of an ancestor and his line (see 6:9, 25:19, 37:2). Note that the ה in בְּהִבְרָאָם is written as a 'small letter' here and in most Hebrew MSS.
- 4a This verse is numbered 4<sup>b</sup> in the NJB.
- 5 The term שִׁיחַ ('wild bush') probably refers to the wild, uncultivated plants (cf. 21:15, Job 30:4, 7); whereas עֵשֶׂב ('plant of the field') refers to cultivated grains. The two causal clauses explain the first two disjunctive clauses: there was no uncultivated, general growth because there was no rain, and there were no grains because there was no man to cultivate the soil.
- 6 The NRSV has 'stream' in place of 'flood'; this is likely the moisture that welled up from the subterranean ocean, the source of fertility (49:25).

וַיִּצְרֵם יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים  
 אֶת-הָאָדָם עֹפָר מִן-הָאֲדָמָה וַיִּפַּח בְּאַפָּיו נִשְׁמַת  
 חַיִּים וַיְהִי הָאָדָם לְנֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה: <sup>ח</sup> וַיֹּטֶעַ יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים  
 גֶּן-בְּעֵדֶן מִקְדָּם וַיִּשֶׁם שֵׁם אֶת-הָאָדָם אֲשֶׁר יָצָר:  
<sup>ט</sup> וַיִּצְמַח יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים מִן-הָאֲדָמָה כָּל-עֵץ נֹחַמַד  
 לְמַרְאֶה וטוֹב לְמֹאכָל וְעֵץ הַחַיִּים בְּתוֹךְ הָגֶן וְעֵץ  
 הַדַּעַת טוֹב ורָע: <sup>י</sup> וְנָהָר יֵצֵא מֵעֵדֶן לְהַשְׁקוֹת אֶת-  
 הָגֶן וּמִשָּׁם יִפְרָד וְהָיָה לְאַרְבַּעַת רְאשִׁים: <sup>יא</sup> שֵׁם  
 הָאֶחָד פִּישׁוֹן הוּא הַסֹּבֵב אֶת כָּל-אֶרֶץ הַחֲוִילָה  
 אֲשֶׁר-שָׁם הַזָּהָב: <sup>יב</sup> וְהָיָה הָאֶרֶץ הַהוּא טוֹב שָׁם  
 הַבָּדֶלֶת וְאֶבֶן הַשֹּׁהַם: <sup>יג</sup> וְשֵׁם-הַנָּהָר הַשְּׁנִי גִיחוֹן  
 הוּא הַסּוֹבֵב אֶת כָּל-אֶרֶץ כּוּשׁ: <sup>יד</sup> וְשֵׁם הַנָּהָר  
 הַשְּׁלִישִׁי חֲדָקִל הוּא הַהֹלֵךְ קִדְמַת אֲשׁוּר וְהַנָּהָר  
 הָרְבִיעִי הוּא פָּרָת: <sup>טו</sup> וַיִּקַּח יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים אֶת-

all the surface of the soil. <sup>7</sup> Yahweh God fashioned man of soil from the ground. Then he breathed into his nostrils a breath of life, and thus man became a living being. <sup>8</sup> Yahweh God planted a garden in Eden, which is in the east, and there he put the man he had fashioned. <sup>9</sup> Yahweh God caused to spring up from the soil every kind of tree, enticing to look at and good to eat, with the tree of life and the tree of knowledge of good and evil in the middle of the garden. <sup>10</sup> A river flowed from Eden to water the garden, and from there, it divided to make four streams. <sup>11</sup> The name of the first is Pishon, and this encircles the whole land of Havilah where there is gold. <sup>12</sup> The gold of this land is pure; bdellium and onyx stone are there. <sup>13</sup> The name of the second river is Gihon, and this encircles the whole land of Cush. <sup>14</sup> The name of the third river is Tigris, and this flows to the east of Ashur; and the fourth river is the Euphrates. <sup>15</sup> Yahweh God took the man and settled him in the Garden in Eden to

<sup>7</sup> Man, 'Adam' (הָאָדָם) comes from the ground, 'adamah' (הָאֲדָמָה): see 3:19. This collective noun was to become the proper name for the first human being, Adam (4:25 & 5:1-3). Human nature is not a duality of body and soul; rather, God's breath animates the dust and it becomes a 'living being' (Hebrew 'nephesh' – נֶפֶשׁ) or psychophysical self (see Ps 104:29, Job 34:14-15).

<sup>8</sup> 'Garden' is translated as 'paradise' (παράδεισος) in the LXX and this translation has become traditional. 'Eden' is a geographical name but the place cannot be identified; it may originally have meant 'open wastes' but Israelites understood it to mean 'enjoyment', deriving it from דָּן.

<sup>9</sup> The 'tree of life' is a symbol of immortality, see #3:22. On the 'tree of knowledge of good and evil', see #17.

<sup>10</sup> The Tigris and the Euphrates are well known, and their source is in the mountains of Armenia, but Pishon and Gihon are unknown.

<sup>11</sup> For 'Pishon' (פִּישׁוֹן) and 'Havilah' (חֲוִילָה), the LXX reads Φισων and Ευιλατ, respectively.

<sup>12</sup> In place of 'bdellium' (an aromatic resin), some translators have 'pearls' and, for 'onyx', some have 'lapis lazuli'.

<sup>13</sup> For 'Gihon' (גִּיחוֹן) and 'Cush' (כוּשׁ), the LXX reads Γηων and Αἰθιοπίας (Ethiopia), respectively (see #10).

<sup>14</sup> In place of 'Asshur' (אֲשׁוּר), here following the MT and NJB, the LXX has 'the Assyrians' (Ἀσσυρίων) and the NRSV has 'Assyria'.

<sup>15</sup> Traditionally translated as 'Garden of Eden', the context makes it clear that the 'Garden' was 'in Eden', thus making it a genitive of location.



הָאָדָם וַיִּנְחָהוּ בְּגֶן-עֵדֶן לְעַבְדָּהּ וּלְשִׁמְרָהּ: טז וַיֹּצֵא  
 יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים עַל-הָאָדָם לֵאמֹר מִכָּל עֵץ-הַגֶּן אָכַל  
 תֹּאכֹל: יז וּמִעֵץ הַדַּעַת טוֹב וְרָע לֹא תֹאכַל מִמֶּנּוּ  
 כִּי בְיוֹם אָכַלְךָ מִמֶּנּוּ מוֹת תָּמוּת: יח וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה  
 אֱלֹהִים לֹא-טוֹב הִיּוֹת הָאָדָם לְבַדּוֹ אֶעֱשֶׂה-לּוֹ עֶזֶר  
 כְּנֶגְדּוֹ: יט וַיִּצֶר יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים מִן-הָאֲדָמָה כָּל-חַיַּת  
 הַשָּׂדֶה וְאֵת כָּל-עוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם וַיָּבֵא אֶל-הָאָדָם  
 לִרְאוֹת מֶה-יִקְרָא-לּוֹ וְכָל־אֲשֶׁר יִקְרָא-לּוֹ הָאָדָם  
 נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה הוּא שְׁמוֹ: כ וַיִּקְרָא הָאָדָם שְׁמוֹת לְכָל-  
 הַבְּהֵמָה וּלְעוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם וּלְכָל חַיַּת הַשָּׂדֶה וּלְאָדָם  
 לֹא-מָצָא עֶזֶר כְּנֶגְדּוֹ: כא וַיִּפֹּל יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים  
 תְּרִדְמָה עַל-הָאָדָם וַיִּישָׁן וַיִּקַּח אֶחָת מִצִּלְעֹתָיו

cultivate and take care of it. <sup>16</sup> Then Yahweh God gave the man this admonition, “You may eat freely of all the trees in the garden; <sup>17</sup> but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you are not to eat, for on the day you eat of it you shall surely die. <sup>18</sup> And Yahweh God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone. I will make him a helpmate, who matches him.” <sup>19</sup> Therefore, out of the ground, Yahweh God fashioned all the wild beasts and all the birds of heaven. And these he brought to the man, to see what he would call them; each was to bear the name the man would give it. <sup>20</sup> And the man gave names to all the cattle, to all the birds of heaven and to all the wild beasts; but no helpmate suitable for Adam was found for him. <sup>21</sup> Therefore, Yahweh God made caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man; and, while he slept, he took one of the

<sup>16</sup> This is the first time in the Bible that the verb צוה (*‘to command’*) appears; whatever the man had to do in the garden, the focus of the narrative is on keeping God’s commandments. God created humans with the capacity to obey him and then tested them with commands.

<sup>17</sup> The *‘knowledge of good and evil’* is a privilege that God reserves to himself and which man, by sinning, will usurp (cf. 3:5, 22). The first sin was an attack on God’s sovereignty, a sin of pride.

<sup>18</sup> In v. 16, *‘man’* means man and woman, as in 3:24; and 3:1–3, which is the continuation of 2:17, assumes that the command has been given to the man and woman. The expression כְּנֶגְדּוֹ (*‘who matches him’*) literally means *‘according to the opposite of him’*. Translations such as *‘suitable for him’* (NIV) and *‘comparable to him’* (WEBBE) capture the idea; however, those that render the phrase simply *‘as a partner’* (NRSV), while not totally inaccurate, do not reflect the nuance of correspondence and/or suitability. The NJB does not translate the phrase, ending with *‘helpmate’*.

<sup>19</sup> To harmonise the order of events with the chronology of Ch. 1, some translate *‘fashioned’* (וַיִּצֶר) as a past perfect (*‘had fashioned’*, cf. NIV).

<sup>20</sup> Here, the word אָדָם first appears *without* the article, suggesting the name *‘Adam’* rather than *‘the man’*. Translations differ as to where they make the change from *‘man’* to *‘Adam’* (the NIV has *‘Adam’* here, while NJB and NRSV continue to use *‘the man’*).

<sup>21</sup> *‘Flesh’* (בָּשָׂר) in its primary sense is the *‘meat’* or muscle of animals and man (41:2–4), whence the whole body, and hence members of a family group (2:23, 29:14 & 37:27), hence humanity at large or the aggregate of living beings (*‘all flesh’*, 6:17–19); but often, the *‘flesh’* stands for what is frail and perishable in humanity; and gradually a certain antithesis between these two aspects of human beings becomes apparent.

וַיִּסְגֹּר בָּשָׂר תַּחְתָּנָה: כב וַיִּבֶן יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים | אֶת־  
הַצֶּלַע אֲשֶׁר־לָקַח מִן־הָאָדָם לְאִשָּׁה וַיְבִאָהּ אֶל־  
הָאָדָם:

man's ribs and enclosed it in flesh. <sup>22</sup> And Yahweh God fashioned the  
rib, which he had taken from the man, into a woman; and brought her  
to the man.

כג וַיֹּאמֶר הָאָדָם:

<sup>23</sup> The man exclaimed:

זֹאת הִפַּעַם עָצָם מֵעַצְמִי  
וּבָשָׂר מִבָּשָׂרִי לְזֹאת  
יִקְרָא אִשָּׁה כִּי  
מֵאִישׁ לָקַחָהּ זֹאת:

“This one at last is bone of my bones,  
and flesh from my flesh!  
She is to be called Woman,  
because she was taken from Man.”

כד עַל־כֵּן יַעֲזֹב־אִישׁ אֶת־אָבִיו וְאֶת־אִמּוֹ וְדָבַק  
בְּאִשְׁתּוֹ וְהָיוּ לְבָשָׂר אֶחָד: כה וַיְהִיו שְׁנֵיהֶם עֲרוּמִים  
הָאָדָם וְאִשְׁתּוֹ וְלֹא יִתְבַּשְׁשׁוּ:

<sup>24</sup> This is why a man leaves his father and mother and joins himself to  
his wife, and they become one flesh. <sup>25</sup> Now both of them were naked,  
the man and his wife, but they felt no shame in front of each other.

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<sup>22</sup> This verse is a figurative expression of the close relationship between man and woman, v. 23, which brings them together in marriage, v. 24.  
<sup>23</sup> Note the play on the Hebrew words אִשָּׁה (*woman*) and אִישׁ (*man*). The MT is very precise here, literally stating: “of this one it will be said, ‘woman’.” This is not necessarily saying that the man named his wife – that comes after the Fall (3:20).  
<sup>24</sup> Sex is not regarded as evil but as a God-given impulse that draws a man and a woman together so that ‘they become one flesh’.  
<sup>25</sup> The two were unashamedly naked, a symbol of their guiltless relation to God and to one another.

## GENESIS 3

## בראשית פרק ג

וְהַנָּחֹשׁ הָיָה עָרוּם מִכָּל חַיַּת הַשָּׂדֶה אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל-הָאִשָּׁה אֵף כִּי-אָמַר אֱלֹהִים לֹא תֹאכְלוּ מִכָּל עֵץ הַגָּן: <sup>ב</sup> וְתֹאמַר הָאִשָּׁה אֶל-הַנָּחֹשׁ מִפְּרִי עֵץ-הַגָּן נֹאכָל: <sup>ג</sup> וּמִפְּרִי הָעֵץ אֲשֶׁר בְּתוֹד-הַגָּן אָמַר אֱלֹהִים לֹא תֹאכְלוּ מִמֶּנּוּ וְלֹא תִגְעוּ בוֹ פֶּן-תָּמּוּתוּן: <sup>ד</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר הַנָּחֹשׁ אֶל-הָאִשָּׁה לֹא-מוֹת תָּמּוּתוּן: <sup>ה</sup> כִּי יָדַע אֱלֹהִים כִּי בְיוֹם אֲכַלְכֶּם מִמֶּנּוּ וּנְפַקְחוּ עֵינֵיכֶם וְהִיִּיתֶם כְּאֱלֹהִים

<sup>1</sup> Now the snake was craftier than any wild beast Yahweh God had made. He asked the woman, "Did God say you shall not eat from any tree in the garden?" <sup>2</sup> The woman answered the snake; "We may eat the fruit of the trees in the garden; <sup>3</sup> but of the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden God said, "You must not eat it, nor touch it, or you will die."" <sup>4</sup> And the snake said to the woman, "No, you will not die, <sup>5</sup> for God knows that when you eat it your eyes will open and you will be like gods, knowing good and evil." <sup>6</sup> The woman saw that the tree was

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- <sup>1</sup> In place of 'craftier', here following the NRSV, the NJB has 'more subtle'; the word עָרוּם basically means 'clever', which then polarises into the nuances of 'cunning' (negative sense, cf. Job 5:12, 15:5) and 'prudent' (positive sense, cf. Pr 12:16,23, 13:16, 14:8,15,18, 22:3, 27:12), the negative nuance applying here, where the snake attempts to talk the woman into disobeying God by using half-truths and lies.
- <sup>2</sup> There is a notable change between what God had said and what the woman says: God said, "you may eat freely" (the imperfect with the infinitive absolute, 2:16) but the woman omits the emphasis, saying simply "we may eat;" she does not reflect the sense of eating to her heart's content.
- <sup>3</sup> In the phrase, 'nor touch it', the woman adds to God's prohibition, making it say more than God expressed: it is as though she wanted to set a law for herself by means of this exaggeration.
- <sup>4</sup> The serpent's reply is equal to saying: "not – you will surely die" (לֹא-מוֹת תָּמּוּתוּן); the construction makes this emphatic because normally the negative particle precedes the finite verb. The serpent is a liar, denying that there is a penalty for sin (cf. Jn 8:44).
- <sup>5</sup> It is unclear how the plural participle translated 'knowing' is functioning. On the one hand, יָדַעַי could be taken as a substantial participle functioning as a predicative adjective in the sentence; in this case one might translate: "You will be, like God himself, knowing good and evil." Alternatively, it could be taken as an attributive adjective modifying אֱלֹהִים, which in this case has to be taken as a numerical plural referring to 'gods' or 'divine beings', for if the one true God were the intended referent, a singular form of the participle would appear as a modifier. One could thus translate, "You will be like divine beings who know good and evil." The statistical evidence strongly suggests that the participle is attributive, modifying 'divine beings' (cf. Ps 31:12, Is 1:30, 13:14, 16:2, 29:5, 58:11, Jr 14:9, 20:9, 23:9, 31:12, 48:41, 49:22, Ho 7:11, Am 4:11).
- <sup>6</sup> The word here translated as 'pleasing' (תִּאֲוָה) actually means 'desirable', being a synonym of the later term נִחְמָד; the verbal roots for both of these forms appear in Dt 5:21 in the prohibition against coveting.

יָדְעִי טוֹב וְרָע: וַתֵּרָא הָאִשָּׁה כִּי טוֹב הָעֵץ לְמַאֲכָל  
וְכִי תָאוֹה־הוּא לְעֵינֶיךָ וַנַּחֲמֵד הָעֵץ לְהַשְׁכִּיל  
וַתִּקַּח מִפְּרִיָּו וַתֹּאכַל וַתֵּתֶן גַּם לְאִישָׁהּ עִמָּה  
וַיֹּאכַל: וַתִּפְקַחְנָה עֵינֵי שְׁנֵיהֶם וַיֵּדְעוּ כִּי עִרְמָם  
הֵם וַיִּתְּפְרוּ עָלֵה תְאֵנָה וַיַּעֲשׂוּ לָהֶם חֲגֹרֹת:

וַיִּשְׁמְעוּ אֶת־קוֹל יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים מְתַהַלֵּךְ בַּגֶּן לְרוּחַ  
הַיּוֹם וַיִּתְּחַבֵּא הָאָדָם וְאִשְׁתּוֹ מִפְּנֵי יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים  
בַּתְּוֶדֶךְ עֵץ הַגֶּן: וַיִּקְרָא יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים אֶל־הָאָדָם  
וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ אַיֶּכָּה: וַיֹּאמֶר אֶת־קִלְךָ שָׁמַעְתִּי בַּגֶּן  
וְאִירָא כִּי־עֵרָם אָנֹכִי וְאֶחָבָא: וַיֹּאמֶר מִי הִגִּיד  
לְךָ כִּי עֵרָם אָתָּה הִמְנוּ־הָעֵץ אֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתִיךָ לֵבִלְתִּי  
אֲכָל־מִמֶּנּוּ אֲכָלְתָּ: וַיֹּאמֶר הָאָדָם הָאִשָּׁה אֲשֶׁר

good to eat and pleasing to the eye, and that it was desirable for the knowledge that it could give; so, she took of its fruit and ate, and she gave some also to her husband with her, and he ate. <sup>7</sup> Then the eyes of both of them were opened and they realised that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together to make themselves loincloths.

<sup>8</sup> The man and his wife heard the sound of Yahweh God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from Yahweh God among the trees of the garden. <sup>9</sup> However, Yahweh God called to the man, "Where are you?" he asked. <sup>10</sup> "I heard the sound of you in the garden," he replied; "I was afraid because I was naked, so I hid." <sup>11</sup> "Who told you that you were naked?" he asked, "Have you been eating of the tree I forbade you to eat?" <sup>12</sup> The man replied, "It was the woman whom you

<sup>7</sup> This verse recounts the arousal of lust, as the first manifestation of disorder introduced into the harmony of creation.

<sup>8</sup> Guilt and anxiety prompt an attempt to hide from God (Ps 139:7–12), who is here portrayed as strolling in the garden to enjoy the cool evening breeze. The literal translation for the expression 'cool of the day' is 'breezy time', as the word רֶוַח can mean 'wind', hence the translation here, following the NJB, NRSV ('evening breeze') and most others. Some offer a different interpretation, relating יוֹם (usually understood as 'day') to an Accadian cognate (*umu*) meaning 'storm', and translating 'in the wind of the storm'; in this case, God is not pictured as taking an evening stroll, but as coming in a powerful wind-storm to confront the man and woman with their rebellion, and the phrase קוֹל יְהוָה ('sound of Yahweh God') may refer to the thunderous roar that typically accompanies his appearances to do battle or give judgement (cf. Ps 29).

<sup>9</sup> God's question is probably rhetorical (a figure of speech called erotesis) rather than literal, because it was spoken to the man, who answers it with an explanation of *why* he was hiding rather than a location; the question has more the force of "Why are you hiding?"

<sup>10</sup> If one sees a storm theophany here (see #8), then one could interpret 'the sound of you' as 'your powerful voice'; otherwise, it would be the sound of God walking about in the garden.

<sup>11</sup> The first question here is also rhetorical (see #9), asking more than it appears to; the second question reveals God's real concern.

<sup>12</sup> The Hebrew construction in the man's response uses an independent nominative absolute (formerly known as a *casus pendens*): 'the woman' is the independent nominative absolute, picked up by the formal subject (the pronoun 'she' written with the verb 'gave'). The point of the

נִתְּתָה עִמָּדִי הוּא נִתְּנָה־לִּי מִן־הָעֵץ וְאָכַל: י' וַיֹּאמֶר  
יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים לְאִשָּׁה מַה־זֹּאת עָשִׂית וַתֹּאמֶר  
הָאִשָּׁה הִנֵּחַשׁ הָשִׂיאָנִי וְאָכַל:

י' וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים | אֶל־הַנָּחָשׁ  
כִּי עָשִׂית זֹאת אֲרוּר אַתָּה מִכָּל־הַבְּהֵמָה  
וּמִכָּל חַיַּת הַשָּׂדֶה  
עַל־גֻּחְנֶךָ תֵּלֵךְ  
וְעָפָר תֹּאכַל כָּל־יְמֵי חַיֶּיךָ:  
וַאֲיִבָּה | אִשִּׁית טו  
בֵּינֶךָ וּבֵין הָאִשָּׁה  
וּבֵין זֶרְעֶךָ וּבֵין זֶרְעָהּ  
הוּא יִשׁוּפֶךָ רֹאשׁ  
וְאַתָּה תִּשׁוּפֶנּוּ עֲקֵב: {ס}

put with me; she gave me the fruit, and I ate it.” <sup>13</sup> Then Yahweh God asked the woman, “What is this you have done?” The woman replied, “The serpent tempted me and I ate.”

<sup>14</sup> Then Yahweh God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this, “Be accursed beyond all cattle, all wild beasts. “You shall crawl on your belly and eat dust every day of your life.

<sup>15</sup> “I will make you enemies of each other: you and the woman, your offspring and her offspring. It will crush your head and you will strike its heel.”

construction is to throw the emphasis on ‘the woman’, but what makes this so striking is that a relative clause has been inserted to explain what is meant by the reference to the woman: ‘whom you put with me’; ultimately, the man is blaming God for giving him the woman who (from the man’s viewpoint) caused him to sin.

<sup>13</sup> The Hebrew word order puts ‘the serpent’ (the subject) before the verb (‘tempted’) here, giving it prominence.

<sup>14</sup> Note that God asks no question of the serpent, and does not call for confession, as he did to the man and the woman; there is only the announcement of the curse. The order in this section is chiasitic: the man is questioned, the woman is questioned, the serpent is cursed, sentence is passed on the woman, sentence is passed on the man.

<sup>15</sup> The MT, by proclaiming that the offspring of the snake is henceforth at enmity with the woman’s descendants, opposes the human race to the devil and his ‘seed’, his posterity, and hints at ultimate victory; it is the first glimmer of salvation. The LXX has a masculine pronoun (*αὐτός σου τηρήσει* – ‘he will strike’), thus ascribing the victory not to the woman’s descendants in general but to one of her sons in particular, and thus providing the basis for the messianic interpretation given by many Roman Catholics; the Vg has a feminine pronoun (‘she will crush’ – *ipsa conteret*) and the pronoun has been taken to refer to Mary.



טז אֶל-הָאִשָּׁה אָמַר

הָרְבָה אֲרֵבָה עֲצֻבוֹנָךְ וְהִרְנָךְ בְּעֶצֶב  
תִּלְדִּי בָנִים וְאֶל-אִישְׁךָ  
תִּשְׁוֹקֶתָךְ וְהוּא  
יִמְשָׁל-בְּךָ: {ס}

יז וְלָאָדָם אָמַר כִּי-שָׁמַעְתָּ לְקוֹל אִשְׁתְּךָ וְתָאֵכַל מִן-  
הָעֵץ אֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתִיךָ לֵאמֹר לֹא תֵאֵכַל מִמֶּנּוּ

אֲרוּרָה הָאֲדָמָה בְּעֻבוֹרְךָ  
בְּעֶצֶבוֹן תֵּאֲכָלֶנָּה  
כָּל יְמֵי חַיֶּיךָ:

יח וְקוֹץ וְדִרְדָּר תַּצְמִיחַ לָךְ  
וְאָכַלְתָּ אֶת-עֵשֶׂב הַשָּׂדֶה:

יט בְּזַעַת אִפְּיֶךָ  
תֵּאֵכַל לֶחֶם

16 To the woman he said:

“I will multiply your pains in childbearing;  
you shall give birth to your children in pain.  
Your yearning shall be for your husband,  
yet he will lord it over you.

17 To Adam he said, “Because you have listened to the voice of your wife  
and have eaten from the tree of which I had forbidden you to eat,

“Accursed be the soil because of you.  
With suffering you shall get your food from it  
every day of your life.

18 It shall yield you brambles and thistles,  
and you shall eat wild plants.

19 With sweat on your brow,  
you shall eat your bread,

<sup>16</sup> The punishment is appropriate to the specific functions of each: the woman suffers as mother and wife, the man as breadwinner. The text does not imply that, without sin, woman would have given birth painlessly or that man would not have had to work with sweat on his brow, any more than that, before sin, snakes had feet (v. 14). Sin upsets the order willed by God: woman, instead of being man's associate and equal (2:18–24), becomes his seductress, while he for his part reduces her to the role of child-bearer; man, instead of being God's gardener in Eden, has to struggle against a new hostile environment. However, the greatest punishment is the loss of intimacy with God (v. 23). These penalties are hereditary; the doctrine of hereditary guilt is not clearly stated until Paul draws his comparison between the solidarity of all in the Saviour Christ and the solidarity of all in sinful Adam, Rm. 5.

<sup>17</sup> In place of 'Adam', the NJB, NRSV and many others have 'the man', but there is no article in the word וְלָאָדָם, so we here interpret it as a name.

<sup>18</sup> The term עֵשֶׂב ('plants'), when referring to human food, excludes grass (eaten by cattle) and woody plants like vines.

<sup>19</sup> The theme of mankind's mortality is critical here in view of the temptation to be like God: man will labour painfully to provide food, obviously not enjoying the bounty that creation promised; in place of the abundance of the orchard's fruit trees, thorns and thistles will grow. Man will

עַד שׁוּבוֹךְ אֶל־הָאֲדָמָה  
כִּי מִמֶּנָּה לָקַחְתָּ  
כִּי־עֹפָר אַתָּה  
וְאֶל־עֹפָר תִּשׁוּב:

until you return to the soil,  
for out of it you were taken.  
For dust you are  
and to dust you shall return.”

כ וַיִּקְרָא הָאָדָם שֵׁם אִשְׁתּוֹ חַוָּה כִּי הוּא הִיְתָה אִם  
כִּלְחִי: כֹּא וַיַּעַשׂ יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים לָאָדָם וּלְאִשְׁתּוֹ  
כְּתֻנּוֹת עוֹר וַיִּלְבָּשֵׁם: {פ}  
כב וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים הֵן הָאָדָם הָיָה כְּאֶחָד  
מִמֶּנּוּ לְדַעַת טוֹב וָרָע וְעַתָּה פֶּן־יִשְׁלַח יָדוֹ וְלָקַח  
גַּם מִעֵץ הַחַיִּים וְאָכַל וַחֵי לְעֹלָם: כג וַיִּשְׁלַחְהוּ יְהוָה  
אֱלֹהִים מִגֶּן־עֵדֶן לַעֲבֹד אֶת־הָאֲדָמָה אֲשֶׁר לָקַח

<sup>20</sup> The man named his wife “Eve” because she was the mother of all those who live. <sup>21</sup> Yahweh God made clothes out of skin for the man and his wife, and they put them on.  
<sup>22</sup> Then Yahweh God said, “See, the man has become as one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to stretch his hand out next and pick from the tree of life also, and eat some and live forever.”  
<sup>23</sup> So, Yahweh God expelled him from the Garden of Eden, to till the soil

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have to work the soil so that it will produce the grain to make bread; this will continue until he returns to the soil from which he was taken (recalling the creation in 2:7 with the wordplay on Adam and ground). In spite of the dreams of immortality and divinity, man is but dust, and will return to dust – so much for his pride.

- <sup>20</sup> The name ‘Eve’ (חַוָּה) is here explained as derived from the verb חָיָה (‘live’); the name preserves the archaic form of the verb (חַוָּה for חַיָּה) ‘to live’, with the middle *vav*;
- <sup>21</sup> The text gives no indication of how the clothes were made, or how they came by the skins. Earlier in the narrative, the attempt of the man and the woman to cover their nakedness with leaves expressed their sense of alienation from each other and from God. By giving them more substantial coverings, God indicates this alienation is greater than they realise. This divine action is also ominous; God is preparing them for the more hostile environment in which they will soon be living (v. 23); but, at the same time, there is a positive side to the story in that God makes provision for the man’s and woman’s condition.
- <sup>22</sup> By constituting himself as arbiter of what is good or evil (see #2:17), sinful man has usurped God’s prerogative. The ‘tree of life’ comes from a tradition parallel to that of the ‘tree of knowledge’; man is by nature mortal (v. 19) but aspires to immortality, which he will ultimately be granted. The paradise lost by human guilt is the image of the paradise to be recovered by God’s grace.
- <sup>23</sup> The verb וַיִּשְׁלַחְהוּ (‘expelled him’) is the Piel preterite of שָׁלַח, forming a wordplay with the use of the same verb (in the Qal stem) in v. 22: To prevent the man ‘sending out’ his hand, Yahweh ‘sends him out’.

מִשָּׁם: כִּי וַיִּגְרֹשׁ אֶת־הָאָדָם וַיִּשְׁכֵּן מִקֶּדֶם לְגִן־עֵדֶן
whence he had been taken. <sup>24</sup> He banished the man, and in front of the

אֶת־הַכְּרֻבִּים וְאֵת לֶהֱטֹהֵט הַחֶרֶב הַמִּתְהַפֶּכֶת לִשְׁמֹר
Garden of Eden, he posted the Cherubim, and the flame of a flashing

אֶת־דֶּרֶךְ עֵץ הַחַיִּים: {ס}
sword, to guard the way to the tree of life.

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<sup>24</sup> In place of '*in front of*', here following the *NJB*, *JPS* has '*at the east of*'. The '*cherubim*' (כְּרֻבִּים), guardians of sacred areas (1K 8:6–7), were represented as winged creatures like the Sphinx of Egypt, half human and half lion (Ezk 10, 41:18–19). The '*flame of a flashing sword*' (compare Jr 47:6) parallels Babylonian mythology (see #Ex 25:18); it was placed near the cherubim to warn banished human beings of the impossibility of overstepping their bounds (compare Ezk 28:13–16).

## בראשית פרק ד

## GENESIS 4

א וְהָאָדָם יָדַע אֶת-חַוָּה אִשְׁתּוֹ וַתַּהַר וַתֵּלֶד אֶת-קַיִן וַתֹּאמֶר קָנִיתִי אִישׁ אֶת-יְהוָה: <sup>ב</sup> וַתִּסָּף לֵלֶדֶת אֶת-אָחִיו אֶת-הָבֶל וַיְהִי-הֶבֶל רֹעֶה צֹאן וְקַיִן הָיָה עֹבֵד אֲדָמָה: <sup>ג</sup> וַיְהִי מִקֵּץ יָמִים וַיָּבֵא קַיִן מִפְּרִי הָאֲדָמָה מִנְחָה לַיהוָה: <sup>ד</sup> וְהָבֶל הָבִיא גַם-הוּא מִבְּכֹרוֹת צֹאנוֹ וּמִחֲלֵבֶהֶן וַיִּשַׁע יְהוָה אֶל-הָבֶל וְאֶל-מִנְחָתוֹ: <sup>ה</sup> וְאֶל-קַיִן וְאֶל-מִנְחָתוֹ לֹא שָׁעָה וַיַּחַר לְקַיִן מְאֹד וַיִּפְּלוּ פָנָיו: <sup>ו</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל-קַיִן לָמָּה חָרָה לָךְ

<sup>1</sup> The man knew his wife Eve, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, "I have acquired a man with the help of Yahweh." <sup>2</sup> Next, she bore his brother, Abel. Now Abel was a shepherd of flocks and Cain tilled the soil. <sup>3</sup> Time passed and Cain brought some produce of the soil as an offering for Yahweh, <sup>4</sup> while Abel for his part brought the firstborn of his flock, the fattest of them. Yahweh had regard for Abel and his offering <sup>5</sup> but he did have regard for Cain and his offering, and Cain was very angry and downcast. <sup>6</sup> Yahweh asked Cain, "Why are you angry

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- <sup>1</sup> This verse tells of the delight of the first woman who, though the servant of her husband, now finds herself mother of a male child. By a play on words, the name 'Cain' (קַיִן) is here connected with the verb 'I have acquired' (קָנִיתִי – literally, 'I have created').
- <sup>2</sup> The name Abel (הָבֶל) is not defined here, but the tone is ominous: the word means 'vapour', 'vanity', foreshadowing Abel's untimely death.
- <sup>3</sup> The literal translation of 'time passed' (here following the NJB) is 'at the end of days'; the clause indicates the passing of a set period (the NRSV has 'in the course of time'). The term מִנְחָה ('offering') is a general word for tribute, a gift, or an offering; it is the main word used in Lv 2 for the dedication offering. This type of offering could comprise vegetables: the content of the offering (vegetables, as opposed to animals) was not the critical issue, but rather the attitude of the one offering.
- <sup>4</sup> Two prepositional phrases are used to qualify the kind of sacrifice that Abel brought: 'from the firstborn' and 'the fattest of them'. These also could be interpreted as a hendiadys: 'from the fattest of the firstborn of the flock'. Another option is to understand the 2<sup>nd</sup> phrase as referring to the fat portions of the sheep, giving, "the firstborn of his flock, as well as their fat (portions)," as in the NJB, NRSV and NIV. Here are two types of worshipers – Cain merely discharges a duty at the proper time, while the Abel goes out of his way to please God with the first and the best.
- <sup>5</sup> The theme of the younger being preferred to the elder recurs frequently in Genesis: Isaac/Ishmael (21) Jacob/Esau (25:23, 27), Rachel/Leah (29:15–30), and also the children of these last, and throughout the OT (1S 16:12, 1K 2:15). Such preference demonstrates the freedom of God's choice, his contempt for earthly standards of greatness, and his regard for the lowly. The story also reflects the tension between farmers and semi-nomads, two different ways of life that are symbolised in the two types of offerings. The NT (Heb 11:4) explains the difference between the brothers as one of faith: Abel *by faith* offered a better sacrifice; Cain's offering and his reaction to God's displeasure did not reflect faith.
- <sup>6</sup> The expression 'downcast' is an idiom meaning that inner anger is reflected in Cain's facial expression.

וְלִמָּה נָפְלוּ פָנָיו: <sup>ז</sup> הֲלוֹא אִם־תִּיטִיב שְׂאֵת וְאִם לֹא  
 תִּיטִיב לִפְתַּח חַטָּאת רֹבֵץ וְאֵלֶיךָ תִּשְׁוֹקְתּוּ וְאַתָּה  
 תִּמְשַׁל־בּוֹ: <sup>ח</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר קַיִן אֶל־הֶבֶל אָחִיו וַיְהִי  
 בַּהֲיוֹתָם בַּשָּׂדֶה וַיִּקֶּם קַיִן אֶל־הֶבֶל אָחִיו וַיַּהַרְגֵהוּ:  
<sup>ט</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־קַיִן אֵי הֶבֶל אָחִיךָ וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא  
 יָדַעְתִּי הֲשֹׁמֵר אָחִי אָנֹכִי: <sup>י</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר מָה עָשִׂיתָ קוֹל  
 דְּמֵי אָחִיךָ צֹעֲקִים אֵלַי מִן־הָאֲדָמָה: <sup>יא</sup> וְעַתָּה אָרוּר  
 אַתָּה מִן־הָאֲדָמָה אֲשֶׁר פָּצְתָה אֶת־פִּיהָ לִקְחַת  
 אֶת־דְּמֵי אָחִיךָ מִיָּדְךָ: <sup>יב</sup> כִּי תַעֲבֹד אֶת־הָאֲדָמָה

and downcast? <sup>7</sup> If you are well, ought you not lift up your head? But if you are not well, is not Sin at the door like a crouching beast hungering for you, which you must master?" <sup>8</sup> Cain spoke to his brother Abel; and while they were in the field, Cain set on his brother Abel and killed him. <sup>9</sup> Yahweh asked Cain, "Where is your brother Abel?" He said, "I do not know! Am I my brother's keeper?" <sup>10</sup> Yahweh said, "What have you done? Listen: your brother's blood is crying out to me from the ground. <sup>11</sup> Now be cursed from the ground that has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood at your hands. <sup>12</sup> When you till the land, it shall no

<sup>7</sup> This is an approximate translation of a difficult, probably corrupt, verse, which seems to describe temptation threatening the ill-disposed.

<sup>8</sup> For this verse, the NJB (and NRSV), reads: "Cain said to his brother Abel, 'Let us go out'; and while they were in the open country, Cain set on his brother Abel and killed him." Here, we follow the MT, which lacks Cain's words to Abel: after writing אָחִיו ('his brother'), a scribe's eye may have jumped to the end of the form בַּשָּׂדֶה ('the field') and accidentally omitted the quotation. The longer version is reflected in the Peshitta, Samaritan Pentateuch and the LXX:

καὶ εἶπεν Καὶν πρὸς Ἀβελ τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ Διέλθωμεν εἰς τὸ πεδίον. καὶ ἐγένετο ἐν τῷ εἶναι αὐτοὺς ἐν τῷ πεδίῳ καὶ ἀνέστη Καὶν ἐπὶ Ἀβελ τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ καὶ ἀπέκτεινεν αὐτόν. ("And Cain said to his brother Abel, 'Let us go into the field'; and while they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him.")

<sup>9</sup> Again, Yahweh confronts a guilty sinner with a rhetorical question (cf. 3:9–13), asking for an explanation of what has happened. Cain lies and then responds with a defiant rhetorical question of his own in which he repudiates any responsibility for his brother; but his question is ironic, for he is responsible for his brother's fate, especially if he wanted to kill him.

<sup>10</sup> Blood is sacred to God, for it is the seat of life (Dt 12:23) and cries from the ground for vindication.

<sup>11</sup> In place of 'cursed', the NJB has 'accursed and driven'; as in 3:14, the word אָרוּר, a passive participle from אָרַר, either means 'punished' or 'banished', depending on how one interprets the following preposition. If this is taken as indicating source, then the idea is "cursed are you from (=through the agency of) the ground" (v. 12<sup>a</sup>); but if it is taken as separative, then the idea is "cursed and banished from the ground," then the ground rejects Cain's efforts so that he is banished from the ground and forced to become a fugitive out in the earth (vv. 12<sup>b</sup>, 14).

<sup>12</sup> Two similar sounding synonyms are used here: נָע ('wanderer') and נָגַד ('fugitive'); the juxtaposition of synonyms emphasises a single idea: in translation, one could also serve as the main description and the other as a modifier: 'a wandering fugitive' or 'ceaseless wanderer'.



לֹא־תִסָּף תִּתְּכָחָה לָךְ נֶעַ וְנָד תִּהְיֶה בָאָרֶץ:  
 יג וַיֹּאמֶר קַיִן אֶל־יְהוָה גָּדוֹל עוֹנִי מִנֶּשֶׂא: יד הֵן  
 גִּרַּשְׁתָּ אֹתִי הַיּוֹם מֵעַל פְּנֵי הָאֲדָמָה וּמִפְּנֵי אֶסְתֵּר  
 והִי־יָתִי נֶעַ וְנָד בָּאָרֶץ וְהִיָּה כָל־מֹצְאִי יִהְרָגֵנִי:  
 טו וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ יְהוָה לִכֹּן כָּל־הֹרֵג קַיִן שִׁבְעָתַיִם יִקָּם  
 וַיֵּשֶׂם יְהוָה לְקַיִן אוֹת לְבִלְתִּי הַכּוֹת־אֹתוֹ כָּל־  
 מֹצְאוֹ: טז וַיֵּצֵא קַיִן מִלִּפְנֵי יְהוָה וַיֵּשֶׁב בְּאֶרֶץ־נוֹד  
 קְדֵמַת־עֵדֵן:

יז וַיֵּדַע קַיִן אֶת־אִשְׁתּוֹ וַתֵּהָרֵ וַתֵּלֶד אֶת־חֲנוֹךְ וַיְהִי  
 בִּנְהָ עֵיר וַיִּקְרָא שֵׁם הָעִיר כְּשֵׁם בְּנוֹ חֲנוֹךְ: יח וַיּוֹלֶד  
 לְחֲנוֹךְ אֶת־עֵירָד וְעֵירָד יָלַד אֶת־מְחוּיָאֵל וּמְחוּיָאֵל  
 יָלַד אֶת־מֶתוּשָׁאֵל וּמֶתוּשָׁאֵל יָלַד אֶת־לָמֶךְ:  
 יט וַיִּקַּח־לוֹ לָמֶךְ שְׁתֵּי נָשִׁים שֵׁם הָאֶחָת עֵדָה וְשֵׁם  
 הַשֵּׁנִית צִלָּה:

longer yield to you its fruit; you shall be a wandering fugitive over the earth.” <sup>13</sup> Cain said to Yahweh, “My punishment is more than I can bear. <sup>14</sup> Today you drive me from the soil; I must hide from you and be a wandering fugitive over the earth. Whoever comes across me will kill me!” <sup>15</sup> Yahweh replied, “Not so! Whoever kills Cain will suffer a seven-fold vengeance;” and Yahweh put a mark on Cain, so that no one who came upon him would kill him. <sup>16</sup> Cain left the presence of Yahweh and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden.

<sup>17</sup> Cain lay with his wife, and she conceived and gave birth to Enoch. He became builder of a town, and he gave the town the name of his son Enoch. <sup>18</sup> Enoch had a son, Irad, and Irad fathered Mehujael; Mehujael fathered Methushael, and Methushael fathered Lamech. <sup>19</sup> Lamech married two women: the name of the first was Adah and the name of the second was Zillah.

<sup>13</sup> The primary meaning of the word עוֹנִי (*‘my punishment’*) is ‘my iniquity’ but it can refer to the guilt of, or punishment for sin; a third meaning applies here: Yahweh announces the punishment for Cain’s actions, who complains of the severity; Cain is not portrayed as repenting.

<sup>14</sup> Cain concludes that exile from the farmland is also exile from God’s protective presence, exposing him to blood revenge.

<sup>15</sup> In the NJB, the opening phrase of this verse, here following the NRSV, reads: “Very well! ... If anyone kills Cain ...” The ‘mark of Cain’ is not a brand of shame but a protecting sign: it indicates that Cain is a member of a clan that will exact blood for blood.

<sup>16</sup> The name of this unidentified country recalls the description of Cain as a ‘wanderer’ (*nad*) in the land of ‘Nod’.

<sup>17</sup> The names in this genealogy, varying in form, occur also in the genealogy of Seth between the names of Kenan and Lamech (5:12–28). This list is inappropriately attached to Cain son of Adam for, in it, Cain, the Wanderer, appears as the builder of the first city and ancestor of stockbreeders, musicians, smiths and possibly prostitutes (see #21).

<sup>18</sup> For ‘Enoch’, ‘Irad’, ‘Mehujael’, ‘Methushael’ and ‘Lamech’, the LXX has, respectively, *Ενωχ*, *Γαιδαδ*, *Μαιηλ*, *Μαθουσαλα* and *Λαμεχ*.

<sup>19</sup> For ‘Adah’ and ‘Zillah’, the LXX has *Αδα* and *Σελλα*.

כ וַתֵּלֶד עָדָה אֶת־יָבֵל הוּא הָיָה אֲבִי יֹשְׁבֵי אֹהֶל  
וּמִקְנָה: כא וְשֵׁם אָחִיו יוֹבֵל הוּא הָיָה אֲבִי כָל־תַּפְּשֵׁי  
כְּנֹזַר וְעוֹגָב: כב וְצִלָּה גַם־הִוא יָלְדָה אֶת־תּוֹבֵל קַיִן  
לִטֵּשׁ כָּל־חֹרֶשׁ נְחָשֶׁת וּבְרָזָל וְאַחֹת תּוֹבֵל־קַיִן  
נַעֲמָה: 20 Adah gave birth to Jabel: he was the ancestor of the tent-dwellers and  
owners of livestock. 21 His brother's name was Jubal: he was the ancestor  
of all who play the lyre and the flute. 22 As for Zillah, she gave birth to  
Tubal-Cain: he was the ancestor of all metalworkers, in bronze or iron.  
Tubal-Cain's sister was Naamah.

כג וַיֹּאמֶר לָמֶךְ לְנָשָׁיו  
עָדָה וְצִלָּה שְׁמַעְנָן קוֹלִי  
נָשִׁי לָמֶךְ הָאֲזֹנָה אִמְרָתִי  
כִּי אִישׁ הִרְגָתִי לִפְצָעִי  
וַיֵּלֶד לְחִבְרָתִי:  
כד כִּי שִׁבְעָתַיִם יִקְס־קַיִן  
וְלָמֶךְ שִׁבְעִים וְשִׁבְעָה: 23 Lamech said to his wives:  
“Adah and Zillah, hear my voice,  
wives of Lamech, listen to what I say:  
I killed a man for wounding me  
a boy for striking me.  
24 Sevenfold vengeance is taken for Cain,  
but seventy-sevenfold for Lamech.”

<sup>20</sup> The words ‘owners of’, here following the NJB, are not in the MT.

<sup>21</sup> The three castes: stockbreeders, musicians, and tinkers, are credited with three ancestors whose names are similar and suggest their descendants’ occupations: ‘Jabal’ (יָבֵל, ‘to lead’), ‘Jubal’ (יוֹבֵל, ‘trumpet’) and ‘Tubal’ (תּוֹבֵל, the name of a northern tribe, 10:2, inhabiting a region famous for its deposits of metal). ‘Cain’ means ‘smith’ in other Semitic languages. ‘Naamah’ (pretty or beloved) may be the ancestress of another ‘profession’ that the text forbears to mention.

<sup>22</sup> A more literal translation of ‘metalworkers (in)’, here following the NJB, is ‘forgers (of)’.

<sup>23</sup> This ferocious song, composed in honour of a desert paladin named Lamech, is recorded here as evidence of the increasing ferocity of Cain’s descendants, from murder to measureless blood revenge. The word וַיֵּלֶד (‘a boy’) probably refers here to a young warrior, not a child.

<sup>24</sup> Lamech seems to reason this way: If Cain, a murderer, is to be avenged seven times (v. 15), then how much more one who has been unjustly wronged! Lamech misses the point of God’s merciful treatment of Cain; God was not establishing a principle of justice when he warned he would avenge Cain’s murder. In fact, he was trying to limit the shedding of blood, something Lamech wants to multiply. The use of ‘seventy-seven’, a multiple of ‘seven’, is hyperbolic, emphasising the extreme severity of the vengeance envisioned by Lamech.

<sup>25</sup> <sup>כה</sup> וַיֵּדַע אָדָם עוֹד אֶת־אִשְׁתּוֹ וַתֵּלֶד בֶּן וַתִּקְרָא אֶת־  
שְׁמוֹ שֵׁת כִּי שֵׁת־לִי אֱלֹהִים זָרַע אַחֲרֵי תַחַת הַבֶּל  
כִּי הָרַגוּ קַיִן: <sup>כו</sup> וַלְשֵׁת גַּם־הוּא יָלַד־בֶּן וַיִּקְרָא אֶת־  
שְׁמוֹ אֶנּוֹשׁ אַז הוּחַל לִקְרָא בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה: {ס}

<sup>25</sup> Adam knew his wife and she bore a son whom she named Seth,  
“because God has granted me the offspring,” she said, “in place of Abel,  
since Cain has killed him.” <sup>26</sup> A son was also born to Seth and he named  
him Enosh. It was then that people first invoked the name of Yahweh.

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- <sup>25</sup> Vv. 25–26 form a fragment of another ancient genealogy. The name *Seth* (שֵׁת – pronounced ‘*Shet*’ in Hebrew) probably means something like ‘placed’, ‘appointed’, ‘set’ or ‘granted’, assuming it is actually related to the verb that is used in the sentiment; at any rate, the name and the verb שֵׁת (‘*has granted*’) form a wordplay (paronomasia).
- <sup>26</sup> This tradition traces the worship of Yahweh back to the time of Adam’s grandson, in contrast to Ex 3:14, which puts the revelation of the divine name later, in the time of Moses. In the *LXX* (and *NJB*), the 2<sup>nd</sup> sentence, here following the *MT* (and *NRSV*) is different: οὗτος ἤλπισεν ἐπικαλεῖσθαι τὸ ὄνομα κυρίου τοῦ θεοῦ. (“*This man was the first to invoke the name of Yahweh.*”)

## GENESIS 5

## בראשית פרק ה

אֵלֶּה סֵפֶר תּוֹלְדֹת אָדָם בְּיוֹם בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אָדָם  
בְּדַמּוֹת אֱלֹהִים עָשָׂה אֹתוֹ: בִּזְכָּר וּנְקֵבָה בָּרָא  
וַיְבָרֶךְ אֹתָם וַיִּקְרָא אֶת־שֵׁמָם אָדָם בְּיוֹם הַבְּרָאָה:  
ג וַיְחִי אָדָם שְׁלֹשִׁים וּמֵאָה שָׁנָה וַיּוֹלֶד בְּדַמּוֹתוֹ  
כְּצִלְמוֹ וַיִּקְרָא אֶת־שְׁמוֹ שֵׁת: ד וַיְהִי יָמֵי־אָדָם  
אַחֲרֵי הוֹלִידוֹ אֶת־שֵׁת שְׁמֹנֶה מֵאוֹת שָׁנָה וַיּוֹלֶד  
בָּנִים וּבָנוֹת: ה וַיְהִי כָל־יָמֵי אָדָם אֲשֶׁר־חִי תִשַּׁע  
מֵאוֹת שָׁנָה וּשְׁלֹשִׁים שָׁנָה וַיָּמָת: {ס}

ו וַיְחִי־שֵׁת חֲמֵשׁ שָׁנִים וּמֵאָה שָׁנָה וַיּוֹלֶד אֶת־  
אֶנֶשׁ: ז וַיְחִי־שֵׁת אַחֲרֵי הוֹלִידוֹ אֶת־אֶנֶשׁ שִׁבְעַ  
שָׁנִים וּשְׁמֹנֶה מֵאוֹת שָׁנָה וַיּוֹלֶד בָּנִים וּבָנוֹת:  
ח וַיְהִי כָל־יָמֵי־שֵׁת שְׁתַּיִם עָשָׂרָה שָׁנָה וּתִשַּׁע  
מֵאוֹת שָׁנָה וַיָּמָת: {ס}

<sup>1</sup> This is the roll of Adam's descendants: On the day God created Adam, he made him in the likeness of God. <sup>2</sup> Male and female he created them. He blessed them and gave them the name 'Man' on the day they were created. <sup>3</sup> When Adam was a hundred and thirty years old, he became the father of a son, in his likeness, as his image, and he called him Seth. <sup>4</sup> Adam lived for eight hundred years after the birth of Seth and he became the father of sons and daughters. <sup>5</sup> In all, Adam lived for nine hundred and thirty years; then he died.

<sup>6</sup> When Seth had lived for a hundred and five years, he became the father of Enosh. <sup>7</sup> Seth lived for eight hundred and seven years after he became the father of Enosh, and he became the father of sons and daughters. <sup>8</sup> Thus, all the days of Seth were nine hundred and twelve years; then he died.

## GENESIS 5

In the *Samaritan Pentateuch* and the *LXX*, the numerical data in this section differ considerably from those of the *MT*, followed here; wherever possible, even minor differences in the *LXX* are noted.

<sup>1</sup> In place of the 2<sup>nd</sup> instance of 'Adam', here following the *MT* and *NJB*, the *NRSV* has 'humankind'.

<sup>2</sup> Note that the Hebrew words for 'man' and 'Adam' have the exact same consonants.

<sup>3</sup> The *LXX* has 230 (διακόσια καὶ τριάκοντα) in place of 130 (שְׁלֹשִׁים וּמֵאָה) years, here following the *MT*. This verse shows that likeness to God is a quality of human nature, which the first man passes on to his descendants.

<sup>4</sup> The *LXX* has 700 (ἑπτακόσια) rather than 800 (שְׁמֹנֶה מֵאוֹת) years, here following the *MT*.

<sup>5</sup> Note that the total length of Adam's life (930 years) is the same in both the *MT* and *LXX*.

<sup>6</sup> The *LXX* has 205 (διακόσια καὶ πέντε) in place of 105 years, here following the *MT*.

<sup>7</sup> The *LXX* has 707 (ἑπτακόσια καὶ ἑπτὰ) rather than 807 years, here following the *MT*.

<sup>8</sup> Note that the total length of Seth's life (912 years) is consistent between *MT* and *LXX*.

ט וַיְחִי אֱנוֹשׁ תְּשַׁעִּים שָׁנָה וַיּוֹלֵד אֶת־קִינָן: ׳ וַיְחִי  
אֱנוֹשׁ אַחֲרֵי הוֹלִידוֹ אֶת־קִינָן חֲמֵשׁ עָשָׂרָה שָׁנָה  
וּשְׁמֹנֶה מֵאוֹת שָׁנָה וַיּוֹלֵד בָּנִים וּבָנוֹת: י״ וַיְהִיו כָּל־  
יְמֵי אֱנוֹשׁ חֲמֵשׁ שָׁנִים וּתְשַׁע מֵאוֹת שָׁנָה  
וַיָּמָת: {ס}

<sup>9</sup> When Enosh had lived for ninety years, he became the father of Kenan.

<sup>10</sup> Enosh lived for eight hundred and fifteen years after he became the father of Kenan, and he became the father of sons and daughters.

<sup>11</sup> Thus, all the days of Enosh were nine hundred and five years; then he died.

יב וַיְחִי קִינָן שִׁבְעִים שָׁנָה וַיּוֹלֵד אֶת־מַהֲלָאֵל:  
יג וַיְחִי קִינָן אַחֲרֵי הוֹלִידוֹ אֶת־מַהֲלָאֵל אַרְבָּעִים  
שָׁנָה וּשְׁמֹנֶה מֵאוֹת שָׁנָה וַיּוֹלֵד בָּנִים וּבָנוֹת: יד וַיְהִיו  
כָּל־יְמֵי קִינָן עָשָׂר שָׁנִים וּתְשַׁע מֵאוֹת שָׁנָה וַיָּמָת:  
{ס}

<sup>12</sup> When Kenan had lived for seventy years, he became the father of Mahalalel. <sup>13</sup> Kenan lived for eight hundred and forty years after he became the father of Mahalalel, and he became the father of sons and daughters. <sup>14</sup> Thus, all the days of Kenan were nine hundred and ten years; then he died.

טו וַיְחִי מַהֲלָאֵל חֲמֵשׁ שָׁנִים וּשְׁשִׁים שָׁנָה וַיּוֹלֵד  
אֶת־יָרֵד: טז וַיְחִי מַהֲלָאֵל אַחֲרֵי הוֹלִידוֹ אֶת־יָרֵד  
שְׁלֹשִׁים שָׁנָה וּשְׁמֹנֶה מֵאוֹת שָׁנָה וַיּוֹלֵד בָּנִים  
וּבָנוֹת: יז וַיְהִיו כָּל־יְמֵי מַהֲלָאֵל חֲמֵשׁ וּתְשַׁעִּים  
שָׁנָה וּשְׁמֹנֶה מֵאוֹת שָׁנָה וַיָּמָת: {ס}

<sup>15</sup> When Mahalalel had lived for sixty-five years, he became the father of Jared. <sup>16</sup> Mahalalel lived for eight hundred and thirty years after he became the father of Jared, and he became the father of sons and daughters. <sup>17</sup> Thus, all the days of Mahalalel were eight hundred and ninety-five years; then he died.

<sup>9</sup> The LXX has 190 (ἐκατὸν καὶ ἐνενηήκοντα) rather than 90 (תְּשַׁעִּים) years, here following the MT.

<sup>10</sup> The LXX has 715 (ἑπτακόσια καὶ δέκα πέντε) rather than 815 (חֲמֵשׁ עָשָׂרָה שָׁנָה וּשְׁמֹנֶה מֵאוֹת), here following the MT.

<sup>11</sup> Note that the total length of Enosh's life (905 years) is the same in both the MT and LXX.

<sup>12</sup> The LXX has 170 (ἐκατὸν καὶ ἐβδομήκοντα) rather than 70 (שִׁבְעִים) years, here following the MT.

<sup>13</sup> The LXX has 740 (ἑπτακόσια καὶ τεσσαράκοντα) rather than 840 years (וּשְׁמֹנֶה מֵאוֹת), here following the MT.

<sup>14</sup> Note that the total length of Kenan's life (910 years) is consistent between the MT and LXX.

<sup>15</sup> The LXX has 165 (ἐκατὸν καὶ ἐξήκοντα πέντε) rather than 65 years, here following the MT.

<sup>16</sup> The LXX has 730 (ἑπτακόσια καὶ τριάκοντα) rather than 830 years (שְׁלֹשִׁים שָׁנָה, וּשְׁמֹנֶה מֵאוֹת שָׁנָה), here following the MT.

<sup>17</sup> Note that the total length of Mahalalel's life (895 years) is the same in both the MT and LXX.



י<sup>ח</sup> וַיְחִי־יָרֵד שְׁתַּיִם וְשָׁשִׁים שָׁנָה וּמֵאֵת שָׁנָה וַיּוֹלֵד  
 אֶת־חֲנוּךְ: י<sup>ט</sup> וַיְחִי־יָרֵד אַחֲרֵי הוֹלִידוֹ אֶת־חֲנוּךְ  
 שְׁמֹנֶה מֵאוֹת שָׁנָה וַיּוֹלֵד בָּנִים וּבָנוֹת: כ<sup>ו</sup> וַיְהִי כָל־  
 יְמֵי־יָרֵד שְׁתַּיִם וְשָׁשִׁים שָׁנָה וַתֵּשַׁע מֵאוֹת שָׁנָה  
 וַיָּמָת: {ס}

כ<sup>א</sup> וַיְחִי חֲנוּךְ חָמֵשׁ וְשָׁשִׁים שָׁנָה וַיּוֹלֵד אֶת־  
 מֶתוּשֶׁלַח: כ<sup>ב</sup> וַיִּתְּהַלֵּךְ חֲנוּךְ אֶת־הָאֱלֹהִים אַחֲרֵי  
 הוֹלִידוֹ אֶת־מֶתוּשֶׁלַח שְׁלֹשׁ מֵאוֹת שָׁנָה וַיּוֹלֵד  
 בָּנִים וּבָנוֹת: כ<sup>ג</sup> וַיְהִי כָל־יְמֵי חֲנוּךְ חָמֵשׁ וְשָׁשִׁים  
 שָׁנָה וּשְׁלֹשׁ מֵאוֹת שָׁנָה: כ<sup>ד</sup> וַיִּתְּהַלֵּךְ חֲנוּךְ אֶת־  
 הָאֱלֹהִים וַאֲיָנָנוּ כִּי־לָקַח אֹתוֹ אֱלֹהִים: {ס}

כ<sup>ה</sup> וַיְחִי מֶתוּשֶׁלַח שִׁבְעַת וְשָׁמֹנִים שָׁנָה וּמֵאֵת שָׁנָה  
 וַיּוֹלֵד אֶת־לָמֶךְ: כ<sup>ו</sup> וַיְחִי מֶתוּשֶׁלַח אַחֲרֵי הוֹלִידוֹ  
 אֶת־לָמֶךְ שְׁתַּיִם וְשָׁמוֹנִים שָׁנָה וּשְׁבַע מֵאוֹת שָׁנָה

<sup>18</sup> When Jared had lived for a hundred and sixty-two years, he became the father of Enoch. <sup>19</sup> Jared lived for eight hundred years after he became the father of Enoch, and he became the father of sons and daughters. <sup>20</sup> Thus, all the days of Jared were nine hundred and sixty-two years; then he died.

<sup>21</sup> When Enoch had lived for sixty-five years, he became the father of Methuselah. <sup>22</sup> After he became the father of Methuselah, Enoch walked with God for three hundred years, and he became the father of sons and daughters. <sup>23</sup> Thus, all the days of Enoch were three hundred and sixty-five years. <sup>24</sup> Enoch walked with God. Then he vanished because God took him.

<sup>25</sup> When Methuselah had lived for a hundred and eighty-seven years, he became the father of Lamech. <sup>26</sup> Methuselah lived for seven hundred and eighty-two years after he became the father of Lamech, and he

<sup>18</sup> Unlike in the case of the preceding verse, the LXX, like the MT, has here 162 (ἑκατὸν καὶ ἐξήκοντα δύο) years.

<sup>19</sup> As in v. 17, the LXX also agrees with the MT (שְׁמֹנֶה מֵאוֹת) here in having 800 (ὀκτακόσια) years.

<sup>20</sup> The total length of Jared's life (962 years) is consistent between the MT and LXX (ἐννακόσια καὶ ἐξήκοντα δύο ἔτη).

<sup>21</sup> The LXX has 165 (ἑκατὸν καὶ ἐξήκοντα πέντε) in place of 65 (חָמֵשׁ וְשָׁשִׁים) years, here following the MT.

<sup>22</sup> The LXX has 200 (διακόσια) in place of 300 years, here following the MT.

<sup>23</sup> Note that the total length of Enoch's life on earth is consistent (365 years) between the MT and LXX (τριακόσια ἐξήκοντα πέντε). For all the forefathers, from Adam to Methuselah, the LXX gives the births of their first sons 100 years later but keeps their total life spans the same.

<sup>24</sup> Enoch is distinguished from other Patriarchs in several ways: his life is shorter; he 'walks with God' as Noah did (6:9); like Elijah (2K 2:11ff), he vanishes mysteriously, carried off by God.

<sup>25</sup> Methuselah's age (187 years) at the birth of Lamech is consistent between the MT and LXX (ἑκατὸν καὶ ἐξήκοντα ἑπτὰ ἔτη).

<sup>26</sup> Note that the MT and LXX (ὀκτακόσια δύο ἔτη καὶ ἐγένησεν) agree on the figure of 782 years.

וַיֹּלֶד בָּנִים וּבָנוֹת: כִּי וַיְהִי כָּל־יְמֵי מֶתוּשֶׁלַח תִּשְׁעִים וְשָׁשִׁים שָׁנָה וְתִשְׁעִים מֵאוֹת שָׁנָה וַיָּמָת: {ס}  
 כח וַיְחִי־לָמֶךְ שְׁתַּיִם וּשְׁמֹנִים שָׁנָה וּמֵאוֹת שָׁנָה וַיֹּלֶד בֶּן: כט וַיִּקְרָא אֶת־שְׁמוֹ נֹחַ לֵאמֹר זֶה יַנְחֵמֵנוּ מִמַּעֲשֵׂנוּ וּמִעֲצָבוֹן יָדֵינוּ מִן־הָאָדָמָה אֲשֶׁר אָרְרָה יְהוָה: ל וַיְחִי־לָמֶךְ אַחֲרֵי הוֹלִידוֹ אֶת־נֹחַ חֲמֵשׁ וְתִשְׁעִים שָׁנָה וְחֲמֵשׁ מֵאוֹת שָׁנָה וַיֹּלֶד בָּנִים וּבָנוֹת: לא וַיְהִי כָּל־יְמֵי־לָמֶךְ שֶׁבַע וּשְׁבַעִים שָׁנָה וּשְׁבַע מֵאוֹת שָׁנָה וַיָּמָת: {ס}  
 לב וַיְהִי־נֹחַ בֶּן־חֲמֵשׁ מֵאוֹת שָׁנָה וַיֹּלֶד נָח אֶת־שֵׁם אֶת־חָם וְאֶת־יָפֶת: {ס}

became the father of sons and daughters. <sup>27</sup> Thus, all the days of Methuselah were nine hundred and sixty-nine years; then he died.

<sup>28</sup> When Lamech had lived for a hundred and eighty-two years, he fathered a son. <sup>29</sup> He named him Noah, saying, "Out of the ground that Yahweh has cursed, this one shall bring us relief from our work and from the toil of our hands." <sup>30</sup> Lamech lived for five hundred and ninety-five years after he became the father of Noah, and fathered sons and daughters. <sup>31</sup> Thus, all the days of Lamech were seven hundred and seventy-seven years; then he died.

<sup>32</sup> After Noah was five hundred years old, Noah became the father of Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

<sup>27</sup> At 969 years (consistent in the LXX – ἐννακόςια καὶ ἐξήκοντα ἐννέα ἔτη), Methuselah's life is the longest in the list of Patriarchs.

<sup>28</sup> The LXX has 188 (ἐκατὸν ὀγδοήκοντα ὀκτώ) in place of 182 years, here following the MT.

<sup>29</sup> The name Noah (נֹחַ) appears to be related to the verb נָח ('to rest'). There are several wordplays on the name Noah in the story of the Flood. We here follow the NRSV (which more closely matches the MT arrangement); the NJB reads, "He gave him the name Noah because, he said, 'Here is one who will give us, in the midst of our toil and the labouring of our hands, a consolation derived from the ground that Yahweh cursed.'"

<sup>30</sup> The LXX has 565 (πεντακόςια καὶ ἐξήκοντα πέντε) in place of 595 years, here following the MT.

<sup>31</sup> For the first time, the total length for the life of a Patriarch (Lamech) is different between the MT (777 years – שֶׁבַע וּשְׁבַעִים שָׁנָה וּשְׁבַע מֵאוֹת) and the LXX (753 years – ἐπτακόςια καὶ πεντήκοντα τρία ἔτη).

<sup>32</sup> The MT and LXX (ἐτῶν πεντακοσίῳ) agree on Noah's age at the time of his three sons' birth (500 years old).

## בראשית פרק ו

## GENESIS 6

א וַיְהִי כִּי־הֵחֵל הָאָדָם לָרֹב עַל־פְּנֵי הָאֲדָמָה וּבָנוֹת יָלְדוּ לָהֶם: ב וַיִּרְאוּ בְנֵי־הָאֱלֹהִים אֶת־בָּנוֹת הָאָדָם כִּי טֹבֹת הָנָּה וַיִּקְחוּ לָהֶם נָשִׁים מִכָּל אֲשֶׁר בָּחָרוּ: ג וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה לֹא־יִדּוֹן רוּחִי בָאָדָם לְעֹלָם בְּשָׁגֶם הוּא בָשָׂר וְהָיוּ יָמָיו מֵאָה וְעֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה: ד הַנְּפִלִים הָיוּ בָאָרֶץ בַּיָּמִים הָהֵם וְגַם אַחֲרֵיכֵן אֲשֶׁר יָבֹאוּ

1 When men began multiply on the face of the earth and daughters were born to them, 2 the sons of God saw that the daughters of mankind were fair, so they married as many as they chose. 3 Yahweh said, "My spirit must not for ever be disgraced in man, for he is but flesh; his life shall last no more than a hundred and twenty years." 4 The Nephilim were on the earth at that time (and even afterwards) when the sons of God

### GENESIS 6

- 1 Vv. 1-8 forms an obscure passage, outlining the popular story of a race of giants, 'the Nephilim' (הַנְּפִלִים), the Titans of eastern legend, born of the union between gods and mortals.
- 2 The phrase translated 'sons of God' (בְּנֵי־הָאֱלֹהִים) occurs only here, v. 4 and in Job 1:6, 2:1, 38:7. There are three major interpretations of the phrase: 1 In Job, the phrase clearly refers to angelic beings; here, the 'sons of God' are distinct from 'mankind', suggesting that they were not human; this is consistent with the use of the phrase in Job – since the passage speaks of these beings cohabiting with women, they must have taken physical form. An early Jewish tradition, preserved in 1En 6-7, elaborates on this angelic revolt and even names the ringleaders. 2 Some argue that the 'sons of God' were members of Seth's line, traced back to God through Adam in Chapter 5, while the 'daughters of mankind' were the descendants of Cain; however, as noted above, the text distinguishes the 'sons of God' from 'mankind' (which would include Sethites and Cainites) and suggests that the 'daughters of mankind' are human women in general, not just Cainites. 3 Others identify the 'sons of God' as powerful tyrants, perhaps demon-possessed, who viewed themselves as divine and, following the example of Lamech (4:19), practiced polygamy; but usage of the phrase in Job militates against this view. In place of 'as many as', here following the NJB, JPS has 'whomsoever'.
- 3 The verb form יִדּוֹן ('be disgraced') only occurs here. Some derive it from the verbal root דִּין (to judge) and translate 'strive' or 'contend with' (NIV) but in this case, one expects the form to be יָדִין. The LXX has 'remain with' (καταμείνῃ), a rendering which may find support from an Arabic cognate. If one interprets the verb in this way, then it is possible to understand וְרוּחִי as a reference to the divine life-giving spirit or breath, rather than Yahweh's personal Spirit.
- 4 The word נְפִלִים ('Nephilim') is simply transliterated here because its meaning is uncertain. According to the passage, the Nephilim became mighty warriors and gained great fame in the antediluvian world; the text may imply they were the offspring of the sexual union of the 'sons of God' and the 'daughters of mankind' (see #2), but it stops short of saying this in a direct manner. They are mentioned in the OT only here and in Nb 13:33, where it is stated that they were giants (as the LXX here translates the term – γίγαντες).

בְּנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים אֶל־בָּנוֹת הָאָדָם וַיֵּלְדוּ לָהֶם הֵמָּה  
הַגִּבּוֹרִים אֲשֶׁר מֵעוֹלָם אָנֹשִׁי הֵשֵׁם: {פ}

וַיֵּרָא יְהוָה כִּי רַבָּה רָעַת הָאָדָם בָּאָרֶץ וְכָל־יֹצֵר  
מַחְשַׁבַת לִבּוֹ רָק רָע כָּל־הַיּוֹם: וַיִּנָּחֵם יְהוָה כִּי־  
עָשָׂה אֶת־הָאָדָם בָּאָרֶץ וַיִּתְּעַצֵּב אֶל־לִבּוֹ: וַיֹּאמֶר  
יְהוָה אֲמַחֶה אֶת־הָאָדָם אֲשֶׁר־בָּרָאתִי מֵעַל פְּנֵי  
הָאֲדָמָה מֵאָדָם עַד־בְּהֵמָה עַד־רֶמֶשׂ וְעַד־עוֹף  
הַשָּׁמַיִם כִּי נִחַמְתִּי כִּי עָשִׂיתִם: וְנֹחַ מָצָא חֵן  
בְּעֵינֵי יְהוָה: {פ}

אֵלֶּה תּוֹלְדֹת נֹחַ נֹחַ אִישׁ צַדִּיק תָּמִים הָיָה  
בְּדֹרֹתָיו אֶת־הָאֱלֹהִים הִתְהַלֵּךְ־נֹחַ: וַיֵּלֶד נֹחַ

went into the daughters of mankind and had children by them. These were the heroes of days gone by, the famous men.

<sup>5</sup> Yahweh saw that the wickedness of man was great on the Earth, and that the thoughts of his heart fashioned nothing but wickedness all day long. <sup>6</sup> Yahweh regretted having made man on the earth, and his heart grieved. <sup>7</sup> "I will rid the earth's face of man, my own creation," Yahweh said, "and of animals also, reptiles too, and the birds of heaven; for I regret having made them." <sup>8</sup> However, Noah had found favour with Yahweh.

<sup>9</sup> This is the story of Noah: Noah was a righteous man, blameless among his contemporaries, and he walked with God. <sup>10</sup> Noah fathered three

<sup>5</sup> The verb יָרָא ('saw'), used here of God's evaluation of mankind's evil deeds, contrasts with God's evaluation of creative work in Ch. 1, when he observed that everything was good.

<sup>6</sup> God's 'regret' is a human way of expressing the fact that tolerance of sin is incompatible with his sanctity (1S 15:29 warns us that the phrase is not to be taken too literally); but in many passages, the expression means that God's anger is appeased and his threat withdrawn (Jr 26:3).

<sup>7</sup> The biblical account is superficially similar to the Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic, which also relates the story of a great flood. The biblical perspective, however, is different, for the Flood was not the expression of polytheistic caprice but of God's judgement upon the wickedness of mankind.

<sup>8</sup> The Hebrew expression 'find favour (in the eyes of)' is an idiom meaning 'to be an object of another's favourable disposition or action', or 'to be a recipient of another's favour, kindness, mercy'. The favour/kindness is often earned, coming in response to an action or condition (cf. 32:5, 39:4, Dt 24:1, 1S 25:8, Pr 3:4, Rt 2:10); this is the case here, where v. 9 gives the basis (Noah's righteous character) for the divine favour.

<sup>9</sup> The term תָּמִים ('blameless') is used of men in 17:1 (associated with the idiom 'walk before', which means 'maintain a proper relationship with', cf. 24:40), Dt 18:13 (where it means not guilty of the idolatrous practices listed before this, cf. Jos 24:14), Ps 18:23,26 (in the sense of not having violated God's commands), Ps 37:18 (in contrast to the wicked), Ps 101:2,6 (in contrast to proud, deceitful slanderers, cf. 15:2), Pr 2:21, 11:5 (in contrast to the wicked), Pr 28:10, and Job 12:4. The NRSV opens this verse with, "These are the descendants of Noah."

<sup>10</sup> The LXX renders the names 'Noah' (נֹחַ), 'Shem' (שֵׁם), 'Ham' (חָם) and 'Japheth' (יָפֶת) as *Nωε*, *Σημ*, *Χαμ* and *Ιαφεθ*, respectively.

שְׁלֹשָׁה בָּנִים אֶת־שֵׁם אֶת־חָם וְאֶת־יָפֶת׃  
 י<sup>א</sup> וַתִּשְׁחַת הָאָרֶץ לִפְנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים וַתִּמָּלֵא הָאָרֶץ  
 חָמָס׃ י<sup>ב</sup> וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת־הָאָרֶץ וְהִנֵּה נִשְׁחָתָה  
 בִּיהֵשְׁחִית כָּל־בָּשָׂר אֶת־דִּרְכּוֹ עַל־הָאָרֶץ׃ {ס}  
 י<sup>ג</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים לְנֹחַ קַן כָּל־בָּשָׂר בָּא לִפְנֵי בִי־  
 מִלֵּאָה הָאָרֶץ חָמָס מִפְּנֵיהֶם וְהִנֵּנִי מַשְׁחִיתָם אֶת־  
 הָאָרֶץ׃ י<sup>ד</sup> עֲשֵׂה לָךְ תֵּבַת עֵצ־גִּפְרִי קָנִים תַּעֲשֶׂה  
 אֶת־הַתֵּבָה וּכְפַרְתָּ אֹתָהּ מִבֵּית וּמִחוּץ בַּכֹּפֶר׃  
 טו וְזֶה אֲשֶׁר תַּעֲשֶׂה אֹתָהּ שְׁלֹשׁ מֵאוֹת אַמָּה אָרְךָ  
 הַתֵּבָה חֲמִשִּׁים אַמָּה רָחְבָּהּ וּשְׁלֹשִׁים אַמָּה  
 קוֹמָתָהּ׃ טז צֹהַר תַּעֲשֶׂה לַתֵּבָה וְאֶל־אַמָּה תְּכַלְכְּנָהּ  
 מִלְּמַעַלָּהּ וּפֶתַח הַתֵּבָה בַּצִּדָּה תָּשִׂים תַּחְתִּימֶיךָ  
 שְׁנַיִם וּשְׁלֹשִׁים תַּעֲשֶׂה׃

sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth.<sup>11</sup> Now, the earth grew corrupt in God's sight, and the earth was filled with violence.<sup>12</sup> God contemplated the earth: it was corrupt, for corrupt were the ways of all flesh on the earth.

<sup>13</sup> Then, God said to Noah, "I have determined to make an end for all things of flesh; for, the earth is filled with violence because of them, and now I am going to destroy them along with the earth."<sup>14</sup> Make yourself an ark out of resinous wood. Make rooms in the ark and cover it inside and out with pitch.<sup>15</sup> This is how you are to make it: the length of the ark is to be three hundred cubits, its breadth fifty cubits, and its height thirty cubits.<sup>16</sup> Make a roof for the ark and finish it to a cubit above; put the door of the ark high up in the side, and make a first, second, and third deck.

<sup>11</sup> The literal translation of 'in God's sight' is 'before God'. The word translated 'violence' refers elsewhere to a broad range of crimes, including unjust treatment (Gn 16:5, Am 3:10), injurious legal testimony (Dt 19:16), deadly assault (Gn 49:5), murder (Jg 9:24), and rape (Jr 13:22).

<sup>12</sup> Since moral corruption is in view here, most modern interpreters understand the referent of 'all flesh' to be mankind; however, the phrase is used consistently of mankind and the animals in Gn 6–9 (6:17,19, 7:15–16,21, 8:17, 9:11,15–17), suggesting that the author intends to picture all living creatures, mankind and animals, as guilty of moral failure.

<sup>13</sup> The phrase 'end for all things of flesh' occurs only here; the term 'end' refers here to the end of life, as v. 3 and the following context (which describes how God destroys all flesh) make clear. The necessity of ending the life of all flesh on earth is an issue that has found the attention of God: the term 'end' may even be a metonymy for that which has prompted it – violence (see the following clause). The NJB ends this verse with, "I will efface them from the earth."

<sup>14</sup> The NRSV uses 'cypress wood' for 'resinous wood'; the meaning of the term (גִּפְרִי) is uncertain and transliterates as 'gopher (wood)'. For the 2<sup>nd</sup> sentence, here following the NRSV, the NJB has, "Make it with reeds and line it with pitch inside and out."

<sup>15</sup> The size corresponds ~150m x 25m x 15m (assuming the standard OT cubit of 45 cm – the length from the tip of the middle finger to the elbow).

<sup>16</sup> 'Window' is a possible alternative translation for 'roof'.



י<sup>ז</sup> וְאֲנִי הֹנֵנִי מֵבִיא אֶת־הַמָּבּוּל מִן־עַל־הָאָרֶץ  
 לְשַׁחַת כָּל־בָּשָׂר אֲשֶׁר־בּוֹ רוּחַ חַיִּים מִתַּחַת  
 הַשָּׁמַיִם כֹּל אֲשֶׁר־בָּאָרֶץ יָגוּעַ: י<sup>ח</sup> וְהִקְמַתִּי אֶת־  
 בְּרִיתִי אִתְּךָ וּבָאתָ אֵל־הַתֵּבָה אִתָּהּ וּבְנֶיךָ וְאִשְׁתְּךָ  
 וְנִשְׁי־בְנֶיךָ אִתְּךָ: יט וּמִכָּל־הַחַי מִכָּל־בָּשָׂר שְׁנַיִם  
 מִכֹּל תָּבִיא אֵל־הַתֵּבָה לְהַחֲיֹת אִתְּךָ זָכָר וּנְקֵבָה  
 יְהִיוּ: כ מִהָעוֹף לְמִינֵהוּ וּמִן־הַבְּהֵמָה לְמִינָהּ מִכָּל־  
 רֶמֶשׂ הָאָדָמָה לְמִינֵהוּ שְׁנַיִם מִכֹּל יָבֹאוּ אֵלֶיךָ  
 לְהַחֲיֹת: כא וְאִתָּהּ קַח־לָךְ מִכָּל־מֵאֲכָל אֲשֶׁר יֵאָכֵל  
 וְאִסַּפְתָּ אֵלֶיךָ וְהָיָה לָךְ וְלָהֶם לֶאֱכֹלָה: כב וַיַּעַשׂ נֹחַ  
 כְּכֹל אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה אֹתוֹ אֱלֹהִים בְּן־עֲשָׂה:

17 “For my part I mean to bring a flood, and send the waters over the earth, to destroy all flesh having the breath of life under heaven; everything on earth shall perish. 18 But I will establish my Covenant with you, and you must go onto the ark, you, your sons, your wife, and your sons’ wives with you. 19 From all living creatures, from all flesh, you must take two of each kind into the ark, to save their lives with yours; they must be male and female. 20 Of every kind of bird, of every kind of animal and of every type of reptile on the ground, two must go with you, to keep them alive. 21 For your part provide yourself with food of all kinds, and store of it, to serve as food for yourself and them.” 22 Noah did all that God had ordered him; this he did.

17 The ‘breath of life’ translates רוּחַ, which primarily means the air in motion, whether the breath of the wind (Ex 10:13, Job 21:18), or the breath of the nostrils (7:15 & 22); hence the life force and the thoughts, feelings, or passions to which it gives rise.

18 This ‘Covenant’ is not an agreement between equals but God’s gracious guarantee offered to his chosen ones. The verb וְהִקְמַתִּי is in the Hiphil perfect form, with a *vav* consecutive (picking up the future sense from the participles) from קִוִּים; this may refer to the confirmation or fulfilment of an earlier promise, but it is more likely that it anticipates the unconditional promise made to mankind following the flood (see 9:9,11,17).

19 The disjunctive clause at the beginning of the verse (conjunction with prepositional phrase, followed by two more prepositional phrases in apposition and then the imperfect verb form) signals a change in mood from announcement (vv. 17–18) to instruction. The Piel infinitive construct לְהַחֲיֹת shows the purpose of bringing the animals into the ark – saving life; the Piel of this verb means here ‘to preserve alive’.

20 Human wickedness has affected the whole of creation (6:13) and, for better or worse, the destiny of irrational creatures is now associated with human destiny. The thought is close to that of Paul, in Rm 8:19–22.

21 The verb ‘provide’ is a direct imperative; the form stresses the immediate nature of the instruction; the pronoun underscores the directness.

22 The last clause (בְּן־עֲשָׂה) seems redundant: it underscores the obedience of Noah to all God had said.

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## בראשית פרק ז

א וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה לְנֹחַ בֹּא-אִתָּהּ וְכָל-בֵּיתְךָ אֶל-הַתְּבָה  
ב כִּי-אַתָּה רָאִיתִי צַדִּיק לִפְנֵי בְדֹר הַזֶּה: ב מִכָּל  
הַבְּהֵמָה הַטְּהוֹרָה תִּקַּח-לָךְ שְׁבַעַה שְׁבַעַה אִישׁ  
וְאִשְׁתּוֹ וּמִן-הַבְּהֵמָה אֲשֶׁר לֹא טְהוֹרָה הוּא שְׁנַיִם אִישׁ  
וְאִשְׁתּוֹ: ג גַּם מֵעוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם שְׁבַעַה שְׁבַעַה זָכָר וּנְקֵבָה  
לְחַיּוֹת זֶרַע עַל-פָּנַי כָּל-הָאָרֶץ: ד כִּי לַיָּמִים עוֹד שְׁבַעַה  
אֲנֹכִי מִמָּטִיר עַל-הָאָרֶץ אַרְבָּעִים יוֹם וְאַרְבָּעִים לַיְלָה  
וּמַחֲיִיתִי אֶת-כָּל-הַיְּקוּם אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתִי מֵעַל פָּנַי  
הָאֲדָמָה: ה וַיַּעַשׂ נֹחַ כְּכֹל אֲשֶׁר-צִוָּהוּ יְהוָה: ו וַנָּח בֶּן-  
זָשׁ מֵאוֹת שָׁנָה וְהַמָּבּוּל הָיָה מֵיִם עַל-הָאָרֶץ: ז וַיָּבֹא  
נֹחַ וּבָנָיו וְאִשְׁתּוֹ וְנִשְׁי-בָנָיו אִתּוֹ אֶל-הַתְּבָה מִפָּנֵי מִי  
הַמָּבּוּל: ח מִן-הַבְּהֵמָה הַטְּהוֹרָה וּמִן-הַבְּהֵמָה אֲשֶׁר  
אֵינָנָה טְהוֹרָה וּמִן-הָעוֹף וְכָל אֲשֶׁר-רָמַשׁ עַל-הָאֲדָמָה:  
ט שְׁנַיִם שְׁנַיִם בָּאוּ אֶל-נֹחַ אֶל-הַתְּבָה זָכָר וּנְקֵבָה

<sup>1</sup> Yahweh said to Noah, "Go into the ark, you and all your household, for I see that you alone are righteous before me in this generation.  
<sup>2</sup> Of all the clean animals you must take seven of each kind, both male and female; of the unclean animals you must take two, a male and its female <sup>3</sup> (and of the birds of heaven also, seven of each kind, both male and female), to propagate their kind over the entire earth. <sup>4</sup> For, in seven days' time I mean to make it rain on the earth for forty days and nights, and I will rid the earth of every living thing that I made."  
<sup>5</sup> Noah did according to all that Yahweh ordered. <sup>6</sup> Noah was six hundred years old when the flood of waters engulfed the earth.  
<sup>7</sup> Noah with his sons, his wife, and his sons' wives boarded the ark in order to escape the waters of the flood. <sup>8</sup> (Of the clean animals and the animals that are not clean, of the birds, and all that crawls on the ground, <sup>9</sup> two of each kind boarded the ark with Noah, a male and a

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- <sup>1</sup> The direct object ('you') is placed first in the clause 'for you alone ...' to give it prominence; the verb 'see' here signifies God's discernment.
- <sup>2</sup> The terms used here for 'male and female' (אִישׁ וְאִשְׁתּוֹ) animals normally refer to humans (cf. vv. 3, 9).
- <sup>3</sup> Here, (and in v. 9) the text uses the normal generic terms for 'male and female' (זָכָר וּנְקֵבָה) (cf. v. 2).
- <sup>4</sup> The Hiphil participle מִמָּטִיר ('make it rain') here expresses the certainty of the act in the imminent future.
- <sup>5</sup> The NJB and NRSV lack 'according to', here following the MT.
- <sup>6</sup> In place of 'engulfed', the NJB has 'appeared on': the verb הָיָה here carries the nuance 'to come' but, here, the phrase 'come upon' means 'to engulf'.
- <sup>7</sup> The preposition מִן ('in order to') is causal here, explaining why Noah and his family entered the ark.
- <sup>8</sup> Vv. 8-9 are possibly an editorial addition combining two narratives.
- <sup>9</sup> The literal translation of 'two of each kind' (שְׁנַיִם שְׁנַיִם) is 'two two', meaning 'in twos'.

כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה אֱלֹהִים אֶת־נֹחַ: 'וַיְהִי לְשִׁבְעַת הַיָּמִים וּמִי  
הַמַּבּוּל הָיוּ עַל־הָאָרֶץ:

י"א בְּשָׁנָה שֶׁש־מֵאוֹת שָׁנָה לַחֲיֵי־נֹחַ בַּחֹדֶשׁ הַשֵּׁנִי  
בְּשִׁבְעָה־עָשָׂר יוֹם לַחֹדֶשׁ בַּיּוֹם הַזֶּה נִבְקְעוּ כָּל־  
מַעֲיֵנֹת תְּהוֹם רַבָּה וְאַרְבַּת הַשָּׁמַיִם נִפְתְּחוּ: י"ב וַיְהִי  
הַגֶּשֶׁם עַל־הָאָרֶץ אַרְבָּעִים יוֹם וְאַרְבָּעִים לַיְלָה:

י"ג בְּעֶצֶם הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה בָּא נֹחַ וְשֵׁם־וְחָם וַיִּפֹּת בְּנֵי־נֹחַ  
וְאִשְׁתּוֹ נָח וּשְׁלֹשֶׁת נְשֵׁי־בָנָיו אִתָּם אֶל־הַתֵּבָה: י"ד הֵמָּה  
וְכָל־הַחַיָּה לְמִינָהּ וְכָל־הַבְּהֵמָה לְמִינָהּ וְכָל־הָרֶמֶשׂ  
הָרֹמֵשׁ עַל־הָאָרֶץ לְמִינֵהוּ וְכָל־הָעוֹף לְמִינֵהוּ כָּל צֶפֶר  
כָּל־כָּנָף: ט"ו וַיָּבֹאוּ אֵלֶיךָ אֶל־הַתֵּבָה שְׁנַיִם שְׁנַיִם  
מִכָּל־הַבָּשָׂר אֲשֶׁר־בּוֹ רוּחַ חַיִּים: ט"ז וְהַבָּאִים זָכָר  
וּנְקֵבָה מִכָּל־בָּשָׂר בָּאוּ כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה אֱלֹהִים וַיִּסְגֹּר  
יְהוָה בַּעֲדָיו: י"ז וַיְהִי הַמַּבּוּל אַרְבָּעִים יוֹם עַל־הָאָרֶץ  
וַיִּרְבּוּ הַמַּיִם וַיִּשְׂאוּ אֶת־הַתֵּבָה וַתָּרֶם מֵעַל הָאָרֶץ:

female, according to the order God gave to Noah.) <sup>10</sup> Seven days  
later, the waters of the flood engulfed the earth.

<sup>11</sup> In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, and  
on the seventeenth day of that month, that very day all the springs  
of the great deep broke through, and the sluices of heaven opened.

<sup>12</sup> And it rained on the earth for forty days and forty nights.

<sup>13</sup> That day, Noah and his sons Shem, Ham, and Japheth boarded the  
ark, with Noah's wife and his sons' three wives, <sup>14</sup> and with them  
wild beasts of every kind, cattle of every kind, every creeping thing  
that crawls on the earth, birds of every kind, all that flies, everything  
with wings. <sup>15</sup> One pair of all flesh that has the breath of life boarded  
the ark with Noah; <sup>16</sup> and so there went in a male and a female of  
every creature that is flesh, just as God had ordered him. Then  
Yahweh shut him in. <sup>17</sup> The flood lasted forty days on the earth. The  
waters swelled and bore up the ark until it rose high above the earth.

<sup>10</sup> As in v. 6 (see the footnote thereto), the NJB has 'appeared on' in place of 'engulfed'.

<sup>11</sup> In this narrative, the waters from above and below burst the barriers set by God (1:7) and chaos returned; according to the Yahwistic tradition, rain was the cause of the Flood (vv. 4 & 12).

<sup>12</sup> In place of 'it rained', here following the NJB, the NRSV has 'the rain fell'.

<sup>13</sup> Literally translated, this verse reads, "On that very day Noah entered, and Shem and Ham and Japheth, the sons of Noah, and the wife of Noah, and the three wives of his sons with him into the ark."

<sup>14</sup> In place of 'all that flies', here following the NJB, the MT repeats 'every bird'.

<sup>15</sup> The literal translation of 'one pair' (שְׁנַיִם שְׁנַיִם) is 'two two' (cf. #9).

<sup>16</sup> Literally translated, this verse opens, "Those that went in, male and female from all flesh they went in ..."

<sup>17</sup> After 'forty days', the LXX adds 'and forty nights' (καὶ τεσσαράκοντα νύκτας).

י<sup>ח</sup> וַיִּגְבְּרוּ הַמַּיִם וַיִּרְבוּ מְאֹד עַל־הָאָרֶץ וַתֵּלֶךְ הַתֵּבָה  
עַל־פְּנֵי הַמַּיִם: י<sup>ט</sup> וְהַמַּיִם גָּבְרוּ מְאֹד מְאֹד עַל־הָאָרֶץ  
וַיִּכְסּוּ כָּל־הַהָרִים הַגְּבוּהִים אֲשֶׁר־תַּחַת כָּל־הַשָּׁמַיִם:  
כ<sup>ח</sup> חֹמֶשׁ עֶשְׂרֵה אַמָּה מִלְּמַעְלָה גָבְרוּ הַמַּיִם וַיִּכְסּוּ  
הַהָרִים: כ<sup>א</sup> וַיָּגֹעַ כָּל־בֶּשָׂר | הָרֹמֵשׁ עַל־הָאָרֶץ בָּעוֹף  
וּבַבְּהֵמָה וּבַחַיָּה וּבְכָל־הַשָּׂרֵץ הַשָּׂרֵץ עַל־הָאָרֶץ וְכָל  
הָאָדָם:

כ<sup>ב</sup> כָּל אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁמַת־רוּחַ חַיִּים בְּאַפִּיו מִכָּל אֲשֶׁר  
בַּחֲרָבָה מָתוּ: כ<sup>ג</sup> וַיָּמַח אֶת־כָּל־הַיְּקוּם | אֲשֶׁר | עַל־פְּנֵי  
הָאֲדָמָה מֵאָדָם עַד־בְּהֵמָה עַד־רֶמֶשׂ וְעַד־עוֹף  
הַשָּׁמַיִם וַיִּמָּחוּ מִן־הָאָרֶץ וַיִּשָּׂאֵר אֶדְנָן וְאֲשֶׁר אִתּוֹ  
בַּתֵּבָה:

כ<sup>ד</sup> וַיִּגְבְּרוּ הַמַּיִם עַל־הָאָרֶץ חֲמֵשִׁים וּמֵאֵת יוֹם:

<sup>18</sup> The waters swelled and increased greatly on the earth and the ark floated across the waters. <sup>19</sup> The waters rose higher and higher on the earth until all the high mountains under the whole heaven were covered; <sup>20</sup> the waters swelled above the mountains, covering them fifteen cubits deep. <sup>21</sup> And all flesh died that moved on the earth, birds, cattle, wild beasts, everything that swarms on the earth, and every man.

<sup>22</sup> Everything on dry land with the breath of life in its nostrils died.

<sup>23</sup> He wiped away every living thing that was on the face of the earth, man and animals, creeping things, and the birds of the sky; he rid the earth of them, so that only Noah and those with him in the ark remained.

<sup>24</sup> And the waters flooded the earth for a hundred and fifty days.

<sup>18</sup> In place of 'swelled and increased greatly', here following the NRSV, the NJB has 'rose and swelled greatly' (the literal translation is 'were great and multiplied exceedingly'); the first verb in the sequence is וַיִּגְבְּרוּ, meaning to 'and they became great (or mighty)'.

<sup>19</sup> The waters covered 'all the highest mountains', threatening a confluence of the upper and lower waters (1:6). Archaeological evidence suggests that traditions of a prehistoric flood covering the whole earth are heightened versions of local inundations, e.g. in the Tigris-Euphrates basin.

<sup>20</sup> The figure of 'fifteen cubits' (just less than 7m) might give the modern reader a false impression of exactness.

<sup>21</sup> In place of 'all things of flesh', the MT has simple 'flesh', as also the LXX (σὰρξ).

<sup>22</sup> In place of 'breath of life', here following the LXX (πνομή ζωής), NJB and NRSV, the MT has 'breath of the spirit of life' (נִשְׁמַת־רוּחַ).

<sup>23</sup> The NJB opens this verse with 'Yahweh' rather than the pronoun 'He', here following the MT and NRSV.

<sup>24</sup> The NJB has 'prevailed over' in place of 'flooded', here following the WEBBE.

## GENESIS 8

## בראשית פרק ח

א וַיִּזְכֹּר אֱלֹהִים אֶת־נֹחַ וְאֶת כָּל־הַחַיָּה וְאֶת־כָּל־  
הַבְּהֵמָה אֲשֶׁר אִתּוֹ בַּתֵּבָה וַיַּעֲבֵר אֱלֹהִים רוּחַ עַל־  
הָאָרֶץ וַיָּשֻׁבוּ הַמַּיִם: ב וַיִּסְכְּרוּ מַעֲיֵנֹת תְּהוֹם וְאֲרָבַת  
הַשָּׁמַיִם וַיִּכְלֹא הַגֶּשֶׁם מִן־הַשָּׁמַיִם: ג וַיָּשֻׁבוּ הַמַּיִם מֵעַל  
הָאָרֶץ הַלֹּדֶז וְשׁוֹב וַיַּחֲסְרוּ הַמַּיִם מִקְצֵה חֲמִשִּׁים  
וּמֵאֵת יוֹם: ד וַתֵּנָח הַתֵּבָה בַּחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁבִיעִי בִּשְׁבַע־  
עָשָׂר יוֹם לַחֹדֶשׁ עַל הָרֵי אֲרָרָט: ה וְהַמַּיִם הָיוּ הַלֹּדֶז  
וַחֲסֹר עַד הַחֹדֶשׁ הָעֲשִׂירִי בְּעֶשְׂרִי בָּאֶחָד לַחֹדֶשׁ  
נִרְאוּ רֵאשֵׁי הַהָרִים: ו וַיְהִי מִקֵּץ אַרְבַּעַם יוֹם וַיִּפְתָּח  
נֹחַ אֶת־חַלּוֹן הַתֵּבָה אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה: ז וַיִּשְׁלַח אֶת־הָעֶרֶב  
וַיֵּצֵא יָצֹא וְשׁוֹב עַד־יָבֹשֶׁת הַמַּיִם מֵעַל הָאָרֶץ:  
ח וַיִּשְׁלַח אֶת־הַיּוֹנָה מֵאֲתוֹ לִרְאוֹת הַקָּלוּ הַמַּיִם מֵעַל

1 But God remembered Noah, and all the wild beasts and all the cattle that were with him in the ark. God sent a wind across the earth and the waters subsided. 2 The springs of the deep and the sluices of heaven were stopped; rain ceased to fall from heaven; 3 and the waters gradually ebbed from the earth; after a hundred and fifty days, the waters fell, 4 and in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of that month, the ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat. 5 The waters gradually fell until the tenth month when, on the first day of the tenth month, the mountain peaks appeared. 6 At the end of forty days, Noah opened the window he had made in the ark 7 and sent out the raven; it flew back and forth until the waters dried up from the earth. 8 Then he sent out the dove, to see if the waters had

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- <sup>1</sup> The dramatic turning point of the story: 'God remembered Noah' and the remnant of humans and animals with him. The waters of chaos, which have peaked, are driven back by a wind (compare 1:2) sent by God.
- <sup>2</sup> Some (e.g. NIV) translate the preterite verb forms in this verse as past perfects (e.g. 'had been stopped'), for it seems likely that the sources of the water would have stopped before the waters receded.
- <sup>3</sup> The construction translated as 'gradually ebbed' combines a Qal preterite from שׁוֹב with its infinitive absolute, to indicate continuous action; the infinitive absolute from הָלָךְ is included for emphasis: 'the waters returned ... going and returning'.
- <sup>4</sup> 'Ararat' (2K 19:37, Jr 51:27) is the Hebrew name for a region in Armenia/Eastern Turkey (Urartu).
- <sup>5</sup> In the phrase, 'the waters gradually fell', the perfect verb form הָיוּ is used as an auxiliary verb with the infinitive absolute וַחֲסֹר ('and lessening'), while the infinitive absolute הַלֹּדֶז indicates continuous action.
- <sup>6</sup> In the Babylonian epic, the hero sent out two birds, a dove and a swallow, each of which came back; the third, a raven, did not return.
- <sup>7</sup> The verb יָצָא ('flying') is modified by two infinitives absolute indicating that the raven went back and forth.
- <sup>8</sup> The verb הִקְלִי ('were receding') normally means 'were lightening'.



פָּנֵי הָאָדָמָה: <sup>ט</sup> וְלֹא־מָצָאָהּ הַיּוֹנָה מְנוּחַ לְכַף־רַגְלָהּ  
וּתְשֹׁב אֵלָיו אֶל־הַתֵּבָה כִּי־מַיִם עַל־פְּנֵי כָל־הָאָרֶץ  
וַיִּשְׁלַח יָדוֹ וַיִּקְחָהּ וַיָּבֵא אֹתָהּ אֵלָיו אֶל־הַתֵּבָה: <sup>י</sup> וַיַּחֲלֵ  
עוֹד שְׁבַעַת יָמִים אַחֲרַיִם וַיִּסָּף שַׁלַּח אֶת־הַיּוֹנָה מִן־  
הַתֵּבָה: <sup>יא</sup> וַתָּבֹא אֵלָיו הַיּוֹנָה לֵעֵת עֶרֶב וְהָנָה עָלֶיהָ־  
זֵית טָרֵף בִּפִּיהָ וַיֵּדַע נֹחַ כִּי־קָלוּ הַמַּיִם מֵעַל הָאָרֶץ:  
<sup>יב</sup> וַיַּחֲלֵ עוֹד שְׁבַעַת יָמִים אַחֲרַיִם וַיִּשְׁלַח אֶת־הַיּוֹנָה  
וְלֹא־יָסָפָה שׁוּב־אֵלָיו עוֹד: <sup>יג</sup> וַיְהִי בְּאַחַת וּשְׁש־מֵאוֹת  
שָׁנָה בְּרֵאשׁוֹן בְּאַחַד לַחֹדֶשׁ חָרְבוּ הַמַּיִם מֵעַל הָאָרֶץ  
וַיֹּסֶר נֹחַ אֶת־מִכְסֵּה הַתֵּבָה וַיֵּרָא וְהָנָה חָרְבוּ פְּנֵי  
הָאָדָמָה: <sup>יד</sup> וּבַחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁנִי בְּשַׁבְעָה וְעֶשְׂרִים יוֹם  
לַחֹדֶשׁ יָבֹשָׁה הָאָרֶץ: {ס}

<sup>טו</sup> וַיְדַבֵּר אֱלֹהִים אֶל־נֹחַ לֵאמֹר: <sup>טז</sup> צֵא מִן־הַתֵּבָה אַתָּה  
וְאִשְׁתְּךָ וּבְנֶיךָ וּנְשֵׁי־בְנֶיךָ אִתְּךָ: <sup>יז</sup> כָּל־הַחַיָּה אֲשֶׁר־  
אִתְּךָ מִכָּל־בֶּשָׂר בְּעוֹף וּבַבְּהֵמָה וּבְכָל־הָרֶמֶשׂ הָרֹמֵשׁ

receded from the face of the earth. <sup>9</sup> The dove found nowhere to perch and returned to him in the ark, for there was water on the face of the whole earth. He put out his hand, took hold of it, and brought it into the ark with him. <sup>10</sup> He waited seven more days and again sent out the dove from the ark. <sup>11</sup> In the evening, the dove came back to him and there was a new olive leaf in its beak; so, Noah knew that the waters had receded from the earth. <sup>12</sup> He waited seven more days, sent out the dove, and it returned to him no more. <sup>13</sup> In the six hundred and first year, in the first month, the first day of the month, the water dried up from the earth. Noah removed the hatch of the ark, looked, and the face of the earth was dry! <sup>14</sup> In the second month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, the earth was dry.

<sup>15</sup> Then God spoke to Noah and said, <sup>16</sup> "Go out of the ark, you, your wife, your sons, and your sons' wives with you. <sup>17</sup> Bring out all living things of flesh with you: birds, animals, and reptiles that crawl on

<sup>9</sup> For clarity, some translate 'there was water over' as 'water covered'.

<sup>10</sup> The LXX reads: "καὶ ἐπισχὼν ἔτι ἡμέρας ἑπτὰ ἐτέρως πάλιν ἐξαπέστειλεν τὴν περιστρεῖν ἐκ τῆς κιβωτοῦ"

<sup>11</sup> The deictic particle, הָנָה, draws attention to the olive leaf, inviting the reader to 'enter' the story, to look at the olive leaf with their own eyes.

<sup>12</sup> The literal translation of the final clause is, "it did not again return to him still;" the LXX copes thus: καὶ οὐ προσέειπε τοῦ ἐπιστρέψαι πρὸς αὐτὸν ἔτι. ("and she proceeded not to return to him any longer").

<sup>13</sup> After 'year', the LXX (and NJB) adds 'in the life of Noah' (ἐν τῇ ζωῇ τοῦ Νωε); here, we follow the MT.

<sup>14</sup> In v. 13 the ground (הָאָדָמָה) is dry; now the earth (הָאָרֶץ) is dry.

<sup>15</sup> For this verse, the NJB reads, "Then God said to Noah," avoiding the stylistic repetition; here, we follow the MT.

<sup>16</sup> The LXX opens with, "Come forth from out of the ark," (Ἔξελεθε ἐκ τῆς κιβωτοῦ).

<sup>17</sup> Following the Hiphil imperative (the Qere reading – הֵצֵא; the Ketiv has a possibly archaic, perfect verb form), 'bring them out', the three perfect verb forms with *vav* consecutive carry an imperative nuance.



עַל־הָאָרֶץ הוּצָא הַיָּצָא אֹתָם וְשָׂרְצוּ בָאָרֶץ וּפְרוּ וּרְבוּ  
עַל־הָאָרֶץ: <sup>יח</sup> וַיֵּצֵא־נֹחַ וּבָנָיו וְאִשְׁתּוֹ וּנְשֵׁי־בָנָיו אִתּוֹ:  
<sup>יט</sup> כָּל־הַחַיָּה כָּל־הָרֶמֶשׂ וְכָל־הָעוֹף כֹּל רוֹמֵשׁ עַל־  
הָאָרֶץ לְמִשְׁפַּחְתֵּיהֶם יֵצְאוּ מִן־הַתֵּבָה:  
<sup>כ</sup> וַיִּבֶן נֹחַ מִזְבֵּחַ לַיהוָה וַיִּקַּח מִכָּל הַבְּהֵמָה הַטְּהוֹרָה  
וּמִכָּל הָעוֹף הַטְּהוֹר וַיַּעַל עֹלֹת בַּמִּזְבֵּחַ: <sup>כא</sup> וַיִּרַח יְהוָה  
אֶת־רִיחַ הַנִּיחֹחַ וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־לְבוֹ לֹא־אֶסָּף לְקַלֵּל  
עוֹד אֶת־הָאָדָמָה בַּעֲבוּר הָאָדָם כִּי יַעַר לִב הָאָדָם רָע  
מִנְעָרְיוֹ וְלֹא־אֶסָּף עוֹד לְהַכּוֹת אֶת־כָּל־חַי כְּבָאֲשֶׁר  
עָשִׂיתִי:

<sup>כב</sup> עַד כָּל־יְמֵי הָאָרֶץ זֶרַע וְקָצִיר  
וְקֹר וְחֹם וְקִיץ וְחֹרֶף  
וַיּוֹם וּלְיָלָה לֹא יִשָּׁבְתוּ:

the earth; let them swarm on the earth and be fruitful and multiply  
on the earth.” <sup>18</sup> Noah went out with his sons, his wife, and his sons’  
wives, <sup>19</sup> and every animal, every creeping thing, and every bird,  
everything that moves on the earth, went out of the ark by families.  
<sup>20</sup> Noah built an altar for Yahweh and, choosing from all the clean  
animals and all the clean birds, he offered burnt offerings on the  
altar. <sup>21</sup> Yahweh smelt the appeasing fragrance and said to himself,  
“Never again will I curse the earth because of man, because his heart  
contrives evil from his infancy. Never again will I strike down every  
living thing as I have done.”

<sup>22</sup> “As long as the earth lasts, sowing and reaping,  
cold and heat, summer and winter,  
day and night shall cease no more.”

<sup>18</sup> In place of ‘went out’, the LXX has ‘came forth’ (ἐξῆλθεν).

<sup>19</sup> For this verse, here following the MT & NRSV, the NJB more closely reflects the LXX: (“all the wild beasts, all the cattle, all the birds and all the reptiles that crawl on the earth went out from the ark, one kind after another.” (καὶ πάντα τὰ θηρία καὶ πάντα τὰ κτήνη καὶ πᾶν πετεινὸν καὶ πᾶν ἔρπετον οἰνοῦμενον ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς κατὰ γένος αὐτῶν ἐξῆλθον ἐκ τῆς κιβωτοῦ.))

<sup>20</sup> The whole burnt offering, according to Lv 1, represented the worshiper’s complete surrender and dedication to Yahweh.

<sup>21</sup> The anthropomorphism, “Yahweh smelt the pleasing fragrance,” was destined to become part of the technical vocabulary of ritual (see Ex 29:18 & 25, Lv 1:9 & 13, and Nb 28:2).

<sup>22</sup> Aware of continuing human wickedness, God still preserves what he has made and, in spite of human sin, will lead it to the goal he has set.

## אשית פרק ט

א וַיְבָרֶךְ אֱלֹהִים אֶת־נֹחַ וְאֶת־בָּנָיו וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם פְּרוּ  
וּרְבוּ וּמְלֵאוּ אֶת־הָאָרֶץ: ב וּמִזֶּרְעְכֶם וּחְתֻכֶּם יִהְיֶה עַל  
כָּל־חַיַּת הָאָרֶץ וְעַל כָּל־עוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם בְּכָל־אֲשֶׁר  
תִּרְמָשׁ הָאָדָמָה וּבְכָל־דָּגֵי הַיָּם בְּיַדְכֶם נִתְּנוּ: ג כָּל־  
רֶמֶשׂ אֲשֶׁר הוּא־חַי לָכֶם יִהְיֶה לְאֹכְלָהּ כִּי־רֶק עֹשֵׁב  
נָתַתִּי לָכֶם אֶת־כָּל־: ד אֲדַבֵּשׁ בְּנַפְשׁוֹ דָּמוֹ לֹא  
תֹאכְלוּ: ה וְאֲדַמְּכֶם לְנַפְשֹׁתֵיכֶם אֶדְרֹשׁ מִיַּד  
כָּל־חַיָּה אֲדְרֹשְׁנָהּ וּמִיַּד הָאָדָם מִיַּד אִישׁ אָחִיו אֲדְרֹשׁ  
אֶת־נַפְשׁ הָאָדָם:

ו שֹׁפֵךְ דָּם הָאָדָם  
בָּאָדָם דָּמוֹ יִשְׁפָּךְ  
כִּי בְצִלְם אֱלֹהִים עָשָׂה אֶת־הָאָדָם:

## GENESIS 9

<sup>1</sup> God blessed Noah and his sons, saying to them, “Be fruitful, multiply and fill the earth. <sup>2</sup> Be the terror and the dread of all the wild beasts and all the birds of heaven, of everything that crawls on the ground and all the fish of the sea: they are placed in your hands. <sup>3</sup> Every living, moving thing shall be food for you, as the green plants. I give you everything. <sup>4</sup> Only you must not eat flesh with life – its blood – in it. <sup>5</sup> I will demand an account of your life-blood: from every beast and from man. I will demand an account of every man’s life from his fellow men.

<sup>6</sup> “He who sheds man’s blood shall have his blood shed by man; for, in the image of God man was made.

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### GENESIS 9

- <sup>1</sup> At the end of this verse, here following the MT, the LXX adds, ‘and dominate it’ – καὶ κατακυριεύσατε αὐτῆς.
- <sup>2</sup> In the beginning, man was blessed and consecrated lord of creation; he is now blessed and consecrated anew, but his rule is tranquil no longer. In this new age, man will be at war with the beasts and with his fellows; the peace of Paradise will not return until ‘the final days’ (Is 11:6).
- <sup>3</sup> The perfect form of the verb ‘give’ describes the action that accompanies the declaration.
- <sup>4</sup> Since the blood is equated with life, meat that had the blood in it was not to be eaten.
- <sup>5</sup> The literal translation of ‘his fellow man’ is ‘the hand of a man, his brother’; the point is that God will require the blood of someone who kills, since the person killed is a relative of the killer. The language reflects Noah’s situation (after the flood, everyone would be part of Noah’s extended family) but also supports the concept of the brotherhood of mankind.
- <sup>6</sup> The blood of every creature belongs to God (see Lv 1:5), but human blood does in particular because man was made in God’s likeness. Accordingly, God will avenge human blood (4:10) and delegates this office to man himself, to be exercised either through the state or through the individual ‘avenger of blood’ (Nb 35:19). The laws given to Noah are binding not only on Israel but also on all humanity (Ac 15:20, 21:25).

וַאֲתֵם פְּרוּ וּרְבוּ  
 שְׂרִצּוּ בָאָרֶץ וּרְבוּ-בָהּ: {ס}

<sup>7</sup> As for you, be fruitful, multiply,  
 teem over the earth and subdue it.”

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים אֶל-נֹחַ וְאֶל-בָּנָיו אִתּוֹ לֵאמֹר: <sup>ח</sup>וַאֲנִי  
 הֲנִי מְקִים אֶת-בְּרִיתִי אִתְּכֶם וְאֶת-זֶרְעְכֶם אַחֲרֵיכֶם:  
 וְאֵת כָּל-נֶפֶשׁ הַחַיָּה אֲשֶׁר אִתְּכֶם בְּעוֹף בְּבִהֶמָה  
 וּבְכָל-חַיַּת הָאָרֶץ אִתְּכֶם מִכָּל יֹצְאֵי הַתְּבָה לְכָל חַיַּת  
 הָאָרֶץ: <sup>ט</sup>וְהִקְמַתִּי אֶת-בְּרִיתִי אִתְּכֶם וְלֹא-יִכָּרֵת כָּל-  
 בָּשָׂר עוֹד מִמִּי הַמַּבּוּל וְלֹא-יִהְיֶה עוֹד מַבּוּל לְשַׁחַת  
 הָאָרֶץ: <sup>י</sup>וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים זֹאת אוֹת-הַבְּרִית אֲשֶׁר-אֲנִי  
 נֹתֵן בֵּינִי וּבֵינֵיכֶם וּבֵין כָּל-נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה אֲשֶׁר אִתְּכֶם  
 לְדֹרֹת עוֹלָם: <sup>יא</sup>אֶת-קִשְׁטִי נֹתַתִּי בַעֲנָן וְהִיתָה לְאוֹת  
 בְּרִית בֵּינִי וּבֵין הָאָרֶץ: <sup>יד</sup>וְהָיָה בַעֲנָנִי עָנָן עַל-הָאָרֶץ  
 וְנִרְאָתָה הַקֶּשֶׁת בַּעֲנָן: <sup>טו</sup>וְזָכַרְתִּי אֶת-בְּרִיתִי אֲשֶׁר  
 בֵּינִי וּבֵינֵיכֶם וּבֵין כָּל-נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה בְּכָל-בָּשָׂר וְלֹא-יִהְיֶה

<sup>8</sup> And God said to Noah and to his sons with him, <sup>9</sup>“See, I establish my covenant with you and with your seed after you; <sup>10</sup>also with every living creature that is with you, birds, cattle, and every wild beast with you: everything that came out of the ark, every animal of the earth. <sup>11</sup>I establish my covenant with you: never shall all flesh be swept away again by floodwaters there shall be no flood to destroy the earth again. <sup>12</sup>God said, “Here is the sign of the covenant I make between me and you and every living creature with you for all future generations: <sup>13</sup>I set my bow in the clouds and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. <sup>14</sup>When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, <sup>15</sup>I will recall the covenant between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the

<sup>7</sup> The disjunctive clause translated ‘as for you’ (conjunction + pronominal subject + verb) here indicates a contrast to what has preceded: against the backdrop of the warnings about taking life, God now instructs people to produce life, in terms reminiscent of the mandate given to Adam.

<sup>8</sup> The translation given here is literal; most English versions reduce this verse to, “God said to Noah and his sons.”

<sup>9</sup> The Covenant with Noah, the sign of which is the rainbow, involves the whole of creation.

<sup>10</sup> The NRSV omits the final phrase, “... everything animal of earth.”

<sup>11</sup> The verb וְהִקְמַתִּי (‘establish’) is a perfect with the *vav* consecutive and should be translated with the English present tense, just as the participle at the beginning of the speech was (v. 9); another option is to translate both forms with the English future tense (‘I will establish’).

<sup>12</sup> The term עוֹלָם (‘all subsequent’) more literally means ‘forever’ or ‘perpetual’; the covenant would extend to subsequent generations.

<sup>13</sup> The ancients imagined the rainbow as the weapon (bow) of the Divine Warrior, from which the lightning of arrows was shot (Ps 7:12–13, Hab 3:9–11). The placement of this weapon in the heavens is a sign, or visible token, that God’s wrath has abated.

<sup>14</sup> The temporal indicator וְהָיָה (‘when’, conjunction + the perfect verb form), often translated ‘it will be’, anticipates a future development.

<sup>15</sup> The literal translation of ‘the covenant between me and you’ is ‘my covenant, which is between me and you’.

עֹד הַמַּיִם לִמְבּוּל לְשַׁחַת כָּל־בָּשָׂר: <sup>טז</sup> וְהִיְתָה הַקֶּשֶׁת  
 בַּעֲנָן וּרְאִיתִיהָ לְזִכֹּר בְּרִית עֹלָם בֵּין אֱלֹהִים וּבֵין כָּל־  
 נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה בְּכָל־בָּשָׂר אֲשֶׁר עַל־הָאָרֶץ: <sup>יז</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר  
 אֱלֹהִים אֶל־נֹחַ זֹאת אֹת־הַבְּרִית אֲשֶׁר הִקְמַתִי בֵּינִי  
 וּבֵין כָּל־בָּשָׂר אֲשֶׁר עַל־הָאָרֶץ: {פ}

<sup>יח</sup> וַיְהִיו בְּנֵי־נֹחַ הַיָּצְאִים מִן־הַתֵּבָה שֵׁם וְחָם וְיָפֶת וְחָם  
 הוּא אָבִי כְנָעַן: <sup>יט</sup> שְׁלֹשָׁה אֱלֹהִים בְּנֵי־נֹחַ וּמֵאֵלֶּה נִפְצָה  
 כָּל־הָאָרֶץ: <sup>כ</sup> וַיַּחֲלֵ נֹחַ אִישׁ הָאֲדָמָה וַיִּטֵּעַ כֶּרֶם:  
<sup>כא</sup> וַיִּשְׂתֵּ מִן־הַיַּיִן וַיִּשְׁכָּר וַיִּתְּגַל בַּתּוֹךְ אֹהֱלָה: <sup>כב</sup> וַיֵּרָא  
 חָם אָבִי כְנָעַן אֶת עֶרְוַת אָבִיו וַיַּגֵּד לְשְׁנֵי־אֶחָיו בַּחוּץ:  
<sup>כג</sup> וַיִּקַּח שֵׁם וְיָפֶת אֶת־הַשְּׂמָלָה וַיִּשְׁיִמוּ עַל־שָׁכְם  
 שְׁנֵיהֶם וַיִּלְכוּ אַחֲרָנִית וַיִּכְסּוּ אֶת עֶרְוַת אֲבִיהֶם  
 וַפְּגִיהֶם אַחֲרָנִית וְעֶרְוַת אֲבִיהֶם לֹא רָאוּ: <sup>כד</sup> וַיִּקַּץ נֹחַ  
 מִיֵּינוֹ וַיֵּדַע אֵת אֲשֶׁר־עָשָׂה לוֹ בְּנוֹ הַקָּטָן:

waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. <sup>16</sup> When the bow is in the clouds, I shall see it and recall the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth." <sup>17</sup> God said to Noah, "This is the sign of the covenant I have established between me and all flesh that is on the earth.

<sup>18</sup> The sons of Noah who left the ark were Shem, Ham, and Japheth; Ham was the father of Canaan. <sup>19</sup> These three were Noah's sons and, of these, the whole earth was peopled. <sup>20</sup> Noah began farming and planted a vineyard. <sup>21</sup> He drank some wine, got drunk, and lay naked in his tent. <sup>22</sup> Ham, Canaan's father, saw his father's nakedness and told his two brothers outside. <sup>23</sup> Shem and Japheth took a cloak, put it on their shoulders, walked backwards, and covered their father's nakedness; looked away, so they did not see their father's nakedness. <sup>24</sup> Noah woke from his wine and knew what his youngest son had done to him.

<sup>16</sup> The translation assumes that the infinitive לְזִכֹּר ('to call to mind') here expresses the result of seeing the rainbow; another option is to understand it as indicating purpose, in which case it could be translated, "I will look at it so that I may call to mind."

<sup>17</sup> The literal translation of 'every living thing' is 'all flesh'.

<sup>18</sup> The names and order of the sons of Noah: Shem, Ham and Japheth, are fixed by tradition (5:32, 6:10, 7:13 and 10:1).

<sup>19</sup> The literal translation of 'peopled' (נִפְצָה) is 'scattered'; the term figures prominently in story of the dispersion of mankind in Ch. 11.

<sup>20</sup> For this verse, here following the WEBBE, the NJB has, "Noah, a man of the soil, was first to plant the vine."

<sup>21</sup> Noah became overheated because of the wine and uncovered himself in the tent.

<sup>22</sup> Ham is not mentioned again and Canaan is the one to be cursed in vv. 25-27, so he was evidently the guilty party.

<sup>23</sup> The word translated 'a cloak' has the Hebrew definite article on it; the article may simply indicate that the garment is definite and vivid in the mind of the narrator, but it could refer instead to Noah's garment: did Ham bring it out when he told his brothers?

<sup>24</sup> The verb עָשָׂה ('to do') carries too general a sense to imply that Ham had done more than look on his father's nakedness and tell his brothers.

כה וַיֹּאמֶר 25 And he said:

אָרוּר כְּנָעַן  
עֶבֶד עֲבָדִים  
יִהְיֶה לְאֶחָיו:

"Accursed be Canaan.  
He shall be his brothers'  
meanest slave."

כו וַיֹּאמֶר 26 And he said:

בָּרוּךְ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי שֵׁם  
וְיִהְיֶה כְנָעַן עֶבֶד לָמוֹ:  
יִפְתָּ אֱלֹהִים לִיפֹת 27  
וְיִשְׁכֵּן בְּאֶהֱלֵי־שֵׁם  
וְיִהְיֶה כְנָעַן עֶבֶד לָמוֹ:

"Blessed be Yahweh, God of Shem,  
let Canaan be his slave!  
May God extend Japheth,  
may he live in the tents of Shem,  
and may Canaan be his slave!"

כה וַיְחִי־נֹחַ אַחֲרֵי הַמָּבּוּל שְׁלֹשׁ מֵאוֹת שָׁנָה וַחֲמִשִּׁים 28 And, after the flood, Noah lived for three hundred and fifty years.  
שָׁנָה: כט וַיְהִי כָל־יְמֵי־נֹחַ תִּשְׁעַת מֵאוֹת שָׁנָה וַחֲמִשִּׁים 29 All the days of Noah were nine hundred and fifty years;  
שָׁנָה וַיָּמָת: {פ} and then he died.

25 The blessings and curses of the patriarchs (see Chs. 27 & 49) are effective words addressed to the ancestor and worked out in his descendants. Canaan's race is to be subject to Shem, ancestor of Abraham and the Israelites, who are to enjoy Yahweh's special protection, and to Japheth, whose descendants will expand at Shem's expense.

26 For the 2<sup>nd</sup> line, here following the MT, the LXX has "and Canaan will be his slave" (*καὶ ἔσται Χανααν παῖς αὐτοῦ*).

27 Note the play on the word יִפְתָּ ('extend' or 'enlarge') and 'Japheth' (יִפְתָּ). This verse may refer to the Philistines, one of the sea-peoples who dwelt in 'the tents of Shem', i.e. conquered the coats of Canaan.

28 The MT (שְׁלֹשׁ מֵאוֹת שָׁנָה, וַחֲמִשִּׁים שָׁנָה) and LXX (τριακόσια πεντήκοντα ἔτη) here agree on the length of Noah's life after the flood (350 years).

29 As in the previous verse, the MT (תִּשְׁעַת מֵאוֹת שָׁנָה, וַחֲמִשִּׁים שָׁנָה) and LXX (ἐννακόσια πεντήκοντα ἔτη) here agree on the total length of Noah's life (950 years).

## בראשית פרק י

## GENESIS 10

א ואלה תולדות בני־נח שם חם ויפת ויילדו להם בנים אחר המבול: ב בני יפת גמר ומגוג ומדי ויון ותבל ומשך ותירס: ג ובני גמר אשכנז וריפת ותגרמה: ד ובני יון אלישה ותרשיש כתים ודדנים: ה מאלה נפרדו אי הגוים בארצתם איש ללשנו למשפחתם בגויהם: ו ובני חם כוש ומצרים ופוט וכנען: ז ובני

<sup>1</sup> These are the descendants of Noah's sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth, to whom sons were born after the flood: <sup>2</sup> Japheth's sons: Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshech, Tiras; <sup>3</sup> and Gomer's sons: Ashkenaz, Riphath, Togarmah; <sup>4</sup> and Javan's sons: Elishah, Tarshish, the Kittim, the Dananites. <sup>5</sup> From these came the dispersal to the islands of the nations. <sup>6</sup> And Ham's sons: Cush, Mizraim, Put and

### GENESIS 10

- <sup>1</sup> It appears that the Table of Nations is partly composite: some sections begin with the phrase בְּנֵי ('the sons of ...') while other sections use יָלַד ('... fathered'); it may be that the 'sons of' list is the 'original', while the 'fathered' sections are editorial inserts.
- <sup>2</sup> The Greek form of the name Japheth (יָפֶֿתֿ), *Iaφεθ*, is used in Greek tradition for the ancestor of the Greeks. 'Gomer' was the ancestor of the Cimmerians; in place of 'Madai' (here following the MT and NRSV), the NJB has 'the Medes' (who lived east of Assyria); 'Javan' was the father of the Hellenic race, the Ionians who lived in western Asia Minor; *Tubal* was the ancestor of militaristic tribes that lived north of the Black Sea; 'Meshech' was the ancestor of the people known in Assyrian records as the *Musku*; and 'Tiras' was the ancestor of the Thracians, some of whom possibly became the Pelasgian pirates of the Aegean.
- <sup>3</sup> The descendants of 'Gomer' were all northern tribes of the Upper Euphrates; 'Askenaz' was the ancestor of a northern branch of Indo-Germanic tribes, possibly Scythians; The descendants of 'Riphath' lived in a district north of the road from Haran to Carchemish; 'Togarmah' is also mentioned in Ezk 38:6, where it refers to Til-Garimmu, the capital of Kammanu, which bordered Tabal in eastern Turkey.
- <sup>4</sup> The descendants of *Elishah* populated Cyprus; the descendants of *Tarshish* settled along the southern coast of what is modern Turkey, but some identify the site Tarshish (see Jonah 1:3) with Sardinia or Spain; the name *Kittim* is associated with Cyprus, as well as coastlands east of Rhodes – it is used in later texts to refer to the Romans. The NRSV uses 'Rodanim' in place of 'Dananites': most of the MT MSS read 'Dodanim' (דֹּדָנִים) here, but 1Ch 1:7 has 'Rodanim', perhaps referring to the island of Rhodes; however, the Qere reading in 1Ch 1:7 suggests 'Dodanim'.
- <sup>5</sup> The 'islands of the nations' refers to the islands and the seaboard of the Mediterranean. At the end of this verse, here following the MT and NJB, the NRSV adds, "These are the sons of Japheth in their lands, with their own language, by their families, in their nations."
- <sup>6</sup> The descendants of 'Ham' lived in the Egyptian orbit; the descendants of 'Cush' settled in Nubia (Ethiopia); the descendants of 'Mizraim' descendants settled in Upper and Lower Egypt; the descendants of 'Put' settled in Libya; the descendants of 'Canaan' lived in the region of Phoenicia (Palestine).



כֹּשׁ סְבָא וְחַוִּילָה וְסַבְתָּה וְרַעְמָה וְסַבְתֵּכָא וּבְנֵי  
רַעְמָה שְׂבָא וְדֶדָן: Canaan;<sup>7</sup> and Cush's sons: Seba, Havilah, Sabtah, Raamah, Sabteca.  
Raamah's sons: Sheba and Dedan.

ח כֹּשׁ יָלַד אֶת־נִמְרֹד הוּא הָחָל לִהְיוֹת גִּבּוֹר בָּאָרֶץ: 8 Cush fathered Nimrod who was the first valiant warrior on earth.  
ט הוּא־הָיָה גִבּוֹר־צִיד לִפְנֵי יְהוָה עַל־כֵּן יֵאמָר כְּנִמְרֹד 9 He was a mighty hunter before Yahweh, hence the saying, "Like  
גִּבּוֹר צִיד לִפְנֵי יְהוָה: וְתָהִי רֵאשִׁית מִמְּלַכְתּוֹ בְּכָל  
וְאָרֶץ וְאֶכָּד וְכַלְנֶה בָּאָרֶץ שְׁנַעַר: יא מִן־הָאָרֶץ הַהוּא in his empire were Babel, Erech and Accad, all of them in the land of  
יֵצֵא אַשּׁוּר וַיְבִן אֶת־נִינְוֶה וְאֶת־רַחֲבַת עִיר וְאֶת־כַּלַּח: Shinar. 11 From this country came Ashur, the builder of Nineveh,  
יב וְאֶת־רֶסֶן בֵּין נִינְוֶה וּבֵין כַּלַּח הוּא הָעִיר הַגְּדֹלָה: Rehoboth-Ir, Calah, 12 and Resen between Nineveh and Calah (this is  
יג וּמִצְרַיִם יָלַד אֶת־לֹדִים וְאֶת־עַנְמִים וְאֶת־לְהָבִים the great city). 13 Mizraim fathered the Ludim, the Ananim, the

<sup>7</sup> The descendants of *Seba* settled in Upper Egypt along the Nile; the name *Havilah* apparently means 'stretch of sand' – '*Havilah's*' descendants settled in eastern Arabia; the descendants of '*Sabtah*' settled near the western shore of the Persian Gulf in ancient Hadhramaut; the descendants of '*Raamah*' settled in southwest Arabia; the descendants of '*Sabteca*' settled in Samudake, east toward the Persian Gulf; '*Sheba*' became the name of a kingdom in southwest Arabia; the name '*Dedan*' is associated with Ula in northern Arabia.

<sup>8</sup> '*Nimrod*' was a character of popular story (v. 9 records a proverb); there have been many attempts to identify him, but none are convincing.

<sup>9</sup> An alternative translation of '*before Yahweh*' (לִפְנֵי יְהוָה), taking the divine name as a means of expressing the superlative degree, is '*Nimrod was the greatest hunter in the world*'. The word for 'hunt' (צִיד) is used on occasion for hunting men (1S 24:12, Jr 16:16, Lm 3:15).

<sup>10</sup> '*Erech*' (ancient Uruk, modern Warka), one of the most ancient civilisations, was located southeast of Babylon. '*Akkad*', or ancient Agade, was associated with Sargon and located north of Babylon; the name is here used to indicate the southern region of Lower Mesopotamia, as opposed to the land of Sumer, which lies further south; more commonly, it indicates the language and Semitic population of the southern region as distinct from the Sumerians. '*Shinar*' is another name for Babylonia.

<sup>11</sup> '*Nineveh*' was an ancient Assyrian city situated on the Tigris River; the name '*Rehoboth-Ir*' means '*and broad streets of a city*', perhaps referring to a suburb of Nineveh; '*Calah*' (modern Nimrud) was located 35 Km north of Nineveh.

<sup>12</sup> If the parenthesised phrase refers to Calah, it may date from the 9<sup>th</sup> Century BC, when Calah became the capital of Assyria; if it refers to Nineveh, then it is later than Sennacherib, who established his capital there.

<sup>13</sup> The '*Ludim*' (the NJB has '*Ludites*') were African tribes west of the Nile Delta; the '*Ananim*' (NJB = '*Anamites*') lived in North Africa, west of Egypt, near Cyrene; the '*Lehabim*' (NJB = '*Lehabites*') are identified with the Libyans; the '*Naphtuhim*' ('*Naphtuhites*') lived in Lower Egypt (the Nile Delta region). The NJB has '*Cusluhites*' in place of '*Casluhim*', here following the MT (& NRSV).

וְאֶת־נַפְתָּחִים: י<sup>ד</sup> וְאֶת־פַּתְרֹסִים וְאֶת־כַּסְלָחִים אֲשֶׁר  
יֵצְאוּ מִשָּׁם פְּלִשְׁתִּים וְאֶת־כַּפְתָּרִים: {ס}

טו וְכִנְעַן יָלַד אֶת־צִידֹן בְּכֹרוֹ וְאֶת־חֶת: טז וְאֶת־הִיבוּסִי  
וְאֶת־הָאֹמִרִי וְאֶת־הַגִּרְגָּשִׁי: יז וְאֶת־הַחִוִּי וְאֶת־הָעֲרֻקִי  
וְאֶת־הַסִּינִי: יח וְאֶת־הָאַרְוָדִי וְאֶת־הָעֲמֹרִי וְאֶת־  
הַחֲמָתִי וְאַחֵר נִפְצוּ מִשְׁפְּחוֹת הַכְּנַעֲנִי: יט וַיְהִי גְבוּל  
הַכְּנַעֲנִי מִצִּידֹן בְּאֶבְרָה גֶרָר עַד־עֵזָה בְּאֶבְרָה סְדֹמָה  
וְעֹמְרָה וְאַדְמָה וְצִבְיִם עַד־לָשָׁע:

כ אֵלֶּה בְּנֵי־חָם לְמִשְׁפְּחֹתָם לְלִשְׁנָתָם בְּאַרְצֹתָם  
בְּגוֹיֵיהֶם: {ס}

כא וְשֵׁם יֶלֶד גַּם־הוּא אָבִי כָל־בְּנֵי־עֶבֶר אָחִי יָפֶת  
הַגָּדוֹל:

Lehabim, the Naphtuhim, <sup>14</sup> the Pathrosim, the Casluhim and the  
Caphtorim, from which the Philistines came.

<sup>15</sup> Canaan fathered Sidon, his firstborn, then Heth, <sup>16</sup> and the Jebus-  
ites, the Amorites, and the Girgashites, <sup>17</sup> the Hivites, the Arkites, and  
the Sinites, <sup>18</sup> the Arvadites, the Zemarites, and the Hamathites; and  
later, the Canaanite tribes scattered. <sup>19</sup> The Canaanite frontier  
stretched from Sidon all the way to Gerar near Gaza, and all the way  
to Sodom, to Gomorrah, to Admah and to Zeboiim, near Lasha.

<sup>20</sup> These were Ham's sons, among their tribes, according to their lang-  
uages, by their countries and by their nations.

<sup>21</sup> Shem too fathered sons, being ancestor of all the sons of Eber and  
the elder brother of Japheth.

<sup>14</sup> The MT places the people of Caphtor after the Philistines: "... the Philistines and Caphtorim;" however, it was from Caphtor that the Philistines came originally (Jos 13:2).

<sup>15</sup> Sidon was the foremost city in Phoenicia; here 'Sidon' may be the name of its founder.

<sup>16</sup> The 'Jebusites' were the Canaanite inhabitants of ancient Jerusalem; here 'Amorites' refers to smaller groups of Canaanite inhabitants of the mountainous regions of Palestine, rather than the large waves of Amurru, or western Semites, who migrated to the region.

<sup>17</sup> The 'Hivites' were Canaanite tribes of a Hurrian origin; the 'Arkites' lived in Arka, a city in Lebanon, north of Sidon; the 'Sinites' lived in Sin, another town in Lebanon.

<sup>18</sup> The 'Arvadites' lived in the city Arvad, located on an island near the mainland close to the river El Kebir; the 'Zemarites' lived in the town Sumur, north of Arka; the 'Hamathites' lived in Hamath on the Orontes River.

<sup>19</sup> The literal translation of 'all the way to' (twice in this verse) is 'as you go to'. The NJB has 'Lasha' in place of 'Lasha'.

<sup>20</sup> In place of 'among', here reflecting the LXX (ἐν), the MT and many translations have 'according to', as in the next clause.

<sup>21</sup> In place of 'the elder brother of Japheth', some translations read 'whose older brother was Japheth', understanding the adjective הַגָּדוֹל as modifying Japheth; however, in Hebrew when a masculine singular definite attributive adjective follows the sequence masculine singular construct noun + proper name, the adjective invariably modifies the noun in construct, not the proper name.

כב בני שם עילם ואשור וארפכשד ולוד וארם: כג ובני  
ארם עוז וחול וגתר ומש:

<sup>22</sup> Shem's sons: Elam, Asshur, Arpachshad, Lud and Aram. <sup>23</sup> Aram's sons: Uz, Hul, Gether and Mash.

כד וארפכשד ילד את-שלח ושלח ילד את-עבר:  
כה ולעבר ילד שני בנים שם האחד פלג כי בימיו  
נפלגה הארץ ושם אחיו יקטן: כו ויקטן ילד את-  
אלמודד ואת-שלף ואת-חצרמות ואת-ירח: כז ואת-  
הדורם ואת-אוזל ואת-דקלה: כח ואת-עובל ואת-  
אבימאל ואת-שבא: כט ואת-אופר ואת-חזילה ואת-  
יזבב כל-אלה בני יקטן: ל ויהי מושבם ממשא באכה  
ספרה הר הקדם:

<sup>24</sup> Arpachshad fathered Shelah, and Shelah fathered Eber. <sup>25</sup> To Eber were born two sons: the first he called Peleg – because it was in his time that the earth was divided – and his brother he called Joktan. <sup>26</sup> Joktan fathered Almodad, and Sheleph, and Hazarmaveth, and Jerah, <sup>27</sup> and Hadoram, and Uzal, and Diklah, <sup>28</sup> and Obal, and Abima-El, and Sheba, <sup>29</sup> and Ophir, and Havilah, and Jobab; all these are sons of Joktan. <sup>30</sup> They occupied a stretch of country from Mesha all the way to Sephar, the eastern mountain range.

<sup>22</sup> The name 'Elam' means 'highland'; the Elamites were a non-Semitic people living east of Babylon. 'Asshur' is a name for Assyria, the region in which Nimrod expanded his power (see v. 11, where the name is also mentioned); when names appear in both sections of a genealogical list, it probably means that there were both Hamites and Shemites living in that region in antiquity, especially if the name is a place name.

<sup>23</sup> In place of 'Mash', here following the MT (מש), the LXX has 'Mosoch' (Μοσοχ).

<sup>24</sup> In this verse, the LXX adds a generation between Arpachshad and Shelah: καὶ Αρφαξὰδ ἐγέννησεν τὸν Καϊναν, καὶ Καϊναν ἐγέννησεν τὸν Σαλα, Σαλα δὲ ἐγέννησεν τὸν Εβερ. ("And Arphaxad fathered Kainan, and Kainan fathered Sala, and Sala fathered Eber.")

<sup>25</sup> 'Peleg' (פלג) means division.

<sup>26</sup> The name 'Almodad' combines the Arabic article *al* with *modad* ('friend'); Almodad was the ancestor of a South Arabian people. The name, 'Sheleph', may be related to Shilph, a district of Yemen; Shalph is a Yemenite tribe. The name, 'Hazarmaveth', should be equated with Hadramawt, located in Southern Arabia. The name, 'Jerah', means 'moon'.

<sup>27</sup> 'Uzal' was the name of the old capital of Yemen. The name, 'Diklah', means 'date-palm'.

<sup>28</sup> 'Obal' was a name used for several localities in Yemen. The name 'Abima-El' is a genuine Sabaeen form, which means 'my father, truly, he is God'. The descendants of 'Sheba' lived in South Arabia, where the Joktanites were more powerful than the Hamites.

<sup>29</sup> 'Ophir' became the name of a territory in South Arabia; many of the references to Ophir are connected with gold (e.g. 1K 9:28, 10:11, 22:48, 1Ch 29:4, 2Ch 8:18, 9:10, Job 22:24, 28:16, Ps 45:9, Is 13:12). Havilah is listed with Ham in v. 7.

<sup>30</sup> The literal translation of 'all the way' is 'as you go'.

לֹא אֵלֶּה בְּנֵי־שֵׁם לְמִשְׁפַּחְתָּם לְלִשְׁנָתָם בְּאַרְצֵתָם  
לְגוֹיֵיהֶם: לִבִּי אֵלֶּה מִשְׁפַּחַת בְּנֵי־נֹחַ לְתוֹלְדֹתָם בְּגוֹיֵיהֶם  
וּמֵאֵלֶּה נִפְרְדּוּ הַגּוֹיִם בְּאַרְץ אַחֵר הַמִּבּוּל:  
{פ}

<sup>31</sup> These were Shem's sons, according to their tribes and languages,  
and their nations. <sup>32</sup> These are the tribes of Noah's sons, according to  
their descendants and their nations. From these, the nation spread  
over the earth after the Flood.

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<sup>31</sup> Before 'nations', the NJB adds 'countries and'; here, we follow the MT (and JPS).

<sup>32</sup> An alternative reading of the last sentence (following the NJB) is: "From these came the dispersal of the nations over the earth, after the flood."

## GENESIS 11

## בראשית פרק יא

א ויהי כלהארץ שפה אחת ודברים אחדים: ב ויהי בנסעם מקדם וימצאו בקעה בארץ שנער וישבו שם: ג ויאמרו איש אל-רעהו הבה נלבנה לבנים ונשרפה לשרפה ותהי להם הלבנה לאבן והחמר יהיה להם לחמר: ד ויאמרו הבה נבנה-לנו עיר ומגדל וראשו בשמים ונעשה-לנו שם פן-נפוז על-פני כלהארץ: ה וירד יהוה לראות את-העיר ואת-המגדל אשר בנו בני האדם: ו ויאמר יהוה הן עם אחד ושפה אחת לכלם וזה החלם לעשות ועתה לא-יבצר מהם כל אשר יזמו לעשות: ז הבה נרדה

1 The whole earth was of one language and one speech. 2 When men migrated eastward, they found a plain in the land of Shinar where they settled. 3 They said to one another, "Come, let us make bricks and bake them." For stone, they used bricks and for mortar, they used bitumen. 4 "Come," they said, "let us build a city and a tower with its top reaching heaven; let us make a name for ourselves, or we will be scattered about the whole earth." 5 Yahweh came down to see the city and the tower the sons of me had built. 6 Yahweh said, "So, they are one people with one language! This is but the start of their plans: nothing will be too hard for them! 7 Come, let us go down and

## GENESIS 11

- 1 The literal translation of 'one language and one speech' is 'one lip and one (set of) words': the term 'lip' is a metonymy of cause, putting the instrument for the intended effect – they had one language; the term 'words' refers to the content of their speech – their vocabulary.
- 2 The NRSV, following the LXX, opens this verse (here following the NJB) with: "Now as they migrated from the east ..." 'Shinar' is Babylonia (10:10, Is 11:11, Dn 1:2).
- 3 The literal translation of 'to one another' is 'a man to his neighbour'. The speech contains two cohortatives of exhortation followed by their respective cognate accusatives, literally: 'let us brick bricks' (לִבְנִים נִלְבְּנָה) and 'and burn for burning' (וְנִשְׂרֹפָה לְשִׂרְפָּה); this stresses the intensity of the undertaking; it also reflects the Accadian text, which uses similar constructions.
- 4 Tradition has crystallised round the ruins of one of those high, stepped towers built in ancient Mesopotamia to symbolise the holy mountain and resting place of the deity. The builders were apparently seeking a means to meet their god.
- 5 The phrase, 'sons of men' portrays the builders as mere mortals, not the lesser deities that the Babylonians claimed built the city.
- 6 The literal translation of 'with one language' is 'and one lip to all of them' (see #1).
- 7 The literal translation of 'they will not understand one another' is 'they will not hear, a man the lip of his neighbour'. God speaks here to his angelic assembly; see also Jub 10:22–23, where an angel recounts this incident, saying: "And the Lord our God said to us... And the Lord went down and we went down with him; and we saw the city and the tower that the sons of men built."

וַנְבַּלְהָ שֵׁם שְׁפָתָם אֲשֶׁר לֹא יִשְׁמְעוּ אִישׁ שֹׁפֶת רֵעֵהוּ:  
 ח וַיִּפֶּץ יְהוָה אֹתָם מִשָּׁם עַל-פְּנֵי כָל-הָאָרֶץ וַיַּחְדְּלוּ  
 לְבִנֹּת הָעִיר: ט עַל-כֵּן קָרָא שְׁמָהּ בָּבֶל כִּי-שָׁם בָּלַל  
 יְהוָה שֹׁפֶת כָּל-הָאָרֶץ וּמִשָּׁם הִפִּיצָם יְהוָה עַל-פְּנֵי כָל-  
 הָאָרֶץ: {פ}

י אֵלֶּה תּוֹלְדֹת לָשָׁם שֵׁם בֶּן-מֵאֵת שָׁנָה וַיּוֹלֶד אֶת-  
 אַרְפַּכְשָׁד שְׁנַתִּים אַחֵר הַמָּבּוּל: יא וַיְחִי-שָׁם אַחֲרֵי  
 הוֹלִידוֹ אֶת-אַרְפַּכְשָׁד חֲמֵשׁ מֵאוֹת שָׁנָה וַיּוֹלֶד בָּנִים  
 וּבָנוֹת: {ס} יב וְאַרְפַּכְשָׁד חֵי חֲמֵשׁ וּשְׁלֹשִׁים שָׁנָה  
 וַיּוֹלֶד אֶת-שֶׁלַח: יג וַיְחִי אַרְפַּכְשָׁד אַחֲרֵי הוֹלִידוֹ אֶת-  
 שֶׁלַח שְׁלֹשׁ שָׁנִים וְאַרְבַּע מֵאוֹת שָׁנָה וַיּוֹלֶד בָּנִים  
 וּבָנוֹת: {ס} יד וְשֶׁלַח חֵי שְׁלֹשִׁים שָׁנָה וַיּוֹלֶד אֶת-עֵבֶר:  
 טו וַיְחִי-שֶׁלַח אַחֲרֵי הוֹלִידוֹ אֶת-עֵבֶר שְׁלֹשׁ שָׁנִים

confuse their language, so they will not understand one another.”

<sup>8</sup> Yahweh scattered them thence over the face of all the earth; they stopped building the city. <sup>9</sup> So, it was called Babel, since there, Yahweh confused the language of all the earth; thence, Yahweh scattered them over the face of all the earth.

<sup>10</sup> These are Shem’s descendants: When Shem was a hundred years old, he became the father of Arpachshad, two years after the flood.

<sup>11</sup> After the birth of Arpachshad, Shem lived five hundred years and fathered sons and daughters. <sup>12</sup> When Arpachshad was thirty-

five years old, he became the father of Shelah. <sup>13</sup> After the birth of Shelah, Arpachshad lived four hundred and three years and fathered

sons and daughters. <sup>14</sup> When Shelah was thirty years old, he became the father of Eber. <sup>15</sup> After the birth of Eber, Shelah lived four

<sup>8</sup> The infinitive construct here (לְבַנֹּת – ‘building’) serves as the object of the verb ‘they stopped’.

<sup>9</sup> ‘Babel’ (בָּבֶל) is derived here from the verb ‘balal’ (בָּלַל – to confuse); but in fact, the name means ‘Gate of God’.

<sup>10</sup> The perspective narrows down to Abraham’s direct ancestors, showing how God chose Abraham from all the families of the earth.

<sup>11</sup> Before ‘sons’, the NRSV (and others) insert the word ‘other’ for clarity.

<sup>12</sup> As in 10:24, the LXX adds a generation between Arpachshad and Shelah: *Καὶ ἔζησεν Αρφαξαδ ἑκατὸν τριάκοντα πέντε ἔτη καὶ ἐγέννησεν τὸν Καϊναν.* – (When) Arphaxad had lived thirty-five years, (and) he fathered Cainan.

<sup>13</sup> For this verse, the LXX reads: *καὶ ἔζησεν Αρφαξαδ μετὰ τὸ γεννηῆσαι αὐτὸν τὸν Καϊναν ἔτη τετρακόσια τριάκοντα καὶ ἐγέννησεν υἱοὺς καὶ θυγατέρας καὶ ἀπέθανεν. Καὶ ἔζησεν Καϊναν ἑκατὸν τριάκοντα ἔτη καὶ ἐγέννησεν τὸν Σαλα. καὶ ἔζησεν Καϊναν μετὰ τὸ γεννηῆσαι αὐτὸν τὸν Σαλα ἔτη τριακόσια τριάκοντα καὶ ἐγέννησεν υἱοὺς καὶ θυγατέρας καὶ ἀπέθανεν.* – And after he fathered Cainan, Arphaxad lived four hundred and thirty years and fathered sons and daughters, and (then) he died. When Cainan had lived one hundred and thirty years, (and) he fathered Sala. And after he fathered Sala, Cainan lived three hundred and thirty years and fathered sons and daughters, and (then) he died.

<sup>14</sup> The LXX rendering of ‘Shelah’ (שֶׁלַח) is ‘Sala’ (Σαλα).

<sup>15</sup> Before ‘sons’, the NRSV (and others) insert the word ‘other’ for clarity.



וְאַרְבַּע מֵאוֹת שָׁנָה וַיֹּלֶד בָּנִים וּבָנוֹת: {ס} י"ז וַיְחִי-  
 עֶבֶר אַרְבַּע וּשְׁלֹשִׁים שָׁנָה וַיֹּלֶד אֶת-פֶּלֶג: י"ח וַיְחִי-עֶבֶר  
 אַחֲרֵי הוֹלִידוֹ אֶת-פֶּלֶג שְׁלֹשִׁים שָׁנָה וְאַרְבַּע מֵאוֹת  
 שָׁנָה וַיֹּלֶד בָּנִים וּבָנוֹת: {ס} י"ח וַיְחִי-פֶלֶג שְׁלֹשִׁים שָׁנָה  
 וַיֹּלֶד אֶת-רְעוּ: י"ט וַיְחִי-פֶלֶג אַחֲרֵי הוֹלִידוֹ אֶת-רְעוּ  
 תִּשְׁעַ שָׁנִים וּמֵאֲתַיִם שָׁנָה וַיֹּלֶד בָּנִים וּבָנוֹת: {ס}  
 כ' וַיְחִי רְעוּ שְׁתַּיִם וּשְׁלֹשִׁים שָׁנָה וַיֹּלֶד אֶת-שְׂרוּג:  
 כא' וַיְחִי רְעוּ אַחֲרֵי הוֹלִידוֹ אֶת-שְׂרוּג שֶׁבַע שָׁנִים  
 וּמֵאֲתַיִם שָׁנָה וַיֹּלֶד בָּנִים וּבָנוֹת: {ס} כ"ב וַיְחִי שְׂרוּג  
 שְׁלֹשִׁים שָׁנָה וַיֹּלֶד אֶת-נָחֹר: כ"ג וַיְחִי שְׂרוּג אַחֲרֵי  
 הוֹלִידוֹ אֶת-נָחֹר מֵאֲתַיִם שָׁנָה וַיֹּלֶד בָּנִים וּבָנוֹת:  
 {ס} כ"ד וַיְחִי נָחֹר תִּשְׁעַ וְעֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה וַיֹּלֶד אֶת-תֶּרַח:  
 כ"ה וַיְחִי נָחֹר אַחֲרֵי הוֹלִידוֹ אֶת-תֶּרַח תִּשְׁעֵ-עֶשְׂרֵה  
 שָׁנָה וּמֵאֶת שָׁנָה וַיֹּלֶד בָּנִים וּבָנוֹת: {ס} כ"ו וַיְחִי-תֶרַח

hundred and three years and became the father of sons and daughters. <sup>16</sup> When Eber was thirty-four years old, he fathered Peleg. <sup>17</sup> After the birth of Peleg, Eber lived four hundred and thirty years and fathered sons and daughters. <sup>18</sup> When Peleg was thirty years old, he fathered Reu. <sup>19</sup> After the birth of Reu, Peleg lived two hundred and nine years and became the father of sons and daughters. <sup>20</sup> When Reu was thirty-two years old, he fathered Serug. <sup>21</sup> After the birth of Serug, Reu lived two hundred and seven years and fathered sons and daughters. <sup>22</sup> When Serug was thirty years old, he fathered Nahor. <sup>23</sup> After the birth of Nahor, Serug lived two hundred years and fathered sons and daughters. <sup>24</sup> When Nahor was twenty-nine years old, he fathered Terah. <sup>25</sup> After the birth of Terah, Nahor lived a hundred and nineteen years and fathered sons and daughters. <sup>26</sup> When Terah was seventy years

<sup>16</sup> The LXX rendering of 'Peleg' (פֶּלֶג) is 'Phalek' (Φαλεκ).

<sup>17</sup> Before 'sons', the NRSV (and others) insert the word 'other' for clarity.

<sup>18</sup> The LXX rendering of 'Reu' (רְעוּ) is 'Parau' (Παρευ).

<sup>19</sup> Before 'sons', the NRSV (and others) insert the word 'other' for clarity.

<sup>20</sup> The LXX rendering of 'Serug' (שְׂרוּג) is 'Serouch' (Σερούχ).

<sup>21</sup> Before 'sons', the NRSV (and others) insert the word 'other' for clarity.

<sup>22</sup> The LXX rendering of 'Nahor' (נָחֹר) is 'Nachor' (Ναχωρ).

<sup>23</sup> Before 'sons', the NRSV (and others) insert the word 'other' for clarity.

<sup>24</sup> The LXX rendering of 'Terah' (תֶּרַח) is 'Thala' (Θαρα).

<sup>25</sup> Before 'sons', the NRSV (and others) insert the word 'other' for clarity.

<sup>26</sup> The LXX rendering of 'Haran' (הָרָן) is 'Arran' (Αρραν).

שְׁבַעִים שָׁנָה וַיּוֹלֵד אֶת־אַבְרָם אֶת־נָחֹר וְאֶת־הָרָן:  
 כִּי וְאֵלֶּה תּוֹלְדֹת תֶּרַח תֶּרַח הוֹלִיד אֶת־אַבְרָם אֶת־  
 נָחֹר וְאֶת־הָרָן וְהָרָן הוֹלִיד אֶת־לוֹט: כֹּחַ וַיָּמָת הָרָן עַל־  
 פְּנֵי תֶרַח אָבִיו בְּאֶרֶץ מוֹלְדֹתוֹ בְּאוּר כַּשְׁדִּים: כֹּט וַיִּקַּח  
 אַבְרָם וְנָחֹר לָהֶם נָשִׁים שֵׁם אִשְׁת־אַבְרָם שָׂרִי וְשֵׁם  
 אִשְׁת־נָחֹר מִלְכָּה בַת־הָרָן אֲבִי־מִלְכָּה וְאֲבִי יִסְכָּה:  
 ל וַתְּהִי שָׂרִי עֲקָרָה אֵין לָהּ וָלֵד: לֹא וַיִּקַּח תֶּרַח אֶת־  
 אַבְרָם בְּנוֹ וְאֶת־לוֹט בֶּן־הָרָן בֶּן־בְּנוֹ וְאֵת שָׂרִי כַלְתּוֹ  
 אִשְׁת־אַבְרָם בְּנוֹ וַיֵּצְאוּ אֹתָם מֵאוּר כַּשְׁדִּים לָלֶכֶת  
 אֶרֶצָה כְּנָעַן וַיָּבֹאוּ עַד־חָרָן וַיֵּשְׁבוּ שָׁם: לֵב וַיְהִיו יָמֵי־  
 תֶרַח חֲמֵשׁ שָׁנִים וּמֵאתַיִם שָׁנָה וַיָּמָת תֶּרַח  
 בְּחָרָן: {פ}

old, he became the father of Abram, Nahor and Haran.<sup>27</sup> These are Terah's descendants: Terah became the father of Abram, Nahor and Haran. Haran fathered Lot.<sup>28</sup> Haran died before his father Terah in his native land, Ur of the Chaldeans.<sup>29</sup> Abram and Nahor both married: the name of Abram's wife was Sarai; Nahor's wife's name was Milcah, daughter of Haran, father of Milcah and Iscah.<sup>30</sup> Sarai was barren, having no child.<sup>31</sup> Terah took his son Abram, his grandson Lot the son of Haran, and his daughter-in-law the wife of Abram, and made them leave Ur of the Chaldeans to go to the land of Canaan. However, on arrival in Haran, they settled there.<sup>32</sup> Terah's life lasted two hundred and five years; then he died at Haran.

<sup>27</sup> The story of the chosen race is about to begin and the genealogical table becomes more detailed with a view to introducing its two parents, Abram and Sarai, whose names were later changed to Abraham and Sarah (17:5 & 15).

<sup>28</sup> The phrase 'of the Chaldeans' may be a later editorial clarification for the readers, designating the location of Ur.

<sup>29</sup> The name 'Sarai' (a variant spelling of 'Sarah') means 'princess' (or 'lady'). 'Sharratu' was the name of the wife of the moon god 'Sin'; the original name may reflect the culture out of which the patriarch was called, for the family did worship other gods in Mesopotamia.

<sup>30</sup> For 'barren', the LXX has 'sterile' (στειρά).

<sup>31</sup> This verse recounts the first stage of the journey to the Promised Land. 'Ur' is in Lower Mesopotamia; 'Haran' lies to the northwest of Mesopotamia. The historical accuracy of this first migration is disputed. However, it is attested by ancient traditions, in 11:28 and 15:7, edited at a time when Ur had fallen into oblivion. It was nonetheless an important centre at the beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Millennium BCE and already had religious and commercial ties with Haran. Hence, at least the possibility of this first migration must be admitted, though the mention of the Chaldeans would be an explanatory detail added in the neo-Babylonian period.

<sup>32</sup> According to the Samaritan Pentateuch, Terah lived for only 145 years; this would mean that Abram left Haran only after his father had died (see 11:26, 12:4 and Ac 7:4). Nevertheless, the MT (חֲמֵשׁ שָׁנִים וּמֵאתַיִם שָׁנָה) and LXX (διακόσια πέντε ἔτη) agree on a lifespan of 250 years.

## GENESIS 12

## בראשית פרק יב

א וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־אַבְרָם לֵךְ מֵאַרְצְךָ וּמִמּוֹלַדְתְּךָ וּמִבֵּית אָבִיךָ אֶל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אֲרָאָךְ: ב וְאֶעֱשֶׂךָ לְגוֹי גָּדוֹל וְאֶבְרַכְךָ וְאֶגְדָּלְהָ שְׁמִי וְהָיָה בְרָכָה: ג וְאֶבְרַכְתָּ מְבָרְכֶיךָ וּמְקַלְלֶיךָ אֲאָר וְנִבְרַכּוּ בְּךָ כָּל מְשֻׁפָּחֹת הָאָדָמָה: ד וַיֵּלֶךְ אַבְרָם כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר אֵלָיו יְהוָה וַיֵּלֶךְ אִתּוֹ לוֹט וְאַבְרָם בֶּן־חַמֶּשׁ שָׁנִים וְשִׁבְעִים שָׁנָה בְּצֵאתוֹ מִחָרָן: ה וַיִּקַּח אַבְרָם אֶת־שָׂרִי אִשְׁתּוֹ וְאֶת־לוֹט בֶּן־אָחִיו וְאֶת־כָּל־רְכוּשָׁם אֲשֶׁר רָכְשׁוּ וְאֶת־הַנֶּפֶשׁ אֲשֶׁר־עָשׂוּ בַּחֲרָן וַיֵּצְאוּ לָלֶכֶת אֶרֶצָה כְּנַעַן וַיָּבֹאוּ אֶרֶצָה כְּנַעַן: ו וַיַּעֲבֹר אַבְרָם בְּאֶרֶץ עַד מְקוֹם

<sup>1</sup> Yahweh said to Abram, "Leave your land, your kin, and your father's house, for the land I will show you. <sup>2</sup> I will make of you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; you will be a blessing. <sup>3</sup> I will bless those who bless you; I will curse those who curse you. All the clans of the earth shall be blessed in you." <sup>4</sup> So, Abram went as Yahweh told him and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. <sup>5</sup> Abram took his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, all the possessions they had amassed and the people they had acquired in Haran. They set off for the land of Canaan and arrived there. <sup>6</sup> Abram passed through the land to

## GENESIS 12

- <sup>1</sup> Yahweh called Abram while he was in Ur (see 15:7, Ac 7:2) but the sequence here makes it look like it was after the family left to migrate to Canaan (11:31–32).
- <sup>2</sup> The three 1P verbs in this verse should be classified as cohortatives: the first two have pronominal suffixes, so the form itself does not indicate a cohortative; the third verb form is clearly cohortative.
- <sup>3</sup> The LXX (and NRSV) ends this verse with: "And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." (καὶ ἐνευλογηθήσονται ἐν σοὶ πᾶσαι αἱ φυλαὶ τῆς γῆς.) Theoretically, the Niphal can be translated either as passive or reflexive/reciprocal; (the Niphal of 'bless' is only used in formulations of the Abrahamic covenant: 12:2, 18:18, 28:14.) Traditionally, the verb is taken as passive here, as if Abram were going to be a channel or source of blessing, but in later formulations of the Abrahamic covenant (22:18; 26:4) the Hitpael replaces this Niphal form, suggesting a translation 'will bless themselves'. The Hitpael of 'bless' is used with a reflexive/reciprocal sense in Dt 29:18, Ps 72:17, Is 65:16 & Jr 4:2. Gn 12:2 predicts that Abram will be held up as a paradigm of divine blessing and that people will use his name in their blessing formulae.
- <sup>4</sup> The disjunctive clause in the last sentence (conjunction + subject + implied 'to be') is parenthetical, telling the Abram's age when he left Haran.
- <sup>5</sup> For 'nephew', the MT has 'son of his brother', as does the LXX (υἱὸν τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ αὐτοῦ).
- <sup>6</sup> Shechem, located at the commercial crossroads of Canaan in the pass between Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim, was a flourishing Canaanite city in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Millennium BCE (Jg 9). Nearby was the 'Oak (or Terebinth) of Moreh' ('oracle giver'), a sacred tree (35:4, Dt 11:30, Jos 24:26, Jg 9:37).

שָׁכַם עַד אֵלֶּזן מֹרֶה וְהַכְנַעֲנִי אֲזַ בְּאֶרֶץ: <sup>ז</sup> וַיֵּרָא יְהוָה  
 אֶל-אַבְרָם וַיֹּאמֶר לְזָרְעֶךָ אֶתֶּן אֶת-הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת וַיְבִן  
 שָׁם מִזְבֵּחַ לַיהוָה הַנִּרְאָה אֵלָיו: <sup>ח</sup> וַיַּעֲתֶק מִשֵּׁם הָהָרָה  
 מִקְדָּם לְבֵית-אֵל וַיֵּט אֶהֱלֶה בֵּית-אֵל מִיָּם וְהָעִי מִקְדָּם  
 וַיְבִן-שָׁם מִזְבֵּחַ לַיהוָה וַיִּקְרָא בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה: <sup>ט</sup> וַיֵּסַע  
 אַבְרָם הָלוֹךְ וְנֹסֵעַ הַנֶּגֶבָה: {פ}

וַיְהִי רָעַב בְּאֶרֶץ וַיֵּרֶד אַבְרָם מִצְרַיִם לָגֹר שָׁם כִּי-  
 כָבֵד הָרָעַב בְּאֶרֶץ: <sup>יא</sup> וַיְהִי כַּאֲשֶׁר הִקְרִיב לְבֹא  
 מִצְרַיִם וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל-שָׂרַי אִשְׁתּוֹ הִנֵּה-נָא יֹדַעְתִּי כִּי  
 אִשָּׁה יִפְתַּח-מִרְאָה אֵת: <sup>יב</sup> וְהִיא כִּי-יִרְאוּ אֶתְךָ הַמִּצְרַיִם  
 וְאָמְרוּ אִשְׁתּוֹ זֹאת וְהָרְגוּ אֹתִי וְאֶתְךָ יִחְיוּ: <sup>יג</sup> אֲמַרְיִנָּא  
 אַחֲתִי אֵת לְמַעַן יֵיטִב-לִי בְּעַבְדְּךָ וְחִיתָה נַפְשִׁי  
 בְּגִלְלֶךָ: <sup>יד</sup> וַיְהִי כַּבֹּא אַבְרָם מִצְרַיִם וַיִּרְאוּ הַמִּצְרַיִם  
 אֶת-הָאִשָּׁה כִּי-יָפָה הִוא מְאֹד: <sup>טו</sup> וַיִּרְאוּ אֶתְּךָ שָׂרַי

Shechem, to the Oak of Moreh; the Canaanites were then in the land.

<sup>7</sup> Yahweh appeared to Abram and said, "To your seed I will give this land;" He built there an altar to Yahweh, who appeared to him.

<sup>8</sup> Thence, he moved on to the hills east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel to the west and Ai to the east; there he built an altar to Yahweh and invoked the name of Yahweh. <sup>9</sup> Then Abram made his way by stages to the Negeb.

<sup>10</sup> When famine came to the land, Abram went down to Egypt, to stay there as an alien; for, the famine was severe in the land. <sup>11</sup> As he drew near Egypt, he said to his wife Sarai, "I know you are a beautiful woman. <sup>12</sup> When the Egyptians see you, they will say, "That is his wife;" they will kill me but spare you. <sup>13</sup> Say you are my sister, so they may treat me well for your sake and spare my life because of you." <sup>14</sup> When Abram entered Egypt, the Egyptians saw that the woman was very beautiful. <sup>15</sup> When Pharaoh's men saw her, they

<sup>7</sup> The term זָרַע ('seed') may mean 'seed' (for planting), 'offspring' (as WEBBE, usually of people) or 'descendants', depending on the context.

<sup>8</sup> The expression 'invoked the name of Yahweh' refers to worshipping Yahweh through prayer and sacrifice (see 4:26; 13:4; 21:33; 26:25).

<sup>9</sup> For this verse, here following the NJB & NRSV, NJPS has, "And Abram journeyed, going on still toward the South."

<sup>10</sup> In place of 'as an alien' (following the NRSV), the NJB has 'for the time'.

<sup>11</sup> The particle הִנֵּה ('listen') is deictic here; it draws attention to the following fact.

<sup>12</sup> The Piel of the verb הָיָה ('to live') means 'to keep alive', 'to preserve alive' and, in some places, 'to make alive'.

<sup>13</sup> Among the aristocracy of Haran, a husband might legally adopt his wife as his sister, who then enjoyed greater protection and higher status. Such was the case with Sarai, and Abram appears to have boasted about this to the Egyptians, who misunderstood what he meant (v. 19).

<sup>14</sup> In place of 'the woman' (following the MT), one LXX MS has 'his wife' (γυναῖκα αὐτοῦ); however, the pronoun is not present in most MSS.

<sup>15</sup> The term וְתִקַּח ('was taken') is a rare verbal form, an old Qal passive preterite from the verb 'to take'; it is pointed as a Hophal in the MT.

פָּרַעַה וַיְהַלְלוּ אֹתָהּ אֶל־פַּרְעֹה וַתִּקַּח הָאִשָּׁה בֵּית  
פָּרַעַה: <sup>טז</sup> וּלְאַבְרָם הֵיטִיב בַּעֲבוּרָהּ וַיְהִי־לּוֹ צֹאן־וּבָקָר  
וְחֹמְרִים וְעַבְדִּים וְשִׁפְחֹת וְאִתְּנָת וּגְמָלִים: <sup>יז</sup> וַיִּנְגַּע  
יְהוָה | אֶת־פַּרְעֹה נֹגְעִים גְּדֹלִים וְאֶת־בֵּיתוֹ עַל־דְּבַר  
שָׂרִי אִשְׁתּוֹ אַבְרָם: <sup>יח</sup> וַיִּקְרָא פָּרַעַה לְאַבְרָם וַיֹּאמֶר  
מַה־זֹּאת עָשִׂיתָ לִּי לָמָּה לֹא־הִגַּדְתָּ לִּי כִּי אִשְׁתְּךָ הִוא:  
<sup>יט</sup> לָמָּה אָמַרְתָּ אֲחֹתִי הִוא וְאָקַח אֹתָהּ לִי לְאִשָּׁה  
וַעֲתָה הִנֵּה אִשְׁתְּךָ קַח וּלְךָ: <sup>כ</sup> וַיֵּצֵא עָלָיו פַּרְעֹה אֲנָשִׁים  
וַיִּשְׁלְחוּ אוֹתוֹ וְאֶת־אִשְׁתּוֹ וְאֶת־כָּל־אֲשֶׁר־לוֹ:

praised her to Pharaoh and the woman was taken into Pharaoh's palace. <sup>16</sup> He treated Abram well for her sake; he had sheep, oxen, donkeys, men and women slaves, she-donkeys, and camels. <sup>17</sup> But Yahweh inflicted severe plagues on Pharaoh and his house because of Abram's wife Sarai. <sup>18</sup> So, Pharaoh called Abram and said, "What have you done to me? Why did you not tell me she was your wife? <sup>19</sup> Why did you say, "She is my sister," so that I took her for my wife? Now, here is your wife; take her and go!" <sup>20</sup> Pharaoh gave his men orders to expel him, along with his wife and all he possessed.

<sup>16</sup> The construction of the parenthetical disjunctive clause 'he treated Abram well', beginning with the conjunction on the prepositional phrase, draws attention to the irony of the story: Abram wanted Sarai to lie so that it would go well with him; though he lost Sarai to Pharaoh, it did go well for him – he received a lavish bride price.

<sup>17</sup> The cognate accusative adds emphasis to the verbal sentence: 'inflicted severe plagues', meaning Yahweh inflicted numerous plagues, probably diseases (see Ex 15:26). The adjective 'severe' emphasises that the plagues were overwhelming.

<sup>18</sup> The demonstrative pronoun translated 'this' adds emphasis: "What in the world have you done to me?"

<sup>19</sup> The preterite with *vav* consecutive ('I took') here expresses consequence.

<sup>20</sup> For this verse, here following the NJB, the NRSV reads, "And Pharaoh gave his men orders concerning him; and they set him on the way, with his wife and all that he had."



## GENESIS 13

## בראשית פרק יג

א וַיֵּעַל אַבְרָם מִמִּצְרַיִם הוּא וְאִשְׁתּוֹ וְכָל-אֲשֶׁר-לוֹ וְלוֹט עִמּוֹ הַנֶּגֶבָה: <sup>ב</sup> וְאַבְרָם כָּבֵד מְאֹד בַּמִּקְנֶה בַּבָּסֶף וּבַזָּהָב: <sup>ג</sup> וַיֵּלֶךְ לְמִסְעָיו מִנֶּגֶב וְעַד-בֵּית-אֵל עַד-הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר-הָיָה שָׁם אֵהְלָה בְּתַחֲלָה בֵּין בֵּית-אֵל וּבֵין הָעֵי: <sup>ד</sup> אֶל-מָקוֹם הַמִּזְבֵּחַ אֲשֶׁר-עָשָׂה שָׁם בְּרֵאשִׁיטָה וַיִּקְרָא שָׁם אַבְרָם בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה: <sup>ה</sup> וְגַם-לְלוֹט הֵהָלֵךְ אֶת-אַבְרָם הָיָה צֹאן-וּבָקָר וְאַהֲלִים: <sup>ו</sup> וְלֹא-נִשְׂא אֹתָם הָאָרֶץ לְשִׁבְתָּ יַחְדָּו כִּי-הָיָה רְכוּשָׁם רָב וְלֹא יָכְלוּ לְשִׁבְתָּ יַחְדָּו: <sup>ז</sup> וַיְהִי-רִיב בֵּין רָעִי מִקְנֵה-אַבְרָם וּבֵין רָעִי מִקְנֵה-לוֹט וְהַכְנַעְנִי וְהַפְּרִזִּי אֲזִי יֹשֵׁב בָּאָרֶץ: <sup>ח</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר אַבְרָם אֶל-לוֹט אַל-לוֹט תְּהִי מְרִיבָה בֵּינִי וּבֵינֶךָ וּבֵין רָעִי וּבֵין רָעִיךָ כִּי-אֲנָשִׁים אַחִים אֲנַחְנוּ: <sup>ט</sup> הֲלֹא כָל-הָאָרֶץ לִפְנֶיךָ הִפְרָד נָא מֵעַלִי אֶם-הִשְׁמָאֵל וְאִמְנָה

<sup>1</sup> From Egypt, Abram returned to the Negeb with his wife and all he possessed, and Lot with him. <sup>2</sup> Abram was a very wealthy man, with livestock, silver, and gold. <sup>3</sup> By stages, he went from the Negeb to Bethel, where his camp was first, between Bethel and Ai, <sup>4</sup> to the place where he had first built the altar; here, Abram invoked the name of Yahweh. <sup>5</sup> Lot, who was travelling with Abram, also had flocks, herds and tents of his own. <sup>6</sup> The land was not able to bear them both at once, for they had too many possessions to be able to live together. <sup>7</sup> Dispute broke out between Abram's herdsmen and Lot's herdsmen. The Canaanites and the Perizzites were then living in the land. <sup>8</sup> And Abram said to Lot, "Let there be no dispute between you and me, nor between your herdsmen and mine, for we are brothers. <sup>9</sup> Is not the whole land before you? Part company with

## GENESIS 13

- <sup>1</sup> An alternative reading for 'Negeb' (נֶגֶבָה) is 'South'; the LXX has 'desert' (ἐρημὸν).
- <sup>2</sup> The literal translation of 'wealthy' is 'heavy'.
- <sup>3</sup> The literal translation of 'camp' is 'tent'.
- <sup>4</sup> The expression 'invoked the name of Yahweh' refers to worshiping Yahweh through prayer and sacrifice (cf. 4:26, 12:8, 21:33, 26:25).
- <sup>5</sup> The Hebrew idiom translated 'Lot ... also had' is 'to Lot ... there was', the preposition here expressing possession.
- <sup>6</sup> Israel's ancestors are represented as living a semi-nomadic life in the midst of the Canaanites; thus, adequate pastureland was vital to the herders. The infinitive construct לְשִׁבְתָּ (from the root יִשְׁבַּת) explains what it was that the land could not support.
- <sup>7</sup> The term רִיב ('dispute') means strife, conflict, quarrelling; in later texts, it has the meaning of a legal controversy.
- <sup>8</sup> Here, 'brothers' describes the closeness of the relationship, but could be misunderstood if taken literally, since Abram was Lot's uncle.
- <sup>9</sup> The words 'you go' have been added (twice) in this verse for clarity, and do not appear in the MT.



וְאִם־הֵימִין וְאִשְׁמְאִילָהּ: י' וַיֵּשְׂא־לֹט אֶת־עֵינָיו וַיֵּרָא  
אֶת־כָּל־כְּבֹד הַיַּרְדֵּן כִּי כָלָה מִשְׁקָה לִפְנֵי | שַׁחַת יְהוָה  
אֶת־סֹדֶם וְאֶת־עֲמֹרָה כְּגִן־יְהוָה כַּאֲרֵץ מִצְרַיִם בְּאֶבֶה  
צָעַר: י"א וַיִּבְחַר־לֹו לֹט אֶת כָּל־כְּבֹד הַיַּרְדֵּן וַיֵּסַע לֹט  
מִקֶּדֶם וַיִּפְרְדּוּ אִישׁ מֵעַל אָחִיו: י"ב אֲבָרָם יָשָׁב בְּאֶרֶץ־  
כְּנָעַן וְלֹט יָשָׁב בְּעָרֵי הַכֶּכֶר וַיֵּאֱהֶל עַד־סֹדֶם: י"ג וְאַנְשֵׁי  
סֹדֶם רָעִים וְחַטָּאִים לַיהוָה מְאֹד: י"ד וַיְהוָה אָמַר אֶל־  
אַבְרָם אַחֲרֵי הַפֶּרֶד־לֹט מַעֲמוֹ שָׂא נָא עֵינֶיךָ וּרְאֵה  
מִן־הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר־אַתָּה שָׂם צַפְנָה וְנִגְבָּה וְקִדְמָה  
וַיֹּמַר: ט"ו כִּי אֶת־כָּל־הָאֶרֶץ אֲשֶׁר־אַתָּה רֹאֶה לְךָ  
אֶתְנַנָּה וְלִזְרַעְךָ עַד־עוֹלָם: ט"ז וְשִׁמְתִּי אֶת־זֶרְעֶךָ כְּעֹפֶר  
הָאֶרֶץ אֲשֶׁר | אִם־יֹכֵל אִישׁ לִמְנוֹת אֶת־עֹפֶר הָאֶרֶץ  
גַּם־זֶרְעֶךָ יִמְנֶה: י"ז קוֹם הִתְהַלֵּךְ בָּאֶרֶץ לָאֲרָבָה  
וּלְרַחְבָּהּ כִּי לְךָ אֶתְנַנָּה: י"ח וַיֵּאֱהֶל אֲבָרָם וַיָּבֹא וַיֵּשֶׁב  
בְּאֵלֶיךָ מִמְּרָא אֲשֶׁר בְּחֶבְרוֹן וַיִּבֶן־שָׁם מִזְבֵּחַ  
לַיהוָה: {פ}

me: if you go left, I'll go right; if you go right, I'll go left." <sup>10</sup> Lot looked up and saw all the Jordan plain, irrigated everywhere like the garden of Yahweh or the land of Egypt, as far as Zoar (before Yahweh destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah). <sup>11</sup> Lot chose all the Jordan plain for himself and moved east; and they parted company: <sup>12</sup> Abram settled in the land of Canaan; Lot settled in the cities of the plain, pitching his tents as far as Sodom. <sup>13</sup> Now the men of Sodom were very wicked, great sinners against Yahweh. <sup>14</sup> Yahweh said to Abram after Lot had left him, "Look all round from where you are, to the north, south, east, and west. <sup>15</sup> All the land you see I will give to you and your offspring forever; <sup>16</sup> I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth: when men can count the specks of dust on the ground, then your offspring can be counted! <sup>17</sup> Rise up! Walk through the length and breadth of the land, for I mean to give it to you." <sup>18</sup> So, Abram went with his tents to settle at the Oaks of Mamre, which are at Hebron, and there he built an altar to Yahweh.

<sup>10</sup> The word here translated as 'plain' literally means, 'circle', used here as a topographical name to indicate a sunken river valley.

<sup>11</sup> Before 'moved', the MT repeats 'Lot', omitted here to improve legibility.

<sup>12</sup> In place of 'cities of the plain' (following the MT), the LXX has 'a city of the plain round about' (πόλει τῶν περιχώρων).

<sup>13</sup> This verse is an introduction to a tradition about Lot, originating in Transjordan and centred on the story of Sodom & Gomorrah (Chs 18–19).

<sup>14</sup> The disjunctive clause at the beginning of the verse signals a new scene.

<sup>15</sup> The literal translation of this verse is: "For all the land that you see to you I will give it and to your descendants forever."

<sup>16</sup> The translation 'can be counted' (potential imperfect) is suggested by the use of יֹכֵל ('can') in the preceding clause.

<sup>17</sup> The Hitpael, הִתְהַלֵּךְ means 'to walk about'; it also can carry the ideas of moving about, traversing, going back and forth, or living in an area.

<sup>18</sup> The translation of 'Oak' is uncertain: 'Terebinth' is also possible. The NJB & NRSV follow the LXX (δρῦν) & Peshitta; the MT uses the plural form.

## בראשית פרק יד

## GENESIS 14

א וַיְהִי בִּימֵי אֲמֶרְפֶּל מֶלֶךְ-שִׁנְעָר אַרְיוֹךְ מֶלֶךְ אֱלָסָר  
ב כְּדָרְלֶעֶמֶר מֶלֶךְ עֵילָם וְתִדְעָל מֶלֶךְ גּוֹיִם: ב עָשׂוּ  
ג מִלְחָמָה אֶת-בְּרַעַם מֶלֶךְ סֹדֶם וְאֶת-בְּרִשָׁע מֶלֶךְ עֲמֹרָה  
ד שִׁנְאָב מֶלֶךְ אַדְמָה וְשֵׁמֶבֶר מֶלֶךְ צִבּוִיִּים  
ה וּמֶלֶךְ בֵּלַע הַיָּא-צֶעֶר: ו כָּל-אֵלֶּה חִבְּרוּ אֶל-עֵמֶק  
ו הַשְּׂדִים הוּא יָם הַמֶּלַח: ז שְׁתֵּים עָשָׂר שָׁנָה עָבְדוּ  
ח אֶת-כְּדָרְלֶעֶמֶר וּשְׁלֹשׁ-עָשָׂר שָׁנָה מָרְדּוּ: ט וּבְאַרְבַּע  
י עָשָׂר שָׁנָה בָּא כְּדָרְלֶעֶמֶר וְהַמְּלָכִים אֲשֶׁר אִתּוֹ וַיִּכּוּ  
יא אֶת-רֶפְאִים בְּעֶשְׂתֵּת קִרְיָתִים וְאֶת-הַזּוּזִים בָּהֶם וְאֶת  
יב הָאִיִּמִּים בְּשׁוּה קִרְיָתִים: יג וְאֶת-הַחֲרִי בְּהֶרֶם שֵׁעִיר  
יד עַד אֵיל פָּאֶרָן אֲשֶׁר עַל-הַמִּדְבָּר:

<sup>1</sup> It was in the days of Amraphel king of Shinar, Arioch king of Ellasar, Chedor-Laomer king of Elam, and Tidal king of the nations,  
<sup>2</sup> who made war on Bera king of Sodom, Birsha king of Gomorrah, Shinab king of Admah, Shemeber king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela (that is, Zoar). <sup>3</sup> These all banded together in the Valley of Siddim, now the Salt Sea. <sup>4</sup> For twelve years they had served Chedor-Laomer but, in the thirteenth year, they revolted. <sup>5</sup> In the fourteenth year, Chedor-Laomer arrived and the kings who were with him, and defeated the Rephaim at Ashteroth-Carnaim, the Zuzim at Ham, the Emim in the Plain of Kiriathaim, <sup>6</sup> and the Horites in the mountains of Seir as far as El-Paran, which is on the edge of the desert.

### GENESIS 14

- <sup>1</sup> The sentence begins with the temporal indicator וַיְהִי ('it was') followed by 'in the days of'. 'Shinar' (also in v. 9) is the region of Babylonia. In place of 'nations' (גּוֹיִם), many translations, including NIV, NEB, NJB & NRSV, simply transliterate to 'Goiim'; the LXX translates the word (as we do) – ἐν ταῖς (of (the) nations').
- <sup>2</sup> The Kethib/Qere difference here (vav/yod confusion?) warrants an explanation, especially in view of the fact that it is not indicated in the Mechon Mamre text (which has just צִבּוִיִּים).
- <sup>3</sup> The story represents the Dead Sea as not yet in existence (#13:10); or else an awareness that the 'Valley of Siddim' (the name is not met with elsewhere) occupied only what is now the southern part of the Dead Sea, a depression of relatively recent formation (see #19:25).
- <sup>4</sup> The story serves as a foreshadowing of the plight of the kingdom of Israel later: eastern powers came and forced the western kingdoms into submission; each year, then, they would send tribute east – to keep them away.
- <sup>5</sup> The 'Rephaim', 'Zuzim' (or 'Zamzumim'), 'Emim' and 'Horites' were ancient legendary peoples of Transjordan (see #Dt 1:28/2:12); their towns lie at intervals along the highway that goes down to the Red Sea. The object of the invasion may have been to secure the trade routes to Egypt and southern Arabia.
- <sup>6</sup> The line of attack ran down the east of the Jordan Valley into the desert, and then turned and came up the valley to the cities of the plain.

וַיָּשְׁבוּ וַיָּבֹאוּ אֶל-עֵין מִשְׁפָּט הוּא קָדֵשׁ וַיָּכּוּ אֶת-כָּל-  
שָׂדֵה הָעַמְלָקִי וְגַם אֶת-הָאֱמֹרִי הַיֹּשֵׁב בְּחֶצְצֶן תְּמָר׃  
וַיֵּצֵא מֶלֶךְ-סֹדֶם וּמֶלֶךְ עֵמֶרָה וּמֶלֶךְ אֲדָמָה וּמֶלֶךְ  
צִבְיִים צָבֹוֹם וּמֶלֶךְ בִּלְע הוּא-צָעַר וַיַּעֲרְכוּ אֹתָם  
מִלְחָמָה בְּעֶמֶק הַשְּׂדִים׃<sup>ט</sup> אֵת כְּדָרְלַעְמֶר מֶלֶךְ עֵילָם  
וְתִדְעַל מֶלֶךְ גּוֹיִם וְאַמְרַפֶּל מֶלֶךְ שֹׁנֵעַר וְאַרְיוֹךְ מֶלֶךְ  
אֵלְסַר אַרְבַּעַה מְלָכִים אֶת-הַחֲמִשָּׁה׃

וַעֲמַק הַשְּׂדִים בְּאֵרֹת בְּאֵרֹת חֲמָר וַיִּנְסוּ מֶלֶךְ-סֹדֶם  
וְעֵמֶרָה וַיִּפְּלוּ-שָׁמָּה וְהַנְּשֹׂאֲרִים הָרָה נָסוּ׃<sup>י</sup> וַיִּקְחוּ  
אֶת-כָּל-רֶכֶשׁ סֹדֶם וְעֵמֶרָה וְאֶת-כָּל-אֲכָלָם וַיִּלְכוּ׃  
<sup>יב</sup> וַיִּקְחוּ אֶת-לוֹט וְאֶת-רֶכְשׁוֹ בֶּן-אֲחִי אַבְרָם וַיִּלְכוּ  
וְהוּא יֹשֵׁב בְּסֹדֶם׃

<sup>יג</sup> וַיָּבֹא הַפְּלִיט וַיַּגֵּד לְאַבְרָם הָעִבְרִי וְהוּא שָׁכֵן בְּאֵלְנֵי  
מִמְרָא הָאֱמֹרִי אָחִי אֲשַׁכֵּל וְאֲחִי עֶנֶר וְהֵם בְּעָלֵי  
בְרִית-אַבְרָם׃<sup>יד</sup> וַיִּשְׁמַע אַבְרָם כִּי נִשְׁבָּה אָחִיו וַיֵּרָק

<sup>7</sup> Wheeling round, they came to the Spring of Judgement (that is, Kadesh); they conquered all the territory of the Amalekites and the Amorites who lived in Hazazon-Tamar. <sup>8</sup> Then the kings of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim and Bela (that is, Zoar) marched out and prepared for battle in the Valley of Siddim, <sup>9</sup> against Chedor-Laomer king of Elam, Tidal king of the nations, Amraphel king of Shinar and Arioch king of Ellasar: four kings against five!

<sup>10</sup> There were many slime pits in the Valley of Siddim, and the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled and fell into them, while the rest fled to the hills. <sup>11</sup> They seized all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah, and all their provisions, and made off. <sup>12</sup> And they took Lot, Abram's nephew who lived in Sodom, and his goods, and left.

<sup>13</sup> A fugitive came to tell Abram the Hebrew, who was living at the Oaks of Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eshcol and Aner; these were allies of Abram. <sup>14</sup> When Abram heard that his kinsman had been

<sup>7</sup> The NRSV does not translate 'Spring of Judgement' (עֵין מִשְׁפָּט), but simply transliterates as a proper name ('En-Mishpat').

<sup>8</sup> In place of 'prepared for battle', the NJB has 'took up battle positions' and the NRSV has 'joined battle'. On the Kethib/Qere difference here, see #2.

<sup>9</sup> On the interpretation of the name גּוֹיִם, see #14:1.

<sup>10</sup> In place of 'slime pits', here following JPS, the NJB has 'bitumen wells'. The reference to the 'kings of Sodom and Gomorrah' must mean the kings along with their armies; most of them were defeated in the valley, but some of them escaped to the hills.

<sup>11</sup> The NJB has 'the conquerors' in place of 'they', here following the MT (and LXX).

<sup>12</sup> The final disjunctive clause is circumstantial/causal, explaining that Lot was captured because he was living in Sodom at the time.

<sup>13</sup> 'Mamre' is here the name of a person (compare 13:18). The translation of 'Oak' is uncertain: 'Terebinth' is also possible. The NJB follows the LXX and Peshitta; the MT uses the plural form. The NJB transposes the words 'and Aner' to after 'Abram'.

<sup>14</sup> 'Dan' was known as 'Laish' in the early period (Jg 18:29).

אֶת־חֲנִיכָיו יְלִידֵי בֵיתוֹ שְׁמֹנֶה עָשָׂר וּשְׁלֹשׁ מֵאוֹת  
וַיִּרְדּוּ עַד־דָּן: טו וַיַּחַלֵּק עֲלֵיהֶם | לַיְלָה הוּא וַעֲבָדָיו  
וַיִּכְּסוּ וַיִּרְדְּפֵם עַד־חֹבָה אֲשֶׁר מִשְׁמָאל לַדְּמֶשֶׁק:  
טז וַיִּשָּׁב אֶת כָּל־הָרֶכֶשׁ וְגַם אֶת־לוֹט אָחִיו וְרֶכְשׁוֹ  
הַשִּׁיב וְגַם אֶת־הַנָּשִׁים וְאֶת־הָעָם:

יז וַיָּצֵא מֶלֶךְ־סֹדֶם לִקְרָאתוֹ אַחֲרֵי שׁוּבוֹ מִהַכּוֹת אֶת־  
כְּדֻרְלַעְמֶר וְאֶת־הַמְּלָכִים אֲשֶׁר אָתּוּ אֶל־עֵמֶק שָׁוֵה  
הוּא עֵמֶק הַמֶּלֶךְ: יח וּמֶלֶךְ־צֶדֶק מֶלֶךְ שָׁלֹם הוֹצִיא  
לֶחֶם וַיֵּין וְהוּא כֹהֵן לֵאלֹהִים עֲלִיּוֹן:

יט וַיְבָרְכֵהוּ וַיֹּאמֶר

בָּרוּךְ אַבְרָם לֵאלֹהִים עֲלִיּוֹן

קֹנֵה שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ:

כ וּבָרוּךְ אֱלֹהִים עֲלִיּוֹן

אֲשֶׁר־מָגֵן צָרֶיךָ בַּיָּד

וַיִּתֵּן־לוֹ מַעֲשֵׂר מִכָּל:

taken captive, he mustered his three hundred and eighteen trained men, born in his house, and pursued them as far as Dan. <sup>15</sup> He and his servants fell on them by night, routed them, and pursued them to Hobah, north of Damascus. <sup>16</sup> He retrieved all the goods, and his kinsman Lot and his property, and the women and the people.

<sup>17</sup> When Abram returned from the defeat of Chedor-Laomer and the kings who were with him, the king of Sodom came to meet him in the Valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's Valley). <sup>18</sup> Melchizedek king of Salem brought bread and wine; he was a priest of God Most High.

<sup>19</sup> He blessed Abram, saying:

“Blessed be Abram by God Most High,

creator of heaven and earth,

<sup>20</sup> and blessed be God Most High

for handing over your enemies to you.”

Then he gave him a tithe of everything.

<sup>15</sup> The literal translation of ‘north’ is ‘left’; in ancient Israel, directions were given relative to the east.

<sup>16</sup> In place of ‘all the goods’, here following the MT, the LXX has ‘all the cavalry of Sodom’ (παῖσαν τὴν ἵππον Σοδομων).

<sup>17</sup> According to Josephus, ‘the King’s Valley’ was within ½ Km of Jerusalem; it is also mentioned in 2S 18:18.

<sup>18</sup> The whole of Jewish & Christian tradition identifies ‘Salem’ with Jerusalem (Ps 76:2); its priest-king, ‘Melchizedek’, worships the Most High God, ‘El-Elyon’. Melchizedek makes a brief and mysterious appearance in the narrative as king of that Jerusalem where Yahweh will choose to dwell, as priest of the Most High before the Levitical priesthood was established. See also #22.

<sup>19</sup> A blessing is an effective (9:25) and irrevocable (27:33 & 48:18) word which, even when pronounced by a man, produces the effect which it expresses, since God confers the blessing (1:27–28, 12:2, 28:3–4, and Ps 67:1 & 128:5).

<sup>20</sup> The NJB includes the last 2 lines in v. 20; here, we follow the MT. Melchizedek blesses Abraham in the name of his god, ‘maker of heaven and earth’. In place of ‘he’ in the last line, here following the MT, the NJB & NRSV have ‘Abram’.

כא וַיֹּאמֶר מֶלֶךְ־סֹדָם אֶל־אַבְרָם תֵּן־לִי הַנָּפֶשׁ וְהָרֶכֶשׁ  
 קח־לָךְ: כב וַיֹּאמֶר אַבְרָם אֶל־מֶלֶךְ סֹדָם הֲרַמְתִּי יָדִי  
 אֶל־יְהוָה אֵל עֲלִיּוֹן קִנְיָה שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ: כג אִם־מַחֲוֹט  
 וְעַד שְׂרוֹד־נֹעַל וְאִם־אַקַּח מִכָּל־אֲשֶׁר־לָךְ וְלֹא תֹאמַר  
 אֲנִי הִעֲשֵׂרְתִּי אֶת־אַבְרָם: כד בִּלְעָדִי רַק אֲשֶׁר אָכְלוּ  
 הַנְּעָרִים וְחֶלֶק הָאֲנָשִׁים אֲשֶׁר הָלְכוּ אִתִּי עֲנֵר אֲשָׁכָל  
 וּמִמָּוֶה הֵם יִקְחוּ חֶלְקָם: {ס}

<sup>21</sup> The king of Sodom said to Abram, "Give me the people and take the goods for yourself." <sup>22</sup> But Abram replied to the king of Sodom, "I raise my hand before Yahweh, God Most High, creator of heaven and earth: <sup>23</sup> I will take nothing of yours; not one thread, not one sandal strap; you shall not say, "I enriched Abram." <sup>24</sup> I will take only what my men have eaten, and the share belonging to the men who came with me, Eshcol, Aner and Mamre; let them take their share."

<sup>21</sup> In place of 'people', the LXX has 'cavalry' (ἵππων).

<sup>22</sup> Here, 'God Most High' is identified with Yahweh, the God of Israel (Nb 24:16, Ps 46:4). Ps 110:4 represents the mysterious Melchizedek as a figure of David, who is himself a figure of the Messiah (who is both king and priest); the application to Christ is worked out in Heb 7.

<sup>23</sup> The oath formula is elliptical, reading simply: 'if I take'; it is as if Abram says, "(May God deal with me) if I take," or, "I will surely not take." The positive oath would add the negative adverb and be the reverse: "(God will deal with me) if I do not take," or, "I certainly will."

<sup>24</sup> The phrase 'what my men have eaten' implies compensation.

## GENESIS 15

## בראשית פרק טו

אֶחָד הָיָה דְּבַר־יְהוָה אֶל־אַבְרָם  
בְּמַחְזָה לְאֹמַר

<sup>1</sup> It happened sometime later that the word of Yahweh came to Abram in a vision:

אֶל־תִּירָא אַבְרָם  
אֲנִכִּי מָגֵן לָךְ  
שְׂכָרְךָ הָרַבָּה מְאֹד:

“Do not be afraid, Abram!  
I am your shield  
and shall give you a very great reward.”

בַּיּוֹמָא אַבְרָם אָדָנִי יְהוָה מֵהִתְתַּן־לִי וְאֲנִכִּי הוּלָךְ  
עֲרִירִי וּבֶן־מֶשֶׁק בֵּיתִי הוּא דְמֶשֶׁק אֱלִיעֶזֶר: גַּיּוֹמָא  
אַבְרָם הֵן לִי לֹא נִתְּתָה זָרַע וְהִנֵּה בֶן־בֵּיתִי יוֹרֵשׁ אֹתִי:  
דְּוְהִנֵּה דְבַר־יְהוָה אֵלָיו לֵאמֹר לֹא יִירָשְׁךָ זֶה כִּי־אִם  
אֲשֶׁר יֵצֵא מִמֶּעֶיךָ הוּא יִירָשְׁךָ: הַיּוֹצֵא אֹתוֹ הַחוּצָה  
וַיֹּאמֶר הַבֶּט־נָא הַשָּׁמַיְמָה וּסְפֹר הַכּוֹכָבִים אֲסִתּוּכֵל  
לְסַפֵּר אֶתֶם וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ כֹּה יִהְיֶה זָרְעֶךָ: וַיִּהְיֶה אֱמָן בְּיָהוָה  
וַיַּחְשְׁבֶהָ לוֹ צְדָקָה:

<sup>2</sup> Abram said, “O Lord Yahweh, what will you give me? I go childless and the heir to my house is Eliezer of Damascus.” <sup>3</sup> And Abram said, “See, you have given me no offspring; some man of my household will be my heir.” <sup>4</sup> Then this word of Yahweh came to him, “He shall not be your heir; rather, your heir shall be of your own issue.” <sup>5</sup> He took him outside and said, “Look up to heaven and count the stars if you can.” He told him, “So will your offspring be.” <sup>6</sup> He believed Yahweh, who counted this as making him righteous.

## GENESIS 15

- <sup>1</sup> When the phrase **הַרְבֵּה מְאֹד** follows a noun, it invariably modifies the noun and carries the nuance ‘very great’ or ‘in great abundance’ (see Gn 41:49, Dt 3:5, Jos 22:8, 2S 8:8, 12:2, 1K 4:29, 10:10–11, 2Ch 14:13, 32:27, Jr 40:12). Here, the noun ‘reward’ is in apposition to ‘shield’ and refers by metonymy to God as the source of the reward.
- <sup>2</sup> The clause, “... and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus,” is from the NRSV, and not present in the NJB; the meaning of the Hebrew is uncertain. The Tetragrammaton (יהוה) is usually pointed with the vowels for the word **אָדָנִי** (*Adonai* = ‘Master’) to avoid pronouncing the divine name but that would lead in this place to a repetition; so, the Divine Name is here pointed with the vowels for **אֱלֹהִים** (*Elohim* = ‘God’).
- <sup>3</sup> The Hebrew construction here uses **הֵן** (‘since’) to introduce the foundational clause and **וְהִנֵּה** (‘then see’) to introduce the main clause.
- <sup>4</sup> The word **כִּי־אִם** (‘rather’) forms a very strong adversative. In place of ‘issue’, here following the NRSV, the NJB has ‘flesh and blood’.
- <sup>5</sup> In place of ‘if you can’, here following the NJB, the NRSV (more closely following the MT) has ‘if you are able to count them’.
- <sup>6</sup> The faith of Abraham is an act of trust in a promise which, humanly speaking, could never be realised.



וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו אֲנִי יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאתִיךָ מֵאוּר כַּשְׂדִּים  
לָתֵת לְךָ אֶת־הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת לְרִשְׁתָּהּ: <sup>ח</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר אֲדֹנָי  
יְהוָה בִּמָּה אֵדַע כִּי אִירְשֶׁנָּה: <sup>ט</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו קְחָה לִּי  
עֶגְלָה מְשֻׁלֶּשֶׁת וְעֵז מְשֻׁלֶּשֶׁת וְאִיל מְשֻׁלֶּשׁ וְתֹר וְגֹזֶל:  
וַיִּקַּח־לוֹ אֶת־כָּל־אֵלֶּה וַיַּבְתֵּר אֹתָם בַּתְּוֹךְ וַיִּתֵּן אִישׁ־  
בְּתָרוֹ לִקְרֹאת רֵעֵהוּ וְאֶת־הַצֶּפֶר לֹא בָתָר: <sup>י</sup> וַיִּרְדּוּ  
הָעֵיט עַל־הַפְּגָרִים וַיֵּשֶׁב אֹתָם אַבְרָם:  
<sup>יב</sup> וַיְהִי הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ לָבוֹא וַתִּרְדָּמָה נָפְלָה עַל־אַבְרָם וְהָנָה  
אִמָּה חֲשֵׁכָה גְדֹלָה נִפְלֹת עָלָיו: <sup>יג</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר לְאַבְרָם יָדַע  
תָּדַע כִּי־גֵר | יִהְיֶה זֶרַעְךָ בְּאֶרֶץ לֹא לָהֶם וַעֲבָדוּם וְעָנּוּ  
אֹתָם אַרְבַּע מֵאוֹת שָׁנָה: <sup>יד</sup> וְגַם אֶת־הַגּוֹי אֲשֶׁר יַעֲבֹדוּ  
דָּן אֲנִכִּי וְאַחֲרֵי־כֵן יֵצְאוּ בִּרְכָשׁ גָּדוֹל: <sup>טו</sup> וְאַתָּה תָּבוֹא  
אֶל־אַבְתָּיִךְ בְּשָׁלוֹם תִּקְבֹּר בְּשִׁיבָה טוֹבָה: <sup>טז</sup> וְדֹר  
רְבִיעִי יָשׁוּבוּ הֵנָּה כִּי לֹא־שָׁלֵם עֹן הָאֱמֹרִי עַד־הֵנָּה:  
<sup>יז</sup> וַיְהִי הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ בָּאָה וְעֹלָטָה הָיָה וְהָנָה תִּנּוֹר עָשָׂן

<sup>7</sup> He said to him, "I am Yahweh, who brought you from Ur of the Chaldeans to make you heir to this land." <sup>8</sup> But he said, "Lord Yahweh, how do I know I shall inherit it?" <sup>9</sup> He said to him, "Get me a heifer, a goat, and a ram, each three years old, a turtledove, and a young pigeon." <sup>10</sup> He brought all these, cut them in two, and put each half facing the other; but the birds he did not cut in two. <sup>11</sup> And when birds of prey came down on the carcasses, Abram drove them off. <sup>12</sup> At sunset, Abram fell into a deep sleep and a deep, dark dread came on him. <sup>13</sup> And he said to Abram, "Know for sure that your seed will be aliens in a land not theirs; they will be slaves and oppressed for four hundred years; <sup>14</sup> but I will judge the nation they serve and, then, they will leave with great wealth. <sup>15</sup> But you'll go to your fathers in peace; you will be buried at a ripe old age. <sup>16</sup> In the fourth generation they will return; for, the sin of the Amorites is not over." <sup>17</sup> When the sun had set and darkness had fallen, there appeared a

<sup>7</sup> God initiates the covenant-making ceremony with a declaration of who he is and what he has done for Abram.

<sup>8</sup> On the MT form of the phrase 'Lord Yahweh', see #2. The literal translation of 'how' is 'by what'.

<sup>9</sup> In place of 'each three years old', the NJB repeats 'three-year-old' before 'heifer', 'goat' and 'ram'.

<sup>10</sup> The literal translation of 'cut them in half' is 'cut them in the middle'.

<sup>11</sup> In place of 'birds of prey', the LXX has simply 'birds' (ὄρνεα).

<sup>12</sup> The word 'dark' is a possibly gloss intended to explain the rare word for 'darkness' used in v. 17.

<sup>13</sup> Vv. 13-16 explain the delay in the fulfilment of the promise, referring to the Egyptian oppression for 400 years (Ex 12:40) and the Exodus.

<sup>14</sup> The participle דָּן ('I am judging') is used here for the future: 'I will (surely) judge'; the judgment will be condemnation and punishment.

<sup>15</sup> The phrase 'go to your fathers' is a euphemism for 'die'.

<sup>16</sup> The 'iniquity of the Amorites' (i.e. the Canaanites) was the sexual corruption that led to their downfall (see #9:25).

<sup>17</sup> Here, the firebrand symbolises Yahweh (cf. the burning bush, Ex 3:2, the pillar of fire, Ex 13:21, the smoke of Sinai, Ex 19:18).

<p>וּלְפִיד אֵשׁ אֲשֶׁר עָבַר בֵּין הַגְּזָרִים הָאֵלֶּה: י"ח בַּיּוֹם  הַהוּא כָּרַת יְהוָה אֶת־אֲבָרָם בְּרִית לֵאמֹר  לְזֶרְעֶךָ נָתַתִּי אֶת־הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת  מִנְּהַר מִצְרַיִם עַד־הַנָּהָר הַגָּדֹל  נְהַר־פָּרָת:</p> <p>יט אֶת־הַקִּנִּיזִי וְאֶת־הַקְּנִזִּי וְאֶת הַקַּדְמֹנִי: כ וְאֶת־הַחִתִּי  וְאֶת־הַפְּרִזִּי וְאֶת־הַרְפָּאִים: כא וְאֶת־הָאֱמֹרִי וְאֶת־  הַכְּנַעֲנִי וְאֶת־הַגִּרְגָּשִׁי וְאֶת־הַיְּבוּסִי: {ס}</p>	<p>smoking furnace and a firebrand that went between the halves.  <sup>18</sup> That day, Yahweh made a covenant with Abram in these terms:  “To your descendants I give this land,  from the Wadi of Egypt to the Great River,  the River Euphrates,  <sup>19</sup> “The Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites, <sup>20</sup> the Hittites, the  Perizzites, the Rephaim, <sup>21</sup> the Amorites, the Canaanites, the  Girgashites, and the Jebusites.”</p>
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<sup>18</sup> The ideal boundaries of the Promised Land, from the Nile to the Euphrates, were those of David’s empire (Dt 11:24, 2S 8:3, cf. 2K 4:21, 8:65).

<sup>19</sup> The ‘Kenites’ were believed to be the descendants of Cain.

<sup>20</sup> On the ‘Hittites’, see #10:15 & Dt #7:1; on the ‘Rephaim’, see Dt 1:28 & 2:12.

<sup>21</sup> The ‘Girgashites’ are an otherwise unknown Canaanite tribe, though the name is possibly mentioned in Ugaritic texts.

## GENESIS 16

## בראשית פרק טז

א וְשָׂרַי אִשְׁתּוֹ אַבְרָם לֹא יָלְדָה לוֹ וְלֹה שִׁפְחָה מִצְרִית  
וְשָׂמָה הָגָר: ב וַתֹּאמֶר שָׂרַי אֶל-אַבְרָם הִנֵּה-נָא עֲצָרְנִי  
יְהוָה מִלְּדֹת בֶּן-נָא אֶל-שִׁפְחָתִי אוֹלִי אֲבִנָּה מִמֶּנָּה  
וַיִּשְׁמַע אַבְרָם לְקוֹל שָׂרַי: ג וַתִּקַּח שָׂרַי אִשְׁתּוֹ-אַבְרָם  
אֶת-הָגָר הַמִּצְרִית שִׁפְחָתָהּ מִקֵּץ עֶשְׂרִי שָׁנִים לְשִׁבְתָּ  
אַבְרָם בְּאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן וַתֵּתֶן אֹתָהּ לְאַבְרָם אִשָּׁה לוֹ  
לְאִשָּׁה:

ד וַיָּבֹא אֶל-הָגָר וַתַּהַר וַתֵּרָא כִּי הָרְתָהּ וַתִּקַּל גְּבִרְתָּהּ  
בְּעֵינֶיהָ: ה וַתֹּאמֶר שָׂרַי אֶל-אַבְרָם חֲמִסִּי עָלֶיךָ אָנֹכִי  
נָתַתִּי שִׁפְחָתִי בְּחִיקְךָ וַתֵּרָא כִּי הָרְתָהּ וְאֶקַּל בְּעֵינֶיהָ  
יִשְׁפֹּט יְהוָה בֵּינִי וּבֵינֶיךָ: ו וַיֹּאמֶר אַבְרָם אֶל-שָׂרַי הִנֵּה  
שִׁפְחָתְךָ בְּיָדְךָ עֲשִׂי-לָהּ הַטּוֹב בְּעֵינֶיךָ וַתַּעֲנֶה שָׂרַי  
וַתִּבְרַח מִפָּנֶיהָ:

ז וַיִּמְצָאָהּ מַלְאָךְ יְהוָה עַל-עֵין הַמַּיִם בַּמִּדְבָּר עַל-הָעֵין  
בְּדֶרֶךְ שׁוּר: ח וַיֹּאמֶר הָגָר שִׁפְחַת שָׂרַי אֵי-מָזָה בָּאת

<sup>1</sup> Abram's wife Sarai bore him no child. She had an Egyptian slave-girl named Hagar. <sup>2</sup> Sarai said to Abram, "Listen! Since Yahweh has kept me from having children, go to my slave-girl. Perhaps I shall get children through her." Abram agreed to what Sarai had said. <sup>3</sup> Thus, after Abram had lived in the land of Canaan for ten years, Sarai took Hagar, her Egyptian slave-girl, and gave her to Abram, her husband, as his wife.

<sup>4</sup> He went into Hagar and she conceived; when she saw she had conceived, she despised her mistress. <sup>5</sup> Sarai said to Abram, "May my insult be on you: I put my slave-girl in your arms but now she is pregnant, she despises me; let Yahweh judge between you and me."

<sup>6</sup> Abram said to Sarai, "Your slave-girl is in your power; treat her as you see fit." Sarai treated her harshly, so she ran away from her.

<sup>7</sup> The Angel of Yahweh met her by a spring in the desert, the spring on the way to Shur. <sup>8</sup> He said, "Hagar, slave-girl of Sarai, where have

## GENESIS 16

<sup>1</sup> The term שִׁפְחָה ('slave-girl') refers to a menial female servant.

<sup>2</sup> According to Mesopotamian law, a barren wife could present a female slave to her husband and acknowledge the issue as her own.

<sup>3</sup> The NJB lacks 'her husband', here following JPS.

<sup>4</sup> Though socially inferior, Hagar felt superior to Sarah and threatened to take her mistress's place (Pr 30:23) as the ancestress of Israel.

<sup>5</sup> Sarai blamed Abram for Hagar's attitude, not the pregnancy; here she expects to be vindicated by God, who will prove Abram responsible.

<sup>6</sup> In the Piel stem, the verb עָנָה ('treated ... badly') means 'to afflict', 'to oppress' or 'to mistreat'.

<sup>7</sup> In the most ancient texts, 'the Angel of Yahweh' is not a created being distinct from God but is God himself in a form visible to men.

<sup>8</sup> Before 'my mistress', the MT includes 'the presence of', but this makes the English sound clumsy.

וְאִנָּה תֵּלְכִי וְתֹאמַר מִפְּנֵי שָׂרִי גְבֻרָתִי אֲנֹכִי בִּרְחַת:  
 ט וַיֹּאמֶר לָהּ מִלֶּאֱדָיְיךָ יְהוָה שׁוּבִי אֶל-גְּבֻרָתְךָ וְהִתְעַנִּי  
 תַּחַת יָדֶיהָ: י' וַיֹּאמֶר לָהּ מִלֶּאֱדָיְיךָ יְהוָה הֲרַבָּה אֲרָבָה  
 אֶת-זֶרְעֶךָ וְלֹא יִסְפָּר מִרְבּוֹ:  
 יא וַיֹּאמֶר לָהּ מִלֶּאֱדָיְיךָ יְהוָה

הֵנֵךְ הָרָה וְיִלְדֶּת בֶּן  
 וְקִרְאתָ שְׁמוֹ יִשְׁמָעֵאל  
 כִּי-שָׁמַע יְהוָה אֶל-עֲנִיָּךְ:  
 יב וְהוּא יִהְיֶה פָּרָא אָדָם  
 יְדוּ בְּכָל וַיֵּד כָּל בּוֹ  
 וְעַל-פָּנָי כָּל-אֲחָיו יִשְׁכָּן:

יג וְתִקְרָא שֵׁם-יְהוָה הַדֹּבֵר אֵלֶיהָ אַתָּה אֵל רֹאֵי כִי  
 אָמְרָה הֵגֶם הֵלֶם רָאִיתִי אַחֲרַי רֹאֵי: יד עַל-כֵּן קָרָא  
 לְבֵאֵר בְּאֵר לַחֵי רֹאֵי הֵנָּה בֵּין-קִדְשׁ וּבֵין בֶּרֶד: טו וְתִלְדַּ  
 הָגֵר לְאַבְרָם בֶּן וַיִּקְרָא אַבְרָם שֵׁם-בְנוֹ אֲשֶׁר-יִלְדָהּ  
 הָגֵר יִשְׁמָעֵאל: טז וְאַבְרָם בֶּן-שְׁמֹנִים שָׁנָה וְשֵׁשׁ שָׁנִים  
 בְּלִדְתָּ-הָגֵר אֶת-יִשְׁמָעֵאל לְאַבְרָם: {ס}

you come from, and where are you going?" She said, "I am running away from my mistress Sarai." <sup>9</sup> The Angel of Yahweh said to her, "Return to your mistress and submit to her." <sup>10</sup> The Angel of Yahweh said to her, "I will make your offspring too numerous to be counted."

<sup>11</sup> Then the Angel of Yahweh said to her:

"Now you have conceived, you will bear a son,  
 and you shall name him Ishmael,  
 for Yahweh has heard your cries of distress.

<sup>12</sup> A wild ass of a man he will be,  
 against every man, and every man against him,  
 setting himself to defy all his brothers."

<sup>13</sup> Hagar gave a name to Yahweh who spoke to her: "You are El Roi," for, she said, "Here I have seen the one who sees me?" <sup>14</sup> This is why this well is called Beer-Lahai-Roi; it is between Kadesh and Bered.

<sup>15</sup> Hagar bore Abram a son, and Abram gave to the son that Hagar bore the name Ishmael. <sup>16</sup> Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore Ishmael for Abram.

<sup>9</sup> The word וְהִתְעַנִּי ('submit') is the Hitpael of the same word used (v. 6) for Sarai's harsh treatment of Hagar; God tells Hagar to humble herself.

<sup>10</sup> The literal translation of 'too numerous to be counted' is 'unable to be counted because of abundance'.

<sup>11</sup> The particle הֵנֵךְ focuses on the immediate situation. 'Ishmael' means 'God has heard'.

<sup>12</sup> Ishmael's descendants are Arabs of the desert, who are here portrayed as intractable and vagrant as the wild creatures (see Job 39:5-8).

<sup>13</sup> 'El Roi' (אֵל רֹאֵי) means 'God of vision' or 'God sees'. The text of Hagar's words is probably corrupt (cf. Ex 33:20, Jg 6:22-23, 13:22).

<sup>14</sup> 'Beer Lahai Roi' (בְּאֵר לַחֵי רֹאֵי) means 'the well of the Living One who sees me'. Isaac was to stay there.

<sup>15</sup> Hagar must have informed Abram of what the angel had told her: see #11 on the name 'Ishmael'.

<sup>16</sup> The NJB, NRSV and many other translations omit 'for Abram' (or substitute 'for him'), considering the clause redundant in modern English.

## GENESIS 17

## בראשית פרק יז

א וַיְהִי אֲבֹרָם בֶּן־תְּשָׁעִים שָׁנָה וַתֵּשַׁע שָׁנִים וַיֵּלֶךְ יְהוָה  
אֶל־אֲבֹרָם וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו אֲנִי־אֵל שְׁדַי הַתְּהַלֵּךְ לִפְנֵי  
וְהָיָה תָמִים: ב וַתֵּתֶנָּה בְרִיתִי בֵּינִי וּבֵינֶךָ וְאַרְבָּה אוֹתָךְ  
בְּמֵאֵד מְאֹד: ג וַיִּפֹּל אֲבֹרָם עַל־פָּנָיו וַיְדַבֵּר אִתּוֹ  
אֱלֹהִים לֵאמֹר: ד אֲנִי הִנֵּה בְרִיתִי אִתְּךָ וְהָיִיתָ לְאָב  
הַמִּזְוֹן גּוֹיִם: ה וְלֹא־יִקְרָא עוֹד אֶת־שְׁמֶךָ אֲבֹרָם וְהָיָה  
שְׁמֶךָ אֲבֹרָהָם כִּי אֲב־הַמִּזְוֹן גּוֹיִם נִתְּתִיךָ: ו וְהִפְרִתִּי  
אִתְּךָ בְּמֵאֵד מְאֹד וְנִתְּתִיךָ לְגוֹיִם וּמַלְכִּים מִמֶּךָ יֵצְאוּ:  
ז וְהִקְמַתִּי אֶת־בְּרִיתִי בֵּינִי וּבֵינֶךָ וּבֵין זֶרְעֶךָ אַחֲרֶיךָ  
לְדֹרֹתֶם לְבְרִית עוֹלָם לְהִיּוֹת לְךָ לְאֱלֹהִים וְלִזְרַעֲךָ

<sup>1</sup> When Abram was ninety-nine years old, Yahweh appeared to him and said, "I am El Shaddai. Walk before me and be blameless, <sup>2</sup> and I will make a covenant between myself and you and increase your numbers greatly." <sup>3</sup> Abram fell on his face and God said to him, <sup>4</sup> "Here is my covenant with you; you shall be the father of a multitude of nations. <sup>5</sup> No longer shall your name be Abram; but your name shall be Abraham; for, I make you father of a multitude of nations. <sup>6</sup> I will make you most fruitful. I will make nations of you; kings will come from you. <sup>7</sup> I will establish my covenant between me and you, and your seed after you, for generations, a perpetual

## GENESIS 17

- <sup>1</sup> 'El Shaddai' (אֵל שְׁדַי) is an ancient name of God from the patriarchal period (28:3, 35:11, 43:14, 48:3 & 49:25) and rarely used outside the Pentateuch (except in Job). The usual translation ('God Almighty', primarily derived from the Vg rendering of *Deus omnipotens*) is inaccurate; the meaning is uncertain: 'God of the Mountain', from Accadian 'shadu' has been suggested; but perhaps 'God of the open wastes' would be preferable, from Hebrew 'sadeh', and the secondary meaning of the Accadian word.
- <sup>2</sup> The literal translation of 'greatly' (בְּמֵאֵד מְאֹד), here following the NJB, is 'exceedingly exceedingly'; the repetition is emphatic.
- <sup>3</sup> The expression 'fell on his face' probably means that Abram sank to his knees and put his forehead to the ground, although it is possible that he completely prostrated himself; in either case, the posture indicates humility and reverence.
- <sup>4</sup> In place of 'here is', following the NJB and MT (הִנֵּה), the NRSV (and others) have 'this is'.
- <sup>5</sup> For the ancients, a name did not merely indicate but actually made a thing what it was, and a change of name meant a change of destiny (v. 15 & 35:10). 'Abram' and 'Abraham', it seems, are in fact two dialectal forms of the same name, meaning 'he is great by reason of his father' or 'he is of noble descent'. Here, however, 'Abraham' is interpreted in terms of its assonance with אֲב־הַמִּזְוֹן (*ab hamon*), meaning: 'father of a multitude'.
- <sup>6</sup> The verb וְהִפְרִתִּי ('I will make') starts a series of perfect verbal forms with *vav* consecutive to express God's intentions.
- <sup>7</sup> Like that with Noah (9:8-17), this is an everlasting covenant (vv. 13, 19), one that lasts in perpetuity because it is grounded in the sovereign will of God, not in human behaviour.

אֲחֵרֶיךָ: <sup>ח</sup> וְנָתַתִּי לָךְ וּלְזֶרְעֶךָ אַחֲרֶיךָ אֶת | אֶרֶץ מִגְרֶיךָ  
אֶת כָּל-אֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן לְאָחֻזָּת עוֹלָם וְהָיִיתִי לָהֶם  
לֵאלֹהִים:

<sup>ט</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים אֶל-אַבְרָהָם וְאַתָּה אֶת-בְּרִיתִי  
תִּשְׁמֹר אֶתָּה וְזֶרְעֶךָ אַחֲרָיִךְ לְדֹרֹתֶם: 'זֹאת בְּרִיתִי  
אֲשֶׁר תִּשְׁמְרוּ בֵּינִי וּבֵינֵיכֶם וּבֵין זֶרְעֶךָ אַחֲרֶיךָ הַמּוֹלֵד  
לָכֶם כָּל-זָכָר: <sup>י</sup> וְנִמְלֹתֶם אֶת בְּשָׁר עֶרְלַתְכֶם וְהָיָה  
לְאוֹת בְּרִית בֵּינִי וּבֵינֵיכֶם: <sup>יב</sup> וּבֶן-שְׁמֹנֶת יָמִים יִמּוֹל  
לָכֶם כָּל-זָכָר לְדֹרֹתֵיכֶם יֶלֶד בַּיִת וּמִקְנֵת-כֶּסֶף מִכָּל  
בֶּן-נָכָר אֲשֶׁר לֹא מִזֶּרְעֶךָ הוּא: <sup>יג</sup> הַמּוֹל | יִמּוֹל יֶלֶד  
בֵּיתֶךָ וּמִקְנֵת כֶּסֶף וְהָיְתָה בְּרִיתִי בְּבִשְׁרְכֶם לְבְרִית  
עוֹלָם: <sup>יד</sup> וְעָרַל | זָכָר אֲשֶׁר לֹא-יִמּוֹל אֶת-בְּשָׁר עֶרְלָתוֹ  
וְנִכְרְתָה הַנֶּפֶשׁ הַהִוא מֵעַמִּיהָ אֶת-בְּרִיתִי הַפֶּה:  
{ס}

covenant, to be God to you and your seed after you. <sup>8</sup> I will give to you and to your seed after you the land you are living in, all the land of Canaan, to own in perpetuity, and I will be their God."

<sup>9</sup> God said to Abraham, "You shall keep my covenant, you and your seed after you, for all generations. <sup>10</sup> This is my covenant, which you shall keep, between me and you, and your seed after you: all your males must be circumcised. <sup>11</sup> You shall circumcise your foreskin, as a sign of the covenant between me and you. <sup>12</sup> Every male eight days old must be circumcised, for all generations, including slaves born in your house or bought from a foreigner not of your seed. <sup>13</sup> They must all be circumcised: those born in your house and those bought with your money. My covenant shall be in your flesh as a perpetual covenant. <sup>14</sup> The uncircumcised male, whose foreskin is not circumcised, shall be cut off from his people: he has broken my covenant."

<sup>8</sup> This covenant unconditionally guarantees the promise of the land of Canaan as a perpetual holding.

<sup>9</sup> The word בְּרִית ('covenant') can refer to: **1** the agreement itself between two parties (v. 7); **2** the promise made by one party to another (vv. 2–3,7); **3** an obligation placed by one party on another; or **4** a reminder of the agreement. In vv. 9–10, the word refers to a covenantal obligation that God gives to Abraham and his descendants.

<sup>10</sup> Circumcision was originally a rite initiatory to marriage and to the life of the clan (34:14ff, Ex 4:24–26, Lv 19:23). Here, it becomes a 'sign', which, like the rainbow of 9:16–17, is to remind God of his Covenant and human beings of the obligations deriving from belonging to the chosen people.

<sup>11</sup> An alternative translation of 'sign' is 'reminder'.

<sup>12</sup> The literal translation of 'eight days old' is 'sons of eight days'.

<sup>13</sup> In the opening clause, the emphatic construction employs the Niphal imperfect tense (collective singular) and the Niphal infinitive.

<sup>14</sup> The meaning of 'cut off' has been discussed at great length: an entire tractate in the Mishnah is devoted to this subject (tractate *Keritot*).



<sup>טו</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים אֶל־אַבְרָהָם שְׂרִי אֵשֶׁתְּךָ לֹא־תִקְרָא  
 אֶת־שְׁמָהּ שְׂרִי כִּי שָׂרָה שְׁמָהּ: <sup>טז</sup> וּבֵרַכְתִּי אֹתָהּ וְגַם  
 נָתַתִּי מִמֶּנָּה לָּךְ בָּן וּבֵרַכְתִּיהָ וְהָיְתָה לְגוֹיִם מְלֹכֵי  
 עַמִּים מִמֶּנָּה יִהְיוּ: <sup>יז</sup> וַיִּפֹּל אַבְרָהָם עַל־פָּנָיו וַיִּצְחַק  
 וַיֹּאמֶר בְּלִבִּי הִלְבֵּן מֵאָה־שָׁנָה יוֹלֵד וְאִם־שָׂרָה הִבְתִּי־  
 תִשָּׁעִים שָׁנָה תֵּלֵד: <sup>יח</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר אַבְרָהָם אֶל־הָאֱלֹהִים לֹא  
 יִשְׁמַעְאֵל יַחִיהַ לְפָנֶיךָ: <sup>יט</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים אֲבֹל שָׂרָה  
 אֵשֶׁתְּךָ יֵלְדָת לָּךְ בֶּן וְקִרְאתָ אֶת־שְׁמוֹ יִצְחָק וְהִקְמַתִּי  
 אֶת־בְּרִיתִי אִתּוֹ לְבְרִית עוֹלָם לְזֶרְעוֹ אַחֲרָיו:  
<sup>כ</sup> וְלִישְׁמַעְאֵל שְׁמַעְתִּיךָ הִנֵּה בֵרַכְתִּי אֹתוֹ וְהִפְרִיתִי  
 אֹתוֹ וְהִרְבִּיתִי אֹתוֹ בְּמֵאָד מְאֹד שְׁנַיִם־עָשָׂר נְשִׂאִם  
 יוֹלִיד וְנָתַתִּיו לְגוֹי גָּדוֹל: <sup>כא</sup> וְאֶת־בְּרִיתִי אֲקִים אֶת־  
 יִצְחָק אֲשֶׁר תֵּלֵד לָּךְ שָׂרָה לְמוֹעֵד הַזֶּה בַּשָּׁנָה  
 הָאַחֲרֹת: <sup>כב</sup> וַיְכַל לְדַבֵּר אִתּוֹ וַיַּעַל אֱלֹהִים מֵעַל  
 אַבְרָהָם: <sup>כג</sup> וַיִּקַּח אַבְרָהָם אֶת־יִשְׁמַעְאֵל בְּנוֹ וְאֵת כָּל־

<sup>15</sup> God said to Abraham, "As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her Sarai, but Sarah. I will bless her and give you a son by her. <sup>16</sup> I will bless her and nations shall come out of her; kings of peoples shall come from her." <sup>17</sup> Abraham bowed to the ground, and he laughed, thinking: "Is a child to be born to a man one hundred years old, and will Sarah have a child at the age of ninety?" <sup>18</sup> Abraham said to God, "Oh, let Ishmael live in your presence!" <sup>19</sup> God replied, "No, but your wife Sarah shall bear you a son whom you are to name Isaac. With him, I will establish my covenant, an eternal covenant, for his offspring after him. <sup>20</sup> For Ishmael too I have heard you: I bless him and I will make him fruitful and exceedingly numerous. He shall be the father of twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation. <sup>21</sup> But I will establish my covenant with Isaac, whom Sarah will bear you this time next year." <sup>22</sup> When he had finished speaking to Abraham, God went up from him. <sup>23</sup> Then Abraham took his son Ishmael, all

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- <sup>15</sup> 'Sarah' (שָׂרָה) and 'Sarai' (שְׂרִי) are two forms (or dialects) of the same name, which means 'princess': Sarah is to become the mother of kings.  
<sup>16</sup> Alternative readings for 'nations shall come of her' (as NJB) are 'she shall give rise to nations' (NRSV) and 'she shall be the mother of nations' (NETB).  
<sup>17</sup> Abraham's laughter is to be echoed by Sarah's (18:12 & 21:6) and Ishmael's (21:9); the name, Isaac (יִצְחָק), means, 'he laughs'.  
<sup>18</sup> The wish ('O let') is introduced with the Hebrew particle לֹא.  
<sup>19</sup> On the meaning of the name 'Isaac', see #17.  
<sup>20</sup> The verb translated 'I have heard you' forms a wordplay with the name 'Ishmael', which means 'God hears' (see #16:11).  
<sup>21</sup> In place of 'this time', the NRSV has 'at this season'.  
<sup>22</sup> In this verse reads, the sequence of pronouns and proper names has been rearranged for stylistic reasons.  
<sup>23</sup> The literal translation of 'circumcised them' is 'circumcised the flesh of their foreskins'; the Hebrew expression is somewhat pleonastic and has been simplified in the translation.

יְלִידֵי בֵּיתוֹ וְאֵת כָּל־מִקְנֶת כֶּסֶף כָּל־זָכָר בְּאֲנָשֵׁי בֵּית  
 אַבְרָהָם וַיְמַל אֶת־בָּשָׂר עֶרְלָתָם בְּעֶצֶם הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה  
 כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר אֱתוֹ אֱלֹהִים: <sup>כד</sup> וְאַבְרָהָם בֶּן־תְּשַׁעִּים  
 וְתֵשַׁע שָׁנָה בְּהִמְלֹךְ בָּשָׂר עֶרְלָתוֹ: <sup>כה</sup> וַיִּשְׁמַעְאֵל בְּנוֹ  
 בֶּן־שְׁלֹשׁ עֶשְׂרֵה שָׁנָה בְּהִמְלֹךְ אֶת בָּשָׂר עֶרְלָתוֹ:  
<sup>כו</sup> בְּעֶצֶם הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה נִמְּוֹל אַבְרָהָם וַיִּשְׁמַעְאֵל בְּנוֹ:  
<sup>כז</sup> כִּי וְכָל־אֲנָשֵׁי בֵּיתוֹ יְלִיד בֵּית וּמִקְנֶת־כֶּסֶף מֵאֵת בֶּן־  
 נֶכֶד נִמְּלוּ אִתּוֹ: {פ}

those born in his household and all those he had bought: all the males  
 among the men of Abraham's house, and circumcised them that  
 same day, as God had told him. <sup>24</sup> Abraham was ninety-nine years  
 old when his foreskin was circumcised. <sup>25</sup> Ishmael his son was  
 thirteen years old when he was circumcised. <sup>26</sup> That same day,  
 Abraham and his son Ishmael were circumcised; <sup>27</sup> all the men of his  
 house, both those born in the house and those bought with money  
 from a foreigner, were circumcised with him.

<sup>24</sup> The literal translation of 'ninety-nine years old' is 'the son of ninety-nine years'.

<sup>25</sup> See #23 & #24.

<sup>26</sup> For 'that same day', following the NJB, the NRSV has 'that very day'; the LXX reads 'in the time of that day' (ἐν τῷ καιρῷ τῆς ἡμέρας ἐκείνης).

<sup>27</sup> For this verse, here following the NJB, the NRSV reads, "and all the men of his house, slaves born in the house and those bought with money from a foreigner, were circumcised with him."

## GENESIS 18

## בראשית פרק יח

א וַיֵּרָא אֵלָיו יְהוָה בְּאֵלֶיךָ מִמְּרָא וְהוּא יֹשֵׁב פֶּתַח-  
הָאֵהֶל כַּחַם הַיּוֹם: ב וַיֵּשָׂא עֵינָיו וַיֵּרָא וְהִנֵּה שְׁלֹשָׁה  
אֲנָשִׁים נֹצְבִים עָלָיו וַיֵּרָא וַיֵּרָץ לְקִרְאתָם מִפֶּתַח  
הָאֵהֶל וַיִּשְׁתַּחוּ אֶרְצָה: ג וַיֹּאמֶר אֲדֹנָי אִם-נָא מִצָּאתִי  
חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ אֶל-נָא תַעֲבֹר מֵעַל עַבְדְּךָ: ד יִקַּח-נָא מֵעֵט-  
מִים וְרָחֲצוּ רַגְלֵיכֶם וְהִשְׁעֲנוּ תַּחַת הָעֵץ: ה וַאֲקַחְהָ  
פֶּתֶלֶחֶם וְסַעֲדוּ לְבַבְכֶם אַחֵר תַּעֲבֹרוּ כִּי-עֹלֶכֶן  
עֲבַרְתֶּם עַל-עַבְדְּכֶם וַיֹּאמְרוּ בֵּן תַּעֲשֶׂה כַּאֲשֶׁר  
דִּבַּרְתָּ: ו וַיִּמְהַר אַבְרָהָם הָאֵהֶלָה אֶל-שָׂרָה וַיֹּאמֶר  
מִהֲרִי שְׁלֹשׁ סָאִים קֶמַח סֹלֶת לְוִשִׁי וְעֲשִׂי עֲגוֹת: ז וְאֶל-  
הַבָּקָר רָץ אַבְרָהָם וַיִּקַּח בֶּן-בָּקָר רֹדֵד וטוֹב וַיִּתֵּן אֶל-  
הַנֶּזֶר וַיִּמְהַר לַעֲשׂוֹת אֹתוֹ: ח וַיִּקַּח חֲמָאָה וְחֹלֶב וּבֹן-

<sup>1</sup> Yahweh appeared to him by the Oak of Mamre as he sat at his tent door in the heat of the day. <sup>2</sup> He looked up and saw three men standing by him; when he saw them, he ran from the door of the tent to meet them and bowed to the ground. <sup>3</sup> He said, "My lord, if I find favour with you, do not pass your servant by. <sup>4</sup> Let me have a little water brought, and wash your feet, and lie down under the tree. <sup>5</sup> Let me fetch a little bread that you may refresh yourselves before going further, since you have come to your servant." They replied, "Do as you say." <sup>6</sup> Abraham hastened to the tent to find Sarah and said "Knead three bushels of flour quickly and make loaves." <sup>7</sup> Then, running to the cattle, Abraham took a fine and tender calf and gave it to the servant, who hurried to prepare it. <sup>8</sup> Then taking cream, milk,

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- <sup>1</sup> An alternative reading for 'Oak' (the NRSV has 'Oaks') is 'Terebinth(s)'. The noun translated as 'door' is an adverbial accusative of place.
- <sup>2</sup> Abraham's gesture is not a religious act of adoration but simply a mark of respect. At first, Abraham sees his guests as mere human beings (Heb 13:2) and welcomes them warmly; their superhuman character is only gradually revealed (vv. 2, 9, 13 & 14).
- <sup>3</sup> For 'My Lord', the MT has the form אֲדֹנָי, which is reserved for God; this may reflect later scribal activity: the scribes, knowing it was Yahweh, may have put the proper pointing on the word instead of the more common אֲדֹנִי ('my master').
- <sup>4</sup> The verb translated 'wash' and the pronominal suffix on the word 'feet' are plural, referring to all three visitors.
- <sup>5</sup> The literal translation of 'refresh yourselves' is 'strengthen your heart'.
- <sup>6</sup> 'Three bushels' translates שְׁלֹשׁ סָאִים; this was about 22 litres of flour, and the animal prepared was far more than the visitors needed.
- <sup>7</sup> Another reading of 'hurried to prepare it' is 'quickly prepared it'; the phrase uses the Piel preterite followed by the infinitive construct.
- <sup>8</sup> The disjunctive final clause is a temporal circumstantial clause subordinate to the main verb.

הַבֶּקֶר אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה וַיִּתֵּן לִפְנֵיהֶם וְהוּא עֹמֵד עֲלֵיהֶם  
תַּחַת הָעֵץ וַיֹּאכְלוּ:

ט וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלָיו אַיֵּה שָׂרָה אֲשֶׁתְּךָ וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֵּה בָאֵהָל:  
י וַיֹּאמֶר שׁוּב אָשׁוּב אֵלֶיךָ כְּעֵת חַיָּה וְהָנָה־בֶּן לְשָׂרָה  
אֲשֶׁתְּךָ וְשָׂרָה שְׁמַעַת פֶּתַח הָאֵהָל וְהוּא אַחֲרָיו:  
יא וְאַבְרָהָם וְשָׂרָה זָקְנִים בָּאִים בַּיָּמִים חֲדָל לִהְיוֹת  
לְשָׂרָה אֶרֶח כְּנָשִׁים: יב וַתִּצְחַק שָׂרָה בְּקִרְבָּהּ לֵאמֹר  
אֲחֵרִי בִלְתִּי הִיתָה־לִּי עַדְנָה וְאֲדֹנִי זָקֵן: יג וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה  
אֶל־אַבְרָהָם לָמָּה זֶה צִחַקְהָ שָׂרָה לֵאמֹר הָאֵף אֲמַנָּם  
אֵלַד וְאֲנִי זָקֵנָתִי: יד הֲיִפְלֵא מִיְהוָה דְּבַר לְמוֹעֵד אָשׁוּב  
אֵלֶיךָ כְּעֵת חַיָּה וּלְשָׂרָה בֶּן: טו וַתִּכְחַשׁ שָׂרָה | לֵאמֹר  
לֹא צִחַקְתִּי כִּי | יֵרָאֶה וַיֹּאמֶר | לֹא כִּי צִחַקְתָּ:

טז וַיִּקְמוּ מִשָּׁם הָאֲנָשִׁים וַיִּשְׁקְפוּ עַל־פְּנֵי סְדֹם  
וְאַבְרָהָם הֵלֵךְ עִמָּם לְשַׁלְּחָם: יז וַיְהִי וְהָאֵם הַמִּכְסָּה

and the calf he prepared, he laid all before them, and they ate while he remained standing near them under the tree.

<sup>9</sup> “Where is your wife, Sarah?” they asked him. “There in the tent,” he said. <sup>10</sup> And he said, “I will surely return to you next year and your wife will have a son.” Sarah was listening at the tent door behind him. <sup>11</sup> Now Abraham and Sarah were old, well on in years, and Sarah had stopped menstruating. <sup>12</sup> So, Sarah laughed, saying, “Now I am old and my husband is old, shall I have pleasure?” <sup>13</sup> Yahweh asked Abraham, “Why did Sarah laugh and say: ‘Shall I really have a son now I am old?’” <sup>14</sup> Is anything too hard for Yahweh? At the set time, I will return to you and Sarah will have a son.” <sup>15</sup> “I did not laugh,” Sarah said, for she was afraid. He said, “No, you did laugh.” <sup>16</sup> Thence, the men set out and looked toward Sodom, with Abraham with them to show them the way. <sup>17</sup> Yahweh said, “Shall I hide from

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- <sup>9</sup> In place of ‘there’, following the MT and NRSV, the NJB has ‘she is’; the particle הִנֵּה often accompanies a gesture of pointing or a focused gaze.
- <sup>10</sup> In place of ‘then he said’ (following the MT & NJB), the NRSV has ‘then one said’; some (RSV, NIV) specify the referent as Yahweh, based on vv. 1, 13. However, not until the promise of a son later in the verse is it clear who is speaking. In v. 13, the MT explicitly mentions Yahweh.
- <sup>11</sup> In place of ‘Sarah had stopped menstruating’, the NRSV (following the MT) has ‘it had ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women’.
- <sup>12</sup> Sarah’s laughter is an allusion to the name Isaac (see #17:17). She does not yet know who her guest is; in v. 15, she guesses, and is frightened. Some suggest ‘conception’ in place of ‘pleasure’.
- <sup>13</sup> The literal translation of ‘why’ is ‘why this’; the emphatic pronoun (not translated in English) is enclitic, emphasising God’s amazement.
- <sup>14</sup> In place of ‘hard’, here following the NJB, the NRSV has ‘wonderful’.
- <sup>15</sup> In place of ‘No, you did laugh’, here following the MT, the NJB & NRSV have, ‘Oh yes, you did laugh’.
- <sup>16</sup> The Piel of שָׁלַח means ‘to lead out’, ‘to send out’ or ‘to expel’; here, it is used in the friendly sense of seeing the visitors on their way.
- <sup>17</sup> The active participle (‘am about to do’) here refers to an imminent action.

אֲנִי מְאַבְרָהָם אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי עֹשֶׂה: יי' וְאַבְרָהָם הֵיוּ יְהִיָּה  
לְגוֹי גָּדוֹל וְעַצּוֹם וְנִבְרָכוּ-בּוֹ כָּל גּוֹיֵי הָאָרֶץ: יט כִּי  
יִדְעֹתִיו לְמַעַן אֲשֶׁר יֵצִיָּה אֶת-בָּנָיו וְאֶת-בֵּיתוֹ אַחֲרָיו  
וְשָׁמְרוּ דֶּרֶךְ יְהוָה לַעֲשׂוֹת צְדָקָה וּמִשְׁפָּט לְמַעַן הִבִּיא  
יְהוָה עַל-אַבְרָהָם אֶת אֲשֶׁר-דִּבֶּר עָלָיו: כ וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה  
זַעֲקַת סֹדִם וְעִמֹּרָה כִּי-רַבָּה וְחַטָּאתָם כִּי כְבֹּדָה מְאֹד:  
כא אֲרֹדָה-נָא וְאַרְאֶה הַכָּצֵעַקָתָה הַבָּאָה אֵלַי עֲשׂוּ  
כָלָה וְאִם-לֹא אֲדַעָה:

כב וַיִּפְּנוּ מִשָּׁם הָאֲנָשִׁים וַיֵּלְכוּ סְדֹמָה וְאַבְרָהָם עֹדֶנּוּ  
עֹמֵד לִפְנֵי יְהוָה: כג וַיֵּגֶשׁ אַבְרָהָם וַיֹּאמֶר הֲאֵף תִּסְפָּה

Abraham what I am about to do,<sup>18</sup> seeing that Abraham will be a great nation with all the nations of earth blessing themselves by him?<sup>19</sup> For, I have chosen him to charge his sons and his house after him, to keep the way of Yahweh by just and upright living; thus, Yahweh will do for Abraham what he has promised him.”<sup>20</sup> Then Yahweh said, “How great is the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah! How grave is their sin!<sup>21</sup> I will go down to see if they have done what the outcry that has come up to me says. I am determined to know.”

<sup>22</sup> The men left there and went to Sodom, while Abraham remained standing before Yahweh. <sup>23</sup> Approaching him he said, “Are you

<sup>18</sup> The NRSV reads: “... and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?” Theoretically, the Niphal can be translated either as passive or reflexive/reciprocal. (The Niphal of ‘bless’ is only used in formulations of the Abrahamic covenant: 12:2, 28:14.) Traditionally, the verb is taken as passive here, as if Abraham were going to be a channel or source of blessing; but in later formulations of the Abrahamic covenant (22:18, 26:4) the Hitpael replaces this Niphal form, suggesting a translation ‘will bless themselves’. The Hitpael of ‘bless’ is used with a reflexive/reciprocal sense in Dt 29:18, Ps 72:17, Is 65:16, Jr 4:2. This verse (like 12:2) predicts that Abraham will be held up as a paradigm of divine blessing and that people will use his name in their blessing formulae.

<sup>19</sup> The verb יִדְעֹתִיו (*I have chosen*) here means ‘recognise and treat in a special manner’ (cf. Am 3:2); it indicates that Abraham stood in a special covenantal relationship with Yahweh.

<sup>20</sup> The literal translation of ‘outcry against Sodom’ is ‘the outcry of Sodom’, which apparently refers to the outcry for divine justice from those (unidentified persons) who observe its sinful ways.

<sup>21</sup> The descent to ‘see’ Sodom is a bold anthropomorphism, stressing the careful judgment of God; the language is reminiscent of Yahweh going down to see the Tower of Babel in 11:1–9. For the last sentence, here following the NJB, the NRSV has, “And if not, I will know.”

<sup>22</sup> The NJB inverts the names of ‘Abraham’ and ‘Yahweh’; here, we follow the MT & NRSV.

<sup>23</sup> Abraham raises a perennial problem: must the good suffer along with, and because of, the wicked? The conviction of collective responsibility was so strong in ancient Israel that the question does not arise here as to whether the upright may be spared individually. God will, in fact, save Lot and his family (19:15–16); but the principle of individual responsibility is not deduced until Dt 7:10 (see also Dt 24:16, Jr 31:29–30, Ezk 14:12ff & 18). So, Abraham, supposing that all are to share in a common destiny, asks that a few upright people may win pardon for the many wicked; according to Jr 5:1 and Ezk 22:30, God would pardon Jerusalem even if only one upright person could be found there.



צָדִיק עַם־רָשָׁע: כִּי אוֹלֵי יֵשׁ חֲמִשִּׁים צָדִיקִים בְּתוֹךְ  
הָעִיר הָאֵף תִּסְפֶּה וְלֹא־תִשָּׂא לַמָּקוֹם לְמַעַן חֲמִשִּׁים  
הַצָּדִיקִים אֲשֶׁר בְּקִרְבָּהּ: כִּי חָלְלָה לָךְ מַעֲשֵׂת| בְּדַבֵּר  
הַזֶּה לְהַמִּית צָדִיק עַם־רָשָׁע וְהִיא כַצָּדִיק כְּרָשָׁע  
חָלְלָה לָךְ הַשֹּׁפֵט כָּל־הָאָרֶץ לֹא יַעֲשֶׂה מִשְׁפָּט:  
כִּי וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אִם־אֶמְצָא בְּסוֹדִם חֲמִשִּׁים צָדִיקִים  
בְּתוֹךְ הָעִיר וְנִשְׂאתִי לְכָל־הַמָּקוֹם בְּעִבּוּרָם:

כִּי וַיַּעַן אַבְרָהָם וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֵּה־נָא הוֹאֲלֹתִי לְדַבֵּר אֵל־  
אֲדֹנָי וְאֲנֹכִי עֹפֹר וָאֶפֶר: כִּי אוֹלֵי יַחֲסֵרוֹן חֲמִשִּׁים  
הַצָּדִיקִים חֲמִשָּׁה הִתְשַׁחִּית בַּחֲמִשָּׁה אֶת־כָּל־הָעִיר  
וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא אֲשַׁחִית אִם־אֶמְצָא שָׁם אַרְבָּעִים וַחֲמִשָּׁה:  
כִּט וַיִּסָּף עוֹד לְדַבֵּר אֵלָיו וַיֹּאמֶר אוֹלֵי יִמְצְאוּן שָׁם  
אַרְבָּעִים וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא אַעֲשֶׂה בְּעִבּוּר הָאֲרָבָעִים:

לִּי וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל־נָא יַחַר לְאֲדֹנָי וְאֲדַבְּרָה אוֹלֵי יִמְצְאוּן שָׁם  
שְׁלֹשִׁים וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא אַעֲשֶׂה אִם־אֶמְצָא שָׁם שְׁלֹשִׁים:

really going to destroy the just man with the sinner? <sup>24</sup> Perhaps there are fifty just men in the town. Will you really overwhelm them; will you not spare the place for the fifty just men in it? <sup>25</sup> Do not think of doing such a thing: to kill the just man with the sinner, treating just and sinner alike! Do not think of it! Will the judge of the whole earth not administer justice?" <sup>26</sup> Yahweh replied, "If at Sodom I find fifty just men in the town, I will spare the whole place because of them."

<sup>27</sup> Abraham replied, "I am bold indeed to speak like this to my Lord, I who am dust and ashes. <sup>28</sup> But perhaps the fifty just men lack five: will you destroy the whole city for five?" "No," he replied, "I will not destroy it if I find forty-five just men there." <sup>29</sup> Again, he said to him, "Perhaps there will only be forty there." "I will not do it," he replied, "for the sake of the forty."

<sup>30</sup> He said, "Let not my Lord be angry, but give me leave to speak: perhaps there will only be thirty there." He said, "I will not do it if I

<sup>24</sup> The literal translation of 'spare the place' (here following the NJB – the NRSV has 'forgive it') is 'lift up the place', perhaps in the sense of 'bear with'.

<sup>25</sup> Abraham's plea is that it would be more unjust to condemn the innocent few than to spare the many guilty (cf. Rm 3:6). An alternative translation of 'judge' is 'ruler'.

<sup>26</sup> Alternative translations of 'just men' (following the NJB) are 'righteous' (NRSV) and 'godly people' (NETB).

<sup>27</sup> The term here translated 'my Lord' (as also in vv. 30–32) is אֲדֹנָי ('Adonai').

<sup>28</sup> The verb שָׂהַת ('to destroy') was used earlier to describe the effect of the flood.

<sup>29</sup> The construction translated as 'again he said to him' is a verbal hendiadys: the preterite ('he added') is combined with an adverb ('yet') and an infinitive ('to speak').

<sup>30</sup> The literal translation of 'let not my Lord be angry' is 'let it not be hot with my Lord', an idiomatic reference to anger.



לֹא וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֵּה־נָא הוֹאִלְתִּי לְדַבֵּר אֶל־אֲדֹנָי אֱלֹהֵי  
יִמְצְאוֹן שָׁם עֲשָׂרִים וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא אֲשַׁחִית בְּעֶבֶר  
הָעֲשָׂרִים: לֵב וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל־נָא יֵחָר לֵאדֹנָי וְאִדְבָּרָה אִף־  
הַפֶּעַם אֱלֹהֵי יִמְצְאוֹן שָׁם עֲשָׂרָה וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא אֲשַׁחִית  
בְּעֶבֶר הָעֲשָׂרָה:

לֵב וַיֵּלֶךְ יְהוָה כַּאֲשֶׁר כָּלָה לְדַבֵּר אֶל־אַבְרָהָם וְאַבְרָהָם  
שָׁב לְמִקְמוֹ:

find thirty there.” <sup>31</sup> He said, “I am bold to speak like this, but perhaps there will only be twenty there.” He said, “I will not destroy it for the sake of the twenty.” <sup>32</sup> Then he said, “I trust my Lord will not be angry if I speak once more: perhaps there will only be ten.” He said, “I will not destroy it for the sake of the ten.”

<sup>33</sup> When he had finished talking to Abraham, Yahweh went away, and Abraham returned home.

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<sup>31</sup> In place of ‘I am bold to speak like this’, here following the NJB, the NRSV has ‘Let me take it upon myself to speak to the Lord’.

<sup>32</sup> In place of ‘then he said’, NETB has ‘finally, he said’.

<sup>33</sup> Abraham returns the following day to see what has happened.

## GENESIS 19

## בראשית פרק יט

א וַיָּבֹאוּ שְׁנֵי הַמַּלְאָכִים סָדְמָה בָּעֶרֶב וְלוֹט יֹשֵׁב  
בְּשַׁעַר־סֹדֶם וַיֵּרְאֵם לֹוט וַיָּקָם לִקְרֹאתָם וַיִּשְׁתָּחוּ אַפַּיִם  
אָרְצָה: ב וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֵּה נָא־אֲדֹנִי סוּרוּ נָא אֶל־בֵּית  
עַבְדְּכֶם וְלִינוּ וְרַחֲצוּ רַגְלֵיכֶם וְהִשְׁכַּמְתֶּם וְהִלַכְתֶּם  
לְדַרְכְּכֶם וַיֹּאמְרוּ לֹא כִי בָרְחוּב נָלִין: ג וַיִּפְצַר־בָּם מְאֹד  
וַיִּסְרוּ אֵלָיו וַיָּבֹאוּ אֶל־בֵּיתוֹ וַיַּעַשׂ לָהֶם מִשְׁתֶּה וּמִצּוֹת  
אֶפֶה וַיֹּאכְלוּ: ד טֶרֶם יִשְׁכְּבוּ וְאֲנָשֵׁי הָעִיר אֲנָשֵׁי סֹדֶם  
נִסְבּוּ עַל־הַבַּיִת מִנֶּעַר וְעַד־זָקֵן כָּל־הָעָם מִקְצָה:  
ה וַיִּקְרְאוּ אֶל־לֹוט וַיֹּאמְרוּ לוֹ אֵיהָ הָאֲנָשִׁים אֲשֶׁר־בָּאוּ  
אֵלֶיךָ הַלַּיְלָה הוֹצֵאֵם אֵלֵינוּ וְנִדְעָה אֹתָם:

ו וַיֵּצֵא אֱלֹהִים לֹוט הַפֶּתַח וְהַדֹּלֶת סָגַר אַחֲרָיו:  
ז וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל־נָא אַחִי תִרְעוּ: ח הִנֵּה־נָא לִי שְׁתֵּי בָנוֹת  
אֲשֶׁר לֹא־יָדְעוּ אִישׁ אוֹצִיאָה־נָא אֶתְהֶן אֵלֵיכֶם וַעֲשׂוּ

<sup>1</sup> The two angels reached Sodom in the evening and Lot was sitting at the gate of Sodom. When Lot saw them, he rose to meet them and bowed to the ground. <sup>2</sup> He said, "Here, my lords, come to the house of your servant to stay the night and wash your feet; then you can rise early and go on your way." They said, "No, we can spend the night in the square." <sup>3</sup> But he urged them so much that they went with him and entered his house; he made a meal for them, baking unleavened bread, and they ate. <sup>4</sup> Before they retired, the men of the city, the men of Sodom, old and young, to the last man, surrounded the house. <sup>5</sup> They called to Lot, "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Send them out to us so that we may know them."

<sup>6</sup> Lot came out to them at the door and, closing the door behind him, <sup>7</sup> said, "I beg you, my brothers, do no such wicked thing. <sup>8</sup> Look, I have two daughters who are virgins; I will send them out to you, do

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<sup>1</sup> The NJB omits 'of Sodom', here following the MT & NRSV.

<sup>2</sup> 'The square' refers to the wide street area at the gate complex of the city.

<sup>3</sup> The verb יִפְצַר ('urged') ironically foreshadows the hostile actions of the men of the city (see v. 9, where the verb also appears). The repetition of the word serves to contrast Lot to his world.

<sup>4</sup> The repetition of the phrase 'men of' stresses all kinds of men.

<sup>5</sup> The unnatural vice that takes its name from this incident was an abomination to the Israelite (Lv 18:22) and was punishable by death (Lv 20:13).

<sup>6</sup> For this verse, here following the NJB, the NRSV reads, "Lot went out of the door to the men, shut the door after him ..."

<sup>7</sup> The literal translation of this verse is "May my brothers do no wicked thing."

<sup>8</sup> At that period, the honour of a woman was of less account than the sacred duty of hospitality (see 12:13 and #12:10).

לָהֶן כְּטוֹב בְּעֵינֵיכֶם רַק לְאֲנָשִׁים הָאֵל אֶל־תַּעֲשׂוּ דְבָר  
כִּי־עַל־כֵּן בָּאוּ בַּצֵּל קִרְתִּי: <sup>ט</sup> וַיֹּאמְרוּ גִשְׁהֲלָאָה  
וַיֹּאמְרוּ הָאֶחָד בְּא־לְגוֹר וַיִּשְׁפֹּט שְׁפוֹט עֲתָה נִרְעֵ לָךְ  
מֵהֶם וַיִּפְצְרוּ בְּאִישׁ בְּלוֹט מֵאֵד וַיִּגְשׁוּ לְשֹׁבֵר הַדֶּלֶת:  
וַיִּשְׁלְחוּ הָאֲנָשִׁים אֶת־יָדָם וַיָּבִיאוּ אֶת־לֹוט אֶל־הֵם  
הַבַּיִתָּה וְאֶת־הַדֶּלֶת סָגְרוּ: <sup>יא</sup> וְאֶת־הָאֲנָשִׁים אֲשֶׁר־  
פָּתַח הַבַּיִת הִכּוּ בַּסִּנּוּרִים מִקָּטָן וְעַד־גָּדוֹל וַיִּלְאוּ  
לְמִצָּא הַפֶּתַח:

<sup>יב</sup> וַיֹּאמְרוּ הָאֲנָשִׁים אֶל־לוֹט עַד מִי־לָךְ פֹּה חֲתָן וּבָנִיךָ  
וּבְנֹתֶיךָ וְכָל אֲשֶׁר־לָךְ בְּעִיר הוֹצֵא מִן־הַמָּקוֹם: <sup>יג</sup> כִּי־  
מִשְׁחָתִים אָנֹכְנוּ אֶת־הַמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה כִּי־גְדֹלָה צַעֲקָתָם  
אֶת־פָּנַי יְהוָה וַיִּשְׁלַחַנוּ יְהוָה לְשַׁחֲתָהּ: <sup>יד</sup> וַיֵּצֵא לוֹט  
וַיְדַבֵּר אֶל־חֲתָנָיו לֵקְחֵי בָנֹתָיו וַיֹּאמֶר קוּמוּ צֵאוּ מִן־  
הַמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה כִּי־מִשְׁחִית יְהוָה אֶת־הָעִיר וַיְהִי כַּמִּצְחָק  
בְּעֵינֵי חֲתָנָיו: <sup>טו</sup> וְכַמוֹ הַשָּׁחַר עָלָה וַיֵּאֲצִו הַמַּלְאָכִים  
בְּלוֹט לֵאמֹר קוּם קַח אֶת־אִשְׁתְּךָ וְאֶת־שְׁתֵּי בְנֹתֶיךָ

to them as you please. But do nothing to the men, for they have come under the shelter of my roof.” <sup>9</sup> They said, “Stand aside! Here is one who came as an alien and dares to judge. Now we will treat you worse than them.” Then they forced Lot back and moved forward to break down the door. <sup>10</sup> But the men reached out, pulled Lot back into the house, and shut the door. <sup>11</sup> Then they struck the men who were at the door of the house with blindness, from youngest to oldest, and they never found the door.

<sup>12</sup> The men said to Lot, “Have you anyone else here? Sons, daughters and all your people in the city, take them out of the place. <sup>13</sup> For, we will destroy this place; for, a great outcry against them has reached Yahweh and Yahweh has sent us to destroy it.” <sup>14</sup> Lot went out and said to his sons-in-law who married his daughters, “Up! leave this place; for, Yahweh will destroy the city.” But his sons-in-law thought he jested. <sup>15</sup> When dawn broke, the angels urged Lot, “Up! Take your wife and your two daughters, or you will be consumed in the punish-

<sup>9</sup> The literal translation of ‘dares to judge’ is ‘and he has judged, judging’; the emphasis is reflected in the translation.

<sup>10</sup> The ‘men’ here are the angels, Lot’s guests inside the house.

<sup>11</sup> The literal translation of ‘youngest to oldest’ is ‘least to greatest’.

<sup>12</sup> Before, “Sons,” the MT actually inserts ‘son-in-law’, but this is probably a later addition suggested by v. 14.

<sup>13</sup> The participle here translated ‘we will destroy’ expresses imminent action.

<sup>14</sup> Before ‘sons-in-law’, the NJB inserts ‘future’; the language has to be interpreted in the context of social customs: the men are called ‘sons-in-law’ but the daughters were virgins. However, since formal marriage contracts were binding, they could already be called sons-in-law.

<sup>15</sup> The wording of this verse might imply he had other daughters living in the city, but the text does not explicitly state this.

הַנִּמְצָאִים פֶּן־תִּסָּפֶה בְּעֵון הָעִיר: טז וַיִּתְּמָהּ וַיִּחְזְקוּ הָאֲנָשִׁים בִּידוֹ וּבִיד־אִשְׁתּוֹ וּבִיד שְׁתֵּי בָנָתָיו בְּחִמְלַת יְהוָה עָלָיו וַיֹּצֵאֵהוּ וַיִּנְחֵהוּ מִחוּץ לָעִיר:  
 זי וַיְהִי כְּהוֹצִיאֵם אֹתָם הַחוּצָה וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶט עַל־נַפְשֶׁךָ אֲלֵתִּבִּיט אַחֲרֶיךָ וְאַל־תַּעֲמֹד בְּכָל־הַכְּפָר הַהֵרָה הַמֶּלֶט פֶּן־תִּסָּפֶה: יח וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹט אֱלֹהִים אֶל־נָא אֲדֹנָי: יט הִנֵּה־נָא מֵצָא עֲבָדְךָ חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ וַתִּגְדַּל חֲסִדְךָ אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתָ עִמָּדִי לְהַחְיֹת אֶת־נַפְשִׁי וְאַנֹכִי לֹא אוֹכֵל לְהַמְלִיט הַהֵרָה פֶּן־תִּדְבַּקֵּנִי הָרָעָה וּמָתִי: כ הִנֵּה־נָא הָעִיר הַזֹּאת קְרִיבָה לָנוּס שָׁמָּה וְהוּא מֵצֶעֶר אִמְלֻטָּה נָא שָׁמָּה הֲלֹא מֵצֶעֶר הוּא וְתַחִי נַפְשִׁי: כא וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו הִנֵּה נִשְׁאֲתִי פָנֶיךָ גַּם לְדַבֵּר הַזֶּה לְבַלְתִּי הַפְּכִי אֶת־הָעִיר אֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְתָּ: כב מֵהָר הַמֶּלֶט שָׁמָּה כִּי לֹא אוֹכֵל לַעֲשׂוֹת דְּבָר עַד־בֹּאֲךָ שָׁמָּה עַל־כֵּן קָרָא שֵׁם־הָעִיר צוּעַר:

ment of the city.” <sup>16</sup> As he hesitated, the men took him by the hand, and his wife and his two daughters, because of the pity Yahweh felt for him. They led him out and left him outside the city.

<sup>17</sup> As they were leading him out, he said, “Run for your life. Neither look behind you nor stop anywhere on the plain. Make for the mountains if you would not be overwhelmed.” <sup>18</sup> “No, I beg you, my lord,” Lot said to them, <sup>19</sup> “your servant has won your favour and you have shown great kindness to me in saving my life. However, I could not reach the mountains before this calamity overtook me, and death with it. <sup>20</sup> The town over there is near enough to flee to and is a little one. Let me make for that – is it not little? – And my life will be saved.” <sup>21</sup> He answered, “I shall grant you this favour too, and I will not destroy the town of which you speak. <sup>22</sup> Hurry, escape to it, for I can do nothing until you reach it.” That is why the town is named Zoar.

<sup>16</sup> The masculine singular pronominal suffixes refer specifically to Lot, though his wife and daughters accompanied him.

<sup>17</sup> For ‘he said’ (as MT), the LXX (εἶπεν), Vg (*dicentes*) & Peshitta read ‘they said’; some prefer ‘one of them said’ but the text does not support this.

<sup>18</sup> In place of ‘my Lord’ (אֲדֹנָי), here following the MT & NJB, the NRSV has ‘my lords’ (see #19 on the problem of identifying the addressee here).

<sup>19</sup> The 2P pronominal suffixes are singular in this verse; v. 18<sup>b</sup> seems to indicate that Lot is addressing the angels, but the use of the singular and the appearance of the divine title in v. 18<sup>a</sup> suggests he is speaking to God.

<sup>20</sup> The word עִיר can refer to either city or a town, depending on the size of the place; given that this place is described by Lot later in this verse as a ‘little one’, the translation uses ‘town’.

<sup>21</sup> The referent of the speaker (‘he’) is somewhat ambiguous: it could be taken as the angel to whom Lot has been speaking, or it could be that Lot is speaking directly to Yahweh here. Most English translations leave the referent of the pronoun unspecified and maintain the ambiguity.

<sup>22</sup> The name ‘Zoar’ (צוּעַר) is here related to מֵצֶעֶר (‘a trifling thing’), used twice by Lot (v. 20) to describe the town.

כג השמש יצא על־הארץ ולוט בא צערה: כד ויהוה  
המטיר על־סדם ועל־עמרה גפרית ואש מאת יהוה  
מן־השמים: כה ויהפך את־הערים האל ואת כל־  
הכפר ואת כל־ישובי הערים וצמח האדמה: כו ותבט  
אשתו מאחריה ותהי נציב מלח: כז וישכם אברהם  
בבקר אל־המקום אשר־עמד שם את־פני יהוה:  
כח וישקף על־פני סדם ועמרה ועל־כל־פני ארץ  
הכפר וירא והנה עלה קיטר הארץ כקיטר הכבשן:  
כט ויהי בשחת אלהים את־ערי הכפר ויזכר אלהים  
את־אברהם וישלח את־לוט מתוך ההפכה בהפך  
את־הערים אשר־ישב בהן לוט: ל ויעל לוט מצוער  
וישב בהר ושתי בנותיו עמו כי ירא לשבת בצוער

<sup>23</sup> The sun had risen on the earth when Lot reached Zoar. <sup>24</sup> Then Yahweh rained on Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from Yahweh out of heaven; <sup>25</sup> he overthrew those cities and all the plain, all the inhabitants of the cities, and all that grew there. <sup>26</sup> But Lot's wife looked back and she became a pillar of salt. <sup>27</sup> Rising early in the morning, Abraham went to the place where he had stood before Yahweh <sup>28</sup> and, looking towards Sodom and Gomorrah and across all the plain, he saw the smoke rising from the land, like smoke from a furnace. <sup>29</sup> Thus, when God destroyed the towns of the plain, he kept Abraham in mind and rescued Lot out of disaster when he overwhelmed the cities where Lot was living. <sup>30</sup> Lot went up out of Zoar and settled in the hills with his two daughters, for he dared not

<sup>23</sup> There was very little time for Lot to escape between dawn (v. 15) and sunrise (here).

<sup>24</sup> The NJB lacks 'out of heaven'; a footnote therein mentions it as a gloss.

<sup>25</sup> The text enables us to locate the catastrophe (probably an earthquake accompanied by an eruption of gas) in the southern part of the Dead Sea. The subsidence of the southern half of the Dead Sea is known to be recent as geologists reckon, and the whole district is still geologically unstable. The doomed cities, besides Sodom and Gomorrah (Is 1:9 & 10, Am 4:11), were Admah and Zeboiim (Ch. 14, Dt 29:22, Ho 11:8).

<sup>26</sup> The fate of Lot's wife is a popular explanation of some oddly shaped column of rock salt, such as may be seen today on Jebel Usdum.

<sup>27</sup> The word 'went' is not in the MT (or LXX) and is here added for clarity

<sup>28</sup> The literal translation of 'plain' is 'circle', referring to the oval area of the Jordan Valley.

<sup>29</sup> It is hard to imagine what was going on in Abraham's mind, but this brief section in the narrative enables the reader to think about the human response to the judgment. Abraham had family in that area; he had rescued those people from the invasion – that was why he interceded. Yet, he surely knew how wicked they were; that was why he got the number down to ten when he negotiated with God to save the city. But now he must have wondered, "What was the point?"

<sup>30</sup> Like Tamar (Ch. 38), Lot's daughters are not represented as shameless: their ruling motive is to perpetuate the race. The story of Sodom, destroyed because of the sins of its inhabitants, may originally have been a Transjordanian parallel to the story of the Flood.

וַיֵּשֶׁב בַּמְעֵרָה הוּא וּשְׁתֵּי בָנָתָיו: <sup>לא</sup> וַתֹּאמֶר הַבְּכִירָה  
 אֶל־הַצְעִירָה אָבִינוּ זָקֵן וְאִישׁ אֵין בָּאָרֶץ לְבוֹא עָלֵינוּ  
 כְּדֹרֶךְ כָּל־הָאָרֶץ: <sup>לב</sup> לָכֵּה נִשְׁקָה אֶת־אָבִינוּ יַיִן  
 וְנִשְ�כְּבָה עִמּוֹ וְנַחֲיָה מֵאָבִינוּ זֶרַע:  
<sup>לג</sup> וַתִּשְׁקֵן אֶת־אָבִיהָ יַיִן בַּלַּיְלָה הוּא וַתִּבָּא הַבְּכִירָה  
 וַתִּשְׁכַּב אֶת־אָבִיהָ וְלֹא־יָדַע בְּשֹׁכְבָהּ וּבִקְוָמָהּ: <sup>לד</sup> וַיְהִי  
 מִמָּחָרָת וַתֹּאמֶר הַבְּכִירָה אֶל־הַצְעִירָה הֵן־שֹׁכַבְתִּי  
 אִמָּשׁ אֶת־אָבִי נִשְׁקָנוּ יַיִן גַּם־הַלַּיְלָה וּבֹאִי שִׁכְבִּי עִמּוֹ  
 וְנַחֲיָה מֵאָבִינוּ זֶרַע: <sup>לה</sup> וַתִּשְׁקֵן גַּם בַּלַּיְלָה הַהוּא אֶת־  
 אָבִיהָ יַיִן וַתִּקַּם הַצְעִירָה וַתִּשְׁכַּב עִמּוֹ וְלֹא־יָדַע  
 בְּשֹׁכְבָהּ וּבִקְוָמָהּ: <sup>לו</sup> וַתִּהְרֶינָּה שְׁתֵּי בָנוֹת־לוֹט מֵאָבִיהֶן:  
<sup>לז</sup> וַתֵּלֶד הַבְּכִירָה בֶּן וַתִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ מוֹאָב הוּא אָבִי־  
 מוֹאָב עַד־הַיּוֹם: <sup>לח</sup> וְהַצְעִירָה גַּם־הוּא יָלְדָה בֶּן וַתִּקְרָא  
 שְׁמוֹ בֶּן־עַמִּי הוּא אָבִי בְנֵי־עַמּוֹן עַד־הַיּוֹם: {ס}

stay at Zoar. He lived in a cave, with his two daughters. <sup>31</sup> The elder said to the younger, "Our father is old and there is not a man nearby to marry us as they do the world over. <sup>32</sup> Come let us ply our father with wine and lie with him, so that we have children by our father." <sup>33</sup> That night, they made their father drunk, and the elder lay with her father; he knew not when she lay down or rose. <sup>34</sup> The next day, the elder said to the younger, "Last night I lay with my father; let us make him drunk again tonight and you lie with him, so we shall have seed by our father." <sup>35</sup> They made their father drunk that night too, and the younger went and lay with him; he knew not when she lay down or rose. <sup>36</sup> Both Lot's daughters were thus with child by their father. <sup>37</sup> The elder bore a son whom she named Moab, the father of the Moabites of today. <sup>38</sup> The younger also bore a son whom she named Ben-Ammi, the father of the Bene-Ammon of today.

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- <sup>31</sup> This verse assumes that Lot and his daughters are the sole survivors of the catastrophe. An alternative translation for 'nearby' is 'on earth', in which case the statement would be hyperbolic; there were presumably men living in Zoar, to which Lot and his daughters had initially fled.
- <sup>32</sup> The literal translation of 'lie with him' is 'and let him enter upon us' – a euphemism for sexual intercourse.
- <sup>33</sup> For this verse, here (loosely) following the NJB, the NRSV reads, "So they made their father drink wine that night; and the firstborn went in, and lay with her father; he did not know when she lay down or when she rose."
- <sup>34</sup> The literal translation of 'we shall have children by our father' (here and in v. 32) is 'we will keep alive from our father descendants'.
- <sup>35</sup> The literal translation of 'made their father drunk' (here and in vv. 33 & 34) is 'made their father drink wine'.
- <sup>36</sup> For this verse, here following the MT, the LXX reads: *And they conceived – the two daughters of Lot – from their father.* (καὶ συνέλαβον αἱ δύο θυγατέρες Λωτ ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς αὐτῶν.)
- <sup>37</sup> The meaning of the name 'Moab' (מוֹאָב) is not certain; it sounds like the phrase 'by our father' (מֵאָבִינוּ), which the daughters used twice.
- <sup>38</sup> The name 'Ben-Ammi' (בֶּן־עַמִּי) means 'son of my people'.



## בראשית פרק כ

א ויֵסַע מֶשֶׁם אַבְרָהָם אֶרֶץ הַנֶּגֶב וַיֵּשֶׁב בֵּין־קֹדֶשׁ וּבֵין שׁוּר וַיָּגֶר בְּגֶרָר: ב וַיֹּאמֶר אַבְרָהָם אֶל־שָׂרָה אִשְׁתּוֹ אַחֲתִי הוּא וַיִּשְׁלַח אַבְיִמֶלֶךְ מַלְאָךְ גֵּרָר וַיִּקַּח אֶת־שָׂרָה: ג וַיָּבֹא אֱלֹהִים אֶל־אַבְיִמֶלֶךְ בַּחלֹם הַלַּיְלָה וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ הִנֵּנִי מֵת עַל־הָאִשָּׁה אֲשֶׁר־לָקַחְתָּ וְהוּא בַעֲלַת בָּעַל: ד וַאֲבִימֶלֶךְ לֹא קָרַב אֵלֶיהָ וַיֹּאמֶר אֲדֹנָי הַגּוֹי גַּם־צַדִּיק תַּהְרֹג: ה הֲלֹא הוּא אָמַר־לִי אַחֲתִי הוּא וְהִיא־גַם־הוּא אָמְרָה אַחִי הוּא בְּתֶם־לִבִּי וּבִנְקִין כִּפִּי עָשִׂיתִי זֹאת: ו וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים בַּחלֹם גַּם אֲנֹכִי יִדְעֹתִי כִּי בְּתֶם־לִבְבְּךָ עָשִׂיתָ זֹאת וְאַחֲשֹׁךְ גַּם־אֲנֹכִי אוֹתָךְ מִחֲטוֹ־לִי עַל־כֵּן לֹא־נָתַתִּיךָ לְנָגַע אֵלֶיהָ: ז וְעַתָּה הֲשִׁב אִשְׁתְּ־הָאִישׁ כִּי־נָבִיא הוּא וִיתְפַּלֵּל בְּעֶדְךָ וְחִיָּה וְאִם־אֵינֶךָ מֵשִׁיב דָּע כִּי־מוֹת תָּמוּת אֶתָּה וְכָל־אֲשֶׁר־לָךְ:

## GENESIS 20

<sup>1</sup> Abraham left there for the land of the Negeb, and settled between Kadesh and Shur, staying for a time at Gerar. <sup>2</sup> Of his wife Sarah, Abraham said, "She is my sister," and King Abimelech of Gerar had Sarah brought to him. <sup>3</sup> But God visited Abimelech in a dream at night and told him, "You will die because of the woman you have taken, for she is a man's wife." <sup>4</sup> Now, Abimelech had not gone near her; he said, "Lord, would you destroy an innocent people? <sup>5</sup> Did he not tell me, "She is my sister?" Even she said, "He is my brother!" I did this with a clear conscience and clean hands." <sup>6</sup> God replied in the dream, "Yes, I know that you did this with a clear conscience, and I also kept you from sinning against me. So, I did not let you touch her. <sup>7</sup> Now return the man's wife; for, he is a prophet and can pray for you and your life. But if you do not restore her, know that you will surely die, and all your people."

## GENESIS 20

<sup>1</sup> An alternative reading for 'land of the Negeb' is 'South country' – 'Negeb' is the name for the southern desert region of Canaan.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. 12:13, where Abram instructs Sarai to tell Pharaoh that she is his sister.

<sup>3</sup> The literal translation of 'you will die' is 'look, you are dead'; the Hebrew construction uses the particle הִנֵּה with a 2P pronominal suffix (הִנֵּנִי) followed by the participle: it is a highly rhetorical expression.

<sup>4</sup> This verse follows the NRSV; apparently, Abimelech assumes that God's judgment will fall on his entire nation. Some, finding the reference to a nation problematic, prefer to emend the text and read (as NJB), "Lord, would you kill someone even if he is upright?"

<sup>5</sup> The literal translation of 'a clear conscience' is 'the integrity of my heart' (as also in v. 6).

<sup>6</sup> In place the 'So', the NJB opens the last sentence with 'That is why' and the NRSV has 'Therefore'.

<sup>7</sup> The word 'prophet' is used in the wider sense: one privileged before God (Ps 105:15) and a powerful intercessor (Nb 11:2, 21:7, Dt 34:10).

<sup>ח</sup> וַיִּשְׁכֹּם אַבִּימֶלֶךְ בַּבֹּקֶר וַיִּקְרָא לְכָל־עֲבָדָיו וַיְדַבֵּר  
 אֶת־כָּל־הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה בְּאָזְנֵיהֶם וַיִּירָאוּ הָאֲנָשִׁים  
 מְאֹד: <sup>ט</sup> וַיִּקְרָא אַבִּימֶלֶךְ לְאַבְרָהָם וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ מַה־  
 עָשִׂיתָ לָּנוּ וּמַה־חָטָאתָ לָּךְ כִּי־הִבַּאתָ עָלַי וְעַל־  
 מַמְלַכְתִּי חֲטָאָה גְּדֹלָה מִעֲשִׂים אֲשֶׁר לֹא־יַעֲשׂוּ עֲשִׂיתָ  
 עִמָּדִי: <sup>י</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר אַבִּימֶלֶךְ אֶל־אַבְרָהָם מַה רָאִיתָ כִּי  
 עָשִׂיתָ אֶת־הַדְּבָר הַזֶּה: <sup>יא</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר אַבְרָהָם כִּי אָמַרְתִּי  
 רַק אִין־יִרְאֶת אֱלֹהִים בַּמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה וְהִרְגִּינוּ עַל־דְּבַר  
 אִשְׁתִּי: <sup>יב</sup> וְגַם־אָמְנָה אֲחֹתִי בַת־אָבִי הִוא אֵךְ לֹא בַת־  
 אָמִי וְתִהְיֶה־לִּי לְאִשָּׁה: <sup>יג</sup> וַיְהִי כִּאֲשֶׁר הִתְעָו אֹתִי אֱלֹהִים  
 מִבֵּית אָבִי וַאֲמַר לָהּ זֶה חֲסִדְךָ אֲשֶׁר תַּעֲשִׂי עִמָּדִי אֵל  
 כָּל־הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר נָבֹא שָׁמָּה אֲמַר־לִי אָחִי הִוא:  
<sup>יד</sup> וַיִּקַּח אַבִּימֶלֶךְ צֹאן וּבָקָר וְעֲבָדִים וּשְׁפָחוֹת וַיִּתֵּן  
 לְאַבְרָהָם וַיֵּשֶׁב לוֹ אֶת שָׂרָה אִשְׁתּוֹ: <sup>טו</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר  
 אַבִּימֶלֶךְ הִנֵּה אֶרְצִי לְפָנֶיךָ בְּטוֹב בְּעֵינֶיךָ שֵׁב:  
<sup>טז</sup> וּלְשָׂרָה אָמַר הִנֵּה נָתַתִּי אֵלַיךְ כֶּסֶף לְאַחִיךָ הִנֵּה

<sup>8</sup> So, Abimelech rose early next morning, summoned all his servants, and told them the whole story, at which the men were terrified.  
<sup>9</sup> Abimelech summoned Abraham and said to him, “What have you done to us? How have I wronged you that you bring so great a sin on me and on my kingdom? You have treated me as you should not have done.” <sup>10</sup> And Abimelech asked Abraham, “What possessed you to do this?” <sup>11</sup> Abraham said, “Because I thought there is no fear of God here; and the people would kill me because of my wife.  
<sup>12</sup> Also, she is indeed my sister, my father’s daughter though not my mother’s; and she became my wife. <sup>13</sup> So, when God made me wander from my father’s home I said to her, “There is a kindness you can do me: everywhere we go say of me that I am your brother.”  
<sup>14</sup> Abimelech took sheep, cattle, men, and women slaves, presented them to Abraham, and restored his wife, Sarah; <sup>15</sup> and Abimelech said, “My land is before you; settle wherever you please.” <sup>16</sup> To Sarah he said, “Look, I have given one thousand pieces of silver to your

<sup>8</sup> The verb **קרא** followed by the preposition **ל** means ‘to summon’.

<sup>9</sup> The expression ‘great sin’ here refers to adultery.

<sup>10</sup> The literal translation of ‘what possessed you to do this’ (following the NJB) is ‘what did you see that you did this thing’.

<sup>11</sup> The literal translation of ‘because’ is ‘over the matter’.

<sup>12</sup> Marriage with a half-sister was permitted in ancient times (2S 13:13) but was later forbidden (Lv 18:9, 11, 20:17).

<sup>13</sup> The verb translated ‘made me wander’ is plural; normally, a singular verb form is used when used with the (plural) name of God.

<sup>14</sup> The NRSV reads, “Then Abimelech took sheep and oxen, and male and female slaves, and gave them to Abraham, and restored his wife Sarah to him.”

<sup>15</sup> The literal translation of ‘wherever you please’ is ‘in the (place that is) good in your eyes’.

<sup>16</sup> The meaning of ‘you are completely vindicated’ is uncertain.

הוא־לךְ כְּסוּת עֵינִים לְכָל אֲשֶׁר אֶתָּךְ וְאֵת כָּל וְנִכְחַת:  
וַיִּתְּפֹלֵל אַבְרָהָם אֶל־הָאֱלֹהִים וַיִּרְפָּא אֱלֹהִים אֶת־  
אֲבִימֶלֶךְ וְאֶת־אִשְׁתּוֹ וְאִמְהֹתָיו וַיֵּלְדוּ: י"ח כִּי־עָצַר עָצָר  
יְהוָה בְּעַד כָּל־רָחֵם לְבַיִת אֲבִימֶלֶךְ עַל־דִּבְרֵי שָׂרָה  
אִשְׁתֵּי אַבְרָהָם: {ס}

brother; for you, this will be compensation in the eyes of all those  
with you; you are completely vindicated” <sup>17</sup> At Abraham’s prayer,  
God healed Abimelech, his wife and his slave-girls, so that they bore  
children; <sup>18</sup> for, Yahweh had made all the women of Abimelech’s  
house barren on account of Sarah, Abraham’s wife.

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<sup>17</sup> Abimelech and his harem had been struck with impotence and sterility.

<sup>18</sup> According to the *NJB*, this verse is a gloss.

## בראשית פרק כא

א וַיְהִי כִּי בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת-שָׂרָה כַּאֲשֶׁר אָמַר וַיַּעַשׂ יְהוָה  
לְשָׂרָה כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר: ב וַתֵּהָרֵם וַתֵּלֶד שָׂרָה לְאַבְרָהָם בֶּן  
לְזָקְנָיו לְמוֹעֵד אֲשֶׁר-דִּבֶּר אֲתוֹ אֱלֹהִים: ג וַיִּקְרָא  
אַבְרָהָם אֶת-שֵׁם-בְנוֹ הַנּוֹלָד-לּוֹ אֲשֶׁר-יָלְדָה-לּוֹ שָׂרָה  
יִצְחָק: ד וַיְמַל אַבְרָהָם אֶת-יִצְחָק בְּנוֹ בֶּן-שְׁמֹנֶת יָמִים  
כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה אֲתוֹ אֱלֹהִים: ה וַאֲבָרָהָם בֶּן-מֵאָה שָׁנָה  
בְּהוֹלֵד לוֹ אֵת יִצְחָק בְּנוֹ: ו וַתֹּאמֶר שָׂרָה צֶחֶק עָשָׂה  
לִי אֱלֹהִים כָּל-הַשְּׁמַע יִצְחָק-לִי:

ז וַתֹּאמֶר

מִי מָלַל לְאַבְרָהָם  
הַיִּנִיקָה בָנִים שָׂרָה  
כִּי-יָלְדָתִי בֶן לְזָקְנָיו:

## GENESIS 21

<sup>1</sup> Yahweh visited Sarah as he had said and did what he had promised her. <sup>2</sup> Sarah conceived and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the time God had promised. <sup>3</sup> Abraham named the son born to him, the son to whom Sarah had given birth, Isaac. <sup>4</sup> Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him. <sup>5</sup> Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him. <sup>6</sup> Then Sarah said, "God has given me cause to laugh; all those who hear of it will laugh with me."

<sup>7</sup> She added:

"Who would have told Abraham  
that Sarah would nurse children!  
Yet I have borne him a child in his old age."

## GENESIS 21

- <sup>1</sup> The verb פָּקַד (*'visited'*) often describes divine intervention for blessing or cursing; it indicates God's special attention to an individual or a matter, always with respect to his people's destiny. He may visit (destroy) the Amalekites; he may visit (deliver) his people in Egypt.
- <sup>2</sup> In place of *'conceived'*, following the NJB & NRSV, NETB has *'became pregnant'*.
- <sup>3</sup> In this verse, the two modifying clauses, the first introduced with an article and the second with the relative pronoun, are placed in the middle of the sentence, before the name Isaac is stated. They are meant to underscore that this was indeed an actual birth to Abraham and Sarah in fulfilment of the promise.
- <sup>4</sup> With the birth of the promised child, Abraham obeyed Yahweh by both naming (17:19) and circumcising Isaac.
- <sup>5</sup> The parenthetical disjunctive clause structure of this verse underscores how miraculous this birth was: Abraham was 100 years old; the fact that the genealogies give the ages of the fathers when their first son is born shows that this was considered a major milestone in one's life.
- <sup>6</sup> *'Isaac'* is a form of the Hebrew for *'God has laughed'*.
- <sup>7</sup> The perfect form of the verb (*'would'*) is used here to describe a hypothetical situation.

ח וַיִּגְדַּל הַיֶּלֶד וַיִּנְמַל וַיַּעַשׂ אַבְרָהָם מִשְׁתֶּה גְדוֹל בַּיּוֹם  
הַגָּמֵל אֶת־יִצְחָק: ט וַתֵּרָא שָׂרָה אֶת־בֶּן־הָגָר הַמִּצְרִית  
אֲשֶׁר־יָלְדָה לְאַבְרָהָם מִצְחָק: י וַתֹּאמֶר לְאַבְרָהָם גֵּרֶשׁ  
הָאִמָּה הַזֹּאת וְאֶת־בְּנָהּ כִּי לֹא יִירָשׁ בֶּן־הָאִמָּה הַזֹּאת  
עִם־בְּנֵי עַם־יִצְחָק: יא וַיֵּרֶע הַדָּבָר מְאֹד בְּעֵינֵי אַבְרָהָם  
עַל אֹדֶת בְּנֹו: יב וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים אֶל־אַבְרָהָם אֲל־יִרְע  
בְּעֵינֶיךָ עַל־הַנֶּעֱר וְעַל־אִמָּתְךָ כֹּל אֲשֶׁר תֹּאמַר אֵלֶיךָ  
שָׂרָה שְׁמַע בְּקוֹלָהּ כִּי בְיִצְחָק יִקְרָא לָךְ זֶרַע: יג וְגַם  
אֶת־בֶּן־הָאִמָּה לְגֹוי אֲשִׁימֶנּוּ כִּי זֶרַעְךָ הוּא: יד וַיִּשְׁכֶּם  
אַבְרָהָם | בַּבֹּקֶר וַיִּקַּח־לֶחֶם וְחִמַּת מַיִם וַיִּתֵּן אֶל־הָגָר  
שָׁם עַל־שִׁכְמָהּ וְאֶת־הַיֶּלֶד וַיְשַׁלְּחָהּ וַתֵּלֶךְ וַתֵּתֶנּה  
בַּמִּדְבָּר בְּאֶר שָׁבַע:

<sup>8</sup> The child grew and was weaned; and Abraham gave a great feast on the day Isaac was weaned. <sup>9</sup> But Sarah saw the son that Hagar the Egyptian had borne to Abraham playing with her son Isaac. <sup>10</sup> She said to Abraham, “Cast out that slave-girl and her son; this slave-girl’s son shall not inherit along with my son Isaac.” <sup>11</sup> This greatly upset Abraham because of his son, <sup>12</sup> but God said to Abraham, “Do not be upset because of the boy and your slave-girl; grant Sarah all she asks; for, it is through Isaac that your name will carry on. <sup>13</sup> But the slave-girl’s son I will also make into a nation, for he is your child too.” <sup>14</sup> So, Abraham rose early in the morning, took some bread and a skin of water, gave them to Hagar, put the boy on her shoulder, and sent her away; and she wandered in the desert of Beersheba.

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- <sup>8</sup> Children were weaned closer to the age of two or three in the ancient world, because infant mortality was high. If an infant grew to this stage, it was fairly certain he or she would live. Such an event called for a celebration, especially for parents who had waited so long for a child.
- <sup>9</sup> Were this narrative a continuation of Ch. 16, we should have to conclude from 16:16 and 21:5 that by now Ishmael would be more than fifteen years old; but, in fact, this verse represents him as a child scarcely older than Isaac. This story is a parallel to the narrative of Ch. 16; both are concerned with a well in the desert of Beersheba and explain the bonds of relationship between the Ishmaelites and the Israelites descended from Isaac but the circumstances of Hagar’s dismissal and the attitudes of the persons involved are different.
- <sup>10</sup> Sarah’s language seems severe but her maternal instincts sensed a real danger in that Ishmael was not treating Isaac with the proper respect.
- <sup>11</sup> The literal translation of this verse is, “*And the word was very wrong in the eyes of Abraham on account of his son Isaac.*” The verb רָעַע often refers to what is morally or ethically ‘evil’. Its usage here suggests that Abraham thought Sarah’s demand was ethically (and perhaps legally) wrong.
- <sup>12</sup> The exact meaning of the final clause is not clear but it does indicate that God’s covenantal promises to Abraham will be realised through Isaac, not Ishmael.
- <sup>13</sup> Although Isaac was designated to continue Abraham’s line, Ishmael too was promised a great future (vv. 17–19).
- <sup>14</sup> The literal translation of ‘*he put the boy on her shoulders*’ is ‘*he put upon her shoulders and the boy*’; it is unclear how ‘and the boy’ relates syntactically to what precedes. Perhaps the words should be rearranged and the text read, ‘*and he put (them) on her shoulder and he gave to Hagar the boy*’.

טו ויכלו המים מן-החמט ותשלך את-הילד תחת אחד השיחים: טז ותלך ותשב לה מנגד הרחק במטחוי קשת כי אמרה אל-אראה במות הילד ותשב מנגד ותשא את-קלה ותבך:

יז וישמע אלהים את-קול הנער ויקרא מלאך אלהים | אל-הגר מן-השמים ויאמר לה מה-לך הגר אל-תיראי כי-שמע אלהים אל-קול הנער באשר הוא-שם: יח קומי שאי את-הנער והחזיקי את-ידך בו כילגוי גדול אשימנו: יט ויפקח אלהים את-עיניה ותרא באר מים ותלך ותמלא את-החמט מים ותשק את-הנער:

כ ויהי אלהים את-הנער ויגדל וישב במדבר ויהי רבה קשת: כא וישב במדבר פארן ותקחלו אמו אשה מארץ מצרים: {פ}

<sup>15</sup> When the water in the skin was gone, she abandoned the boy under a bush. <sup>16</sup> Then she went and sat down at a distance, about a bowshot away, saying to herself, “I cannot see the child die.” So, she sat at a distance; and the child wailed and wept.

<sup>17</sup> However, God heard the boy wailing, and the Angel of God called to Hagar from heaven. “What is wrong, Hagar?” he asked. “Do not be afraid, for God has heard the boy’s cry where he lies. <sup>18</sup> Come, pick up the boy and hold him fast in your hands, for I will make him into a great nation.” <sup>19</sup> Then God opened Hagar’s eyes and she saw a well of water, so she went and filled the skin with water and gave the boy a drink.

<sup>20</sup> God was with the boy. He grew up and made his home in the desert, and he became a bowman. <sup>21</sup> He made his home in the desert of Paran, and his mother chose him a wife from the land of Egypt.

<sup>15</sup> The literal translation of ‘abandoned’ is ‘threw’, but the child, who was now thirteen years old, would not have been carried, let alone thrown under a bush. The exaggerated language suggests Ishmael is limp from dehydration and is being abandoned to die.

<sup>16</sup> A ‘bowshot’ would be slightly less than 100 m. In place of ‘the child wept’ (referring to Ishmael), here following the LXX (παιδίον ἔκλαυσεν) the MT has ‘she wept’ (referring to Hagar).

<sup>17</sup> Note the play on the name ‘Ishmael’ (‘God hears’). Although Ishmael was not the heir of the promise, God ‘was with the boy’, as the ancestor of the Bedouin tribes of the southern Arabian desert (16:12). Arabs trace their ancestry to Abraham through Ishmael.

<sup>18</sup> In place of ‘fast in your hands’ (following the NRSV), the NJB has simply ‘safe’.

<sup>19</sup> The NJB lacks the phrase ‘of water’.

<sup>20</sup> Alternative translations for ‘bowman’ (NJB) are ‘archer’ (NETB) and ‘expert with the bow’ (NRSV).

<sup>21</sup> The ‘desert of Paran’ is an area in the east central region of the Sinai Peninsula, northeast from the traditional site of Mt Sinai and with the Arabah and the Gulf of Aqaba as its eastern border.



כב וַיְהִי בַעַת הַהוּא וַיֹּאמֶר אַבְיִמֶלֶךְ וּפִיכֹל שַׂר־צְבָאוֹ  
 אֶל־אַבְרָהָם לֵאמֹר אֱלֹהִים עִמָּךְ בְּכֹל אֲשֶׁר־אַתָּה  
 עֹשֶׂה: כג וְעַתָּה הִשָּׁבְעָה לִּי בֵּאלֹהִים הַנָּה אֲסַתְּשָׁקֶר  
 לִי וּלְנִינִי וּלְנִכְדֵי כַחַסְדִּי אֲשֶׁר־עָשִׂיתִי עִמָּךְ תַּעֲשֶׂה  
 עִמָּדִי וְעַם־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר־גִּרְתָּה בָּהּ: כד וַיֹּאמֶר אַבְרָהָם  
 אָנֹכִי אֲשָׁבַע:

כה וְהוֹכַח אַבְרָהָם אֶת־אַבְיִמֶלֶךְ עַל־אֲדֹת בְּאֵר הַמַּיִם  
 אֲשֶׁר גָּזְלוּ עַבְדֵי אַבְיִמֶלֶךְ: כו וַיֹּאמֶר אַבְיִמֶלֶךְ לֹא  
 יָדַעְתִּי מִי עָשָׂה אֶת־הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה וְגַם־אַתָּה לֹא־הִגַּדְתָּ  
 לִי וְגַם אָנֹכִי לֹא שָׁמַעְתִּי בְלִתי הַיּוֹם: כז וַיִּקַּח אַבְרָהָם  
 צֹאן וּבָקָר וַיִּתֵּן לְאַבְיִמֶלֶךְ וַיִּכְרְתוּ שְׁנֵיהֶם בְּרִית:  
 כח וַיָּצַב אַבְרָהָם אֶת־שִׁבְעַת כְּבָשֹׁת הַצֹּאן לְבִדָּהּ:  
 כט וַיֹּאמֶר אַבְיִמֶלֶךְ אֶל־אַבְרָהָם מָה הַנָּה שִׁבְעַת כְּבָשֹׁת  
 הָאֵלֶּה אֲשֶׁר הִצַּבְתָּ לְבִדָּנָה: ל וַיֹּאמֶר כִּי אֶת־שִׁבְעַת

22 At that time, Abimelech, with Phicol, the commander of his army, said to Abraham. "God is with you in all you are doing. 23 Swear by God to me here and now that you will not trick me, nor my offspring, nor my descendants, and you will show the same kindness to me and the land of which you are a guest as I have shown to you." 24 And Abraham replied, "Yes, I swear it."

25 When Abraham reproached Abimelech concerning the well of water that Abimelech's servants had seized, 26 Abimelech said, "I do not know who has done this; moreover, you yourself have never mentioned it to me and, for myself, I heard nothing of it until today."

27 Then Abraham took sheep and cattle and presented them to Abimelech and the two of them made a treaty. 28 Abraham put seven ewe lambs of the flock on one side. 29 "Why have you put these seven ewe lambs on one side?" Abimelech asked Abraham. 30 He replied,

22 Abimelech and Phicol recognised that Abraham enjoyed special divine provision and protection.

23 The word 'land' refers by metonymy to the people in the land.

24 After 'swear', no object is specified in the MT, but the content of the oath requested by Abimelech is the implied object.

25 The verb here translated as 'reproached' means 'to argue' or 'to dispute'; it can focus on the beginning of the dispute (as here), the dispute itself, or the resolution of a dispute (Is 1:18). Apparently, the complaint was lodged before the actual oath was taken.

26 The NJB & NRSV lack 'moreover', here following NETB; the MT has 'and also'.

27 The literal translation of 'made a treaty' is 'cut a covenant'.

28 The NJB lacks the word 'ewe', here following the NRSV & NETB.

29 The literal translation of 'why have you put these' is 'what are these'.

30 Since the king wanted a treaty to share in Abraham's good fortune, Abraham used the treaty to secure ownership and protection of the well he dug. It would be useless to make a treaty to live in this territory if he had no rights to the water.

כְּבִשְׁתָּ תִקַּח מִיָּדַי בַּעֲבוּרִי תִהְיֶה־לִּי לְעֵדָה כִּי חֲפָרְתִּי  
אֶת־הַבְּאֵר הַזֹּאת: <sup>לא</sup> עַל־כֵּן קָרָא לַמָּקוֹם הַהוּא בְּאֵר  
שֶׁבַע כִּי שָׁם נִשְׁבָּעוּ שְׁנֵיהֶם:

<sup>לב</sup> וַיִּכְרְתוּ בְרִית בִּבְאֵר שֶׁבַע וַיֵּקֶם אֲבִימֶלֶךְ וּפִיכֹל  
שַׂר־צָבָאוֹ וַיָּשׁבוּ אֶל־אֶרֶץ פְּלִשְׁתִּים: <sup>לג</sup> וַיִּטֵּעַ אֲשֶׁל  
בִּבְאֵר שֶׁבַע וַיִּקְרָא־שָׁם בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה אֵל עוֹלָם: <sup>לד</sup> וַיֵּגֶר  
אַבְרָהָם בְּאֶרֶץ פְּלִשְׁתִּים יָמִים רַבִּים: {פ}

“You must accept these seven lambs from me as evidence that I have dug this well.” <sup>31</sup> This is why they call that place Beersheba, because there the two of them swore an oath.

<sup>32</sup> When they had made a covenant at Beersheba, Abimelech left with Phicol, the commander of his army, and returned to the land of the Philistines. <sup>33</sup> He planted a tamarisk at Beersheba and there he invoked name of Yahweh, the Everlasting God. <sup>34</sup> Abraham stayed for a long time in the land of the Philistines.

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<sup>31</sup> ‘Well of the Oath’ (as LXX – *φρέατι τοῦ ὄρκου*) and ‘Well of the Seven (Sheep)’ are two traditional explanations of the name ‘Beersheba’. Both the verb ‘to swear’ and the number ‘seven’ have been used throughout the account. Now they are drawn in as part of the explanation of the significance of the name.

<sup>32</sup> The ‘Philistines’ mentioned here may not be ethnically related to those who lived in Palestine in the time of the judges and of the monarchy (see also #34).

<sup>33</sup> The opening pronoun refers to Abraham (the NJB & NRSV use the name; here, we follow the MT). The NJB lacks ‘Everlasting God’ which is from אֵל עוֹלָם (*‘El Olam’*), an ancient divine name, once associated with the sanctuary of Beersheba, which Israel adopted as a title for Yahweh (Is 40:28). The planting of the ‘tamarisk’ is a sign of Abraham’s intent to stay there for a long time, not a religious act. A growing tree in the Negeb would be a lasting witness to God’s provision of water.

<sup>34</sup> The use of the word ‘Philistines’ is an anachronism, for the Philistines came into Canaan after 1200 BCE (see Jos 13:2).

## GENESIS 22

## בראשית פרק כב

א וַיְהִי אַחֲרֵי הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה וַהֲאֱלֹהִים נִסָּה אֶת־  
אַבְרָהָם וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו אַבְרָהָם וַיֹּאמֶר הִנְנִי: ב וַיֹּאמֶר  
קַח־נָא אֶת־בְּנֶךָ אֶת־יִחִידְךָ אֲשֶׁר־אֹהֶבְתָּ אֶת־יִצְחָק  
וְלֵךְ־לְךָ אֶל־אֶרֶץ הַמֹּרְיָה וְהַעֲלֵהוּ שָׁם לְעֹלָה עַל אֶחָד  
הַהָרִים אֲשֶׁר אָמַר אֱלֹהִים: ג וַיִּשְׁכֹּם אַבְרָהָם בַּבֹּקֶר  
וַיַּחְבֹּשׁ אֶת־חֲמֹרוֹ וַיִּקַּח אֶת־שְׁנֵי נַעֲרָיו אֹתוֹ וְאֵת  
יִצְחָק בְּנֵוֹ וַיִּבְקַע עֵצִי עֹלָה וַיִּקֶּם וַיֵּלֶךְ אֶל־הַמָּקוֹם  
אֲשֶׁר־אָמַר־לּוֹ הָאֱלֹהִים: ד בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁלִישִׁי וַיֵּשֶׁא  
אַבְרָהָם אֶת־עֵינָיו וַיִּרְא אֶת־הַמָּקוֹם מֵרֶחֶק: ה וַיֹּאמֶר  
אַבְרָהָם אֶל־נַעֲרָיו שְׁבוּ־לָכֶם פֹּה עִם־הַחֲמֹר וְאֲנִי  
וְהַנֶּעֱר נֹלְכָה עַד־כָּה וְנִשְׁתַּחֲוִה וְנָשׁוּבָה אֵלֵיכֶם:  
ו וַיִּקַּח אַבְרָהָם אֶת־עֵצִי הָעֹלָה וַיִּשֶׂם עַל־יִצְחָק בְּנֵוֹ  
וַיִּקַּח בְּיָדוֹ אֶת־הָאֵשׁ וְאֶת־הַמַּאֲכָלֶת וַיֵּלְכוּ שְׁנֵיהֶם  
יַחְדָּו: ז וַיֹּאמֶר יִצְחָק אֶל־אַבְרָהָם אָבִיו וַיֹּאמֶר אָבִי

<sup>1</sup> After these things, God put Abraham to the test. He said to him, "Abraham!". And he replied, "Here I am." <sup>2</sup> He said, "Take your son, your only child Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah. There you shall offer him as a burnt offering, on a mountain I will point out to you." <sup>3</sup> Rising early next morning, Abraham saddled his donkey and took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac. He chopped wood for the burnt offering and started on his journey to the place God had pointed out to him. <sup>4</sup> On the third day, Abraham looked up and saw the place far away. <sup>5</sup> Then Abraham said to his servants, "Stay here with the donkey. The boy and I will go over there; we will worship and come back to you."

<sup>6</sup> Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering, laid it on Isaac, and carried the fire and the knife, and the two set out together. <sup>7</sup> Isaac said to his father Abraham, "Father." He said, "Yes, my son." He

## GENESIS 22

<sup>1</sup> The verb here translated as 'put to the test' (following the NJB) can mean to 'test', 'try' or 'prove'.

<sup>2</sup> 2Ch 3:1 identifies 'Moriah' with the hill on which the Temple was later built in Jerusalem. Subsequent tradition adopted this identification but the text speaks of 'the land of Moriah', of which the name is otherwise unattested; the site of the sacrifice is unknown, though Samaritan tradition places it on Mount Gerizim (Shechem, compare 12:6), three days' journey (v. 4) from Beersheba.

<sup>3</sup> The literal translation of 'started on his journey' (following the NJB) is 'arose and went'.

<sup>4</sup> In place of 'looked up and saw' (here following the MT, NJB and NRSV), NETB has 'caught sight of'.

<sup>5</sup> The literal translation of 'worship' is 'bow close to the ground'.

<sup>6</sup> The phrase 'carried the fire and the knife' anticipates the forthcoming sacrifice.

<sup>7</sup> The literal translation of 'yes my son' (following the NJB) is 'here I am, my son' (as NRSV); NETB has 'what is it, my son'.

וַיֹּאמֶר הַנְּנִי בְנִי וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֵּה הָאֵשׁ וְהָעֵצִים וְאִיהָ הֵשֶׁה לְעֹלָה: <sup>ח</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר אַבְרָהָם אֱלֹהִים יִרְאֶה-לּוֹ הֵשֶׁה לְעֹלָה בְנִי וַיֵּלְכוּ שְׁנֵיהֶם יַחְדָּו:

<sup>ט</sup> וַיָּבֹאוּ אֶל-הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר אָמַר-לּוֹ הָאֱלֹהִים וַיִּבֶן שָׁם אַבְרָהָם אֶת-הַמִּזְבֵּחַ וַיַּעֲרֹךְ אֶת-הָעֵצִים וַיַּעֲקֹד אֶת-יִצְחָק בְּנֹו וַיֵּשֶׂם אֹתוֹ עַל-הַמִּזְבֵּחַ מִמַּעַל לָעֵצִים: <sup>י</sup> וַיִּשְׁלַח אַבְרָהָם אֶת-יָדוֹ וַיִּקַּח אֶת-הַמָּאֲכָלֶת לְשַׁחֵט אֶת-בְּנֹו: <sup>יא</sup> וַיִּקְרָא אֵלָיו מִלֵּאדָּה יְהוָה מִן-הַשָּׁמַיִם וַיֹּאמֶר אַבְרָהָם | אַבְרָהָם וַיֹּאמֶר הַנְּנִי: <sup>יב</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהֵי יִצְחָק יָדָךְ אֶל-הַנֶּעֱר וְאַל-תַּעֲשֵׂ לוֹ מְאוֹמָה כִּי עַתָּה יָדַעְתִּי כִּי-יִירָא אֱלֹהִים אֶתָּה וְלֹא חָשַׁכְתָּ אֶת-בְּנִיךָ אֶת-יִחִידְךָ מִמֶּנִּי: <sup>יג</sup> וַיֵּשָׂא אַבְרָהָם אֶת-עֵינָיו וַיִּרְאֵהוּ אֵיל אַחֵר נֹאחֲזוּ בַּסִּבְךָ בְּקֶרְנָיו וַיִּלְדֵּךְ אַבְרָהָם וַיִּקַּח אֶת-הָאֵיל וַיַּעֲלֵהוּ לְעֹלָה תַּחַת בְּנֹו: <sup>יד</sup> וַיִּקְרָא אַבְרָהָם שֵׁם-הַמָּקוֹם הַהוּא יְהוָה | יִרְאֶה אֲשֶׁר יֹאמַר הַיּוֹם בְּהָר יְהוָה יִרְאֶה:

said, “The fire and the wood are here but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?” <sup>8</sup> Abraham said, “My son, God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering.” And the two went on together.

<sup>9</sup> When they had arrived at the place that God had pointed out to him, Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order. Then he bound his son Isaac and put him on the altar, on top of the wood.

<sup>10</sup> Then Abraham stretched out his hand and seized the knife to kill his son. <sup>11</sup> However, the Angel of Yahweh called to him from heaven, saying, “Abraham, Abraham!” He replied, “I am here.” <sup>12</sup> The angel said, “Do not raise your hand against the boy. Do not harm him; for, now I know that you fear God. You have not refused me your son, your only son.” <sup>13</sup> Then looking up, Abraham saw behind him a ram caught by its horns in a bush. Abraham took the ram and offered it as a burnt offering in place of his son. <sup>14</sup> Abraham called this place “Yahweh provides,” and hence the saying today: On the mountain, Yahweh provides.

<sup>8</sup> The word here translated as ‘provide’ literally means ‘see’ or ‘look out for’.

<sup>9</sup> This verse has given rise to an important theme in Judaism known as the *Aqedah*, from the Hebrew word for ‘binding’; when sacrifices were made in the sanctuary, God remembered the binding of Isaac, for which a substitute was offered.

<sup>10</sup> Other texts use ‘slaughter’ in place of ‘kill’.

<sup>11</sup> An alternative reading for ‘Angel of Yahweh’ is ‘Yahweh’s Messenger’.

<sup>12</sup> In this context, ‘fear’ refers by metonymy to obedience that grows from faith.

<sup>13</sup> In place of ‘behind him’ (אַחֵר), here following the MT and NETB, the LXX (εἰς), Peshitta, Samaritan Pentateuch, NJB, NRSV and a number of other Hebrew MSS (אֶחָד) read ‘one’.

<sup>14</sup> The text here follows the LXX (Ἐν τῷ ὄρει κύριος ὠφείη – see v. 8) and NJB/NRSV; the MT reads: “On Yahweh’s mountain, he (Yahweh) appears.”

טו וַיִּקְרָא מֵאֵדָּה יְהוָה אֶל־אַבְרָהָם שְׁנִית מִן־הַשָּׁמַיִם:  
 טז וַיֹּאמֶר בִּי נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי נְאֻם־יְהוָה כִּי יַעַן אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתָ  
 אֶת־הַדְּבָר הַזֶּה וְלֹא חָשַׁכְתָּ אֶת־בְּנֶךָ אֶת־יְחִידְךָ:  
 ז' כִּי־בִרְךָ אֲבָרְכֶךָ וְהָרְבָה אֲרֵבָה אֶת־זֶרְעֶךָ כְּכֹכְבֵי  
 הַשָּׁמַיִם וְכַחֹל אֲשֶׁר עַל־שֹׁפֶת הַיָּם וִירֶשׁ זֶרְעֶךָ אֶת  
 שַׁעַר אֵיבָיו: יח וְהִתְבָּרְכוּ בְּזֶרְעֶךָ כָּל גּוֹי הָאָרֶץ עֲקֵב  
 אֲשֶׁר שָׁמַעְתָּ בְּקוֹלִי:

יט וַיָּשָׁב אַבְרָהָם אֶל־נַעֲרָיו וַיִּקְמוּ וַיֵּלְכוּ יַחְדָּו אֶל־בְּאֵר  
 שָׁבַע וַיָּשָׁב אַבְרָהָם בְּבֵאֵר שָׁבַע: {פ}

כ וַיְהִי אַחֲרֵי הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה וַיִּגַּד לְאַבְרָהָם לֵאמֹר  
 הִנֵּה יֵלְדָה מִלְכָּה גַם־הִוא בָּנִים לְנָחוֹר אַחִיךָ: כא אֶת־  
 עֹזָן בְּכֹרוֹ וְאֶת־בּוּז אָחִיו וְאֶת־קִמּוֹאֵל אָבִי אָרָם:  
 כב וְאֶת־כְּשֹׁד וְאֶת־חִזּוֹ וְאֶת־פִּלְדָּשׁ וְאֶת־יִדְלָף וְאֶת־בֶּתְוֵאל

<sup>15</sup> The Angel of Yahweh called Abraham a second time from heaven.

<sup>16</sup> "I swear by myself, says Yahweh, because you have done this and you have not withheld your son, your only son, <sup>17</sup> I will shower blessing on you, I will make your seed as the stars of heaven and the sand on the seashore. Your offspring shall possess the gate of their enemies. <sup>18</sup> All the nations of the earth shall bless themselves by your offspring, because you obeyed my voice."

<sup>19</sup> Abraham went back to his servants and together they set out for Beersheba, and Abraham settled in Beersheba.

<sup>20</sup> Now, after these things, Abraham was told, "Milcah, too, has now borne sons to your brother Nahor: <sup>21</sup> Uz his firstborn, and Buz his brother, and Kemuel Aram's father, <sup>22</sup> and Chesed, and Hazo, and Pildash, and Jidlaph, and Bethuel." <sup>23</sup> And Bethuel was the father of

<sup>15</sup> Since Abraham passes the test, God renews the promise to him and his descendants (see 12:1-3).

<sup>16</sup> In place of 'by myself', here following the MT, LXX, NJB & NRSV, NETB has 'by my own name'.

<sup>17</sup> God here ratifies his earlier promise to give Abraham a multitude of descendants. To 'gain possession of their gates' is to occupy their towns.

<sup>18</sup> Traditionally, the verb here translated as 'bless' is taken as passive, as if Abraham's descendants were going to be a source of blessing to the nations but the Hitpael is better understood here as reflexive ('pronounce blessings [on] themselves', cf. 26:4). Elsewhere, the Hitpael of the verb 'to bless' is used with a reflexive sense in Dt 29:18, Ps 72:17, Is 65:16, Jr 4:2. Gn 12:2 predicts that Abram will be held up as a paradigm of divine blessing and that people will use his name in their blessing formulae: for examples of blessing formulae utilising an individual as an example of blessing see Gn 48:20 and Rt 4:11. Earlier formulations of this promise (Gn 12:2, 18:18) use the Niphal stem. (See also Gen 28:14.)

<sup>19</sup> In place of the second instance of the name 'Abraham', here following the MT and NRSV, the NJB has the pronoun 'he'.

<sup>20</sup> Vv. 20-24 list the Aramaean tribes associated with the 12 'sons' of Nahor; see the 12 sons of Ishmael (25:13) and of Jacob (29:32-30:24 & 35:22ff).

<sup>21</sup> 'Aram's father' may be a later insertion by an editor/compiler of Genesis and not part of the original announcement.

<sup>22</sup> In the LXX, the five names of this verse are *Χασαδ* (Hazad), *Αζαυ* (Azav), *Φαλδας* (Phaldas), *Ιεδλαφ* (Jedlaph) and *Βαθουηλ* (Bathuel).

<sup>23</sup> The disjunctive clause gives information that is important but parenthetical to the narrative: *Rebekah* would become the wife of Isaac (24:15).

בְּתוֹאֵל: כִּי וּבְתוֹאֵל יָלַד אֶת־רִבְקָה שְׂמֹנֶה אֱלֹהֵי יִלְדָּה  
 מִלְכָּה לְנָחוֹר אָחִי אַבְרָהָם: כִּד וּפִילְגֶשׁוּ וּשְׁמָהּ רְאוּמָה  
 וַתֵּלֶד גַּם־הִוא אֶת־טֶבַח וְאֶת־גָּחַם וְאֶת־תַּחַשׁ וְאֶת־  
 מַעֲכָה: {פ}

Rebekah. These are the eight children Milcah gave Nahor,  
 Abraham's brother. <sup>24</sup> He had a concubine, whose name was  
 Reumah, and she too had children: Tebah, and Gaham, and Tahash,  
 and Maacah.

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<sup>24</sup> In the LXX, the children of Reumah (*Ρεημα*) are *Ταβεχ* (Tabech), *Γααμ* (Taam), *Τοχος* (Tochos) and *Μωχα* (Mocha).



## GENESIS 23

## בראשית פרק כג

א ויהיו חיי שרה מאה שנה ועשרים שנה ושבע שנים  
שני חיי שרה: ב ותמת שרה בקרית ארבע הוא  
חברון בארץ כנען ויבא אברהם לספד לשרה  
ולבכתה: ג ויקם אברהם מעל פני מתו וידבר אל-  
בני־חת לאמר: ד גר־ותושב אנכי עמכם תנו לי  
אחזת־קבר עמכם ואקברה מתי מלפני: ה ויענו בני-  
חת את־אברהם לאמר לו: ושמענו אדני נשיא  
אלהים אתה בתוכנו במבחר קברינו קבר את־מתך  
איש ממנו את־קברו לא־יכלה ממך מקבר מתך:  
ז ויקם אברהם וישתחו לעס־הארץ לבני־חת:  
ח וידבר אתם לאמר אם־יש את־נפשכם לקבר את־

<sup>1</sup> And Sarah lived for one hundred and twenty-seven years; this was the length of Sarah's life. <sup>2</sup> And Sarah died at Kiriath-Arba (that is, Hebron) in the land of Canaan and Abraham came to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her. <sup>3</sup> Abraham rose up from his dead and said to the Hittites, <sup>4</sup> "I am a stranger and a settler among you. Let me own a burial-plot among you, so I may bury my dead." <sup>5</sup> The Hittites answered Abraham, saying <sup>6</sup> "Listen, my lord, you are God's prince amongst us; bury your dead in our choicest tombs; not one of us would refuse you his tomb and keep you from burying your dead." <sup>7</sup> Abraham rose and bowed before the local people, the Hittites, <sup>8</sup> and said to them, "If you allow me to bury my dead wife out of my sight,

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- <sup>1</sup> For this verse, the NJB has, "The length of Sarah's life was a hundred and twenty-seven years;" here, we follow (loosely) the NRSV, more closely reflecting the MT.
- <sup>2</sup> The description here is of standard mourning rites: they would have been carried out in the presence of the corpse, probably in Sarah's tent; so, Abraham came in to mourn, then he rose up to go and bury his dead (v. 3). Note that the כ in ולבכתה is written as a 'small letter' here and in most Hebrew MSS.
- <sup>3</sup> On the 'Hittites' (בני־חת – literally, 'the sons of Heth'), see #Dt 7:1.
- <sup>4</sup> After 'bury my dead', the MT (and NRSV) adds 'out of my sight', omitted here for stylistic reasons (following NJB & NETB).
- <sup>5</sup> The MT and NJB include the word 'saying' in v. 6; here, we follow the LXX (some MSS of which also include 'Listen, my Lord' – *Μή, κύριε* – in this verse), NRSV & NETB.
- <sup>6</sup> The reference to 'God' (by the Hittites) here may be used here as a means of expressing the superlative, 'mighty prince'. The word for 'prince' probably means 'tribal chief' here.
- <sup>7</sup> The literal translation of 'local people' is 'people of the land'.
- <sup>8</sup> The word נפשכם ('willing') here has the nuance 'purpose' or perhaps 'desire'.

מִתִּי מִלִּפְנֵי שְׁמַעוֹנִי וּפְגַעוּלִי בְּעַפְרוֹן בֶּן־צֹחַר:  
 ט וַיִּתֵּן־לִי אֶת־מַעְרַת הַמַּכְפֶּלֶה אֲשֶׁר־לּוֹ אֲשֶׁר בְּקֶצֶה  
 שְׂדֵהוּ בְּכֶסֶף מָלֵא יִתְּנֶנָּה לִי בְּתוֹכְכֶם לְאַחֲזֵת־קֶבֶר:  
 י וְעַפְרוֹן יֹשֵׁב בְּתוֹךְ בְּנֵי־חֵת וַיַּעַן עַפְרוֹן הַחִתִּי אֶת־  
 אַבְרָהָם בְּאָזְנֵי בְנֵי־חֵת לְכָל בָּאֵי שַׁעַר־עִירוֹ לֵאמֹר:  
 יא לֹא־אֲדֹנִי שְׁמַעֲנִי הַשְׂדֵּה נְתַתִּי לָךְ וְהַמַּעְרָה אֲשֶׁר־  
 בּוֹ לָךְ נְתַתִּיהָ לְעֵינֵי בְנֵי־עַמִּי נְתַתִּיהָ לָךְ קֶבֶר מִתְּךָ:  
 יב וַיִּשְׁתַּחוּ אַבְרָהָם לִפְנֵי עַם הָאָרֶץ: יג וַיְדַבֵּר אֶל־  
 עַפְרוֹן בְּאָזְנֵי עַם־הָאָרֶץ לֵאמֹר אֵךְ אִם־אַתָּה לוֹ  
 שְׁמַעֲנִי נְתַתִּי כֶסֶף הַשְׂדֵּה קַח מִמֶּנִּי וְאֶקְבְּרָה אֶת־  
 מִתִּי שָׁמָּה: יד וַיַּעַן עַפְרוֹן אֶת־אַבְרָהָם לֵאמֹר לוֹ:  
 טו אֲדֹנִי שְׁמַעֲנִי אֶרֶץ אַרְבַּע מֵאוֹת שְׁקֶל־כֶּסֶף בֵּינִי  
 וּבֵינֶךָ מֵה־הָיָה וְאֶת־מִתְּךָ קֶבֶר: טז וַיִּשְׁמַע אַבְרָהָם  
 אֶל־עַפְרוֹן וַיִּשְׁקַל אַבְרָהָם לְעַפְרוֹן אֶת־הַכֶּסֶף אֲשֶׁר  
 דִּבֶּר בְּאָזְנֵי בְנֵי־חֵת אַרְבַּע מֵאוֹת שְׁקֶל כֶּסֶף עֲבָר  
 לְסֹחָר:

hear me. Entreat Ephron son of Zohar <sup>9</sup> to give me the cave he owns at Machpelah, on the edge of his land. Let him sell it to me in your presence at the full price, for me to own as a burial site.” <sup>10</sup> Now Ephron was sitting among the Hittites, and Ephron the Hittite said to Abraham in the hearing of the Hittites and all who entered the city gate, <sup>11</sup> “No, my lord, hear me: I give you the land and the cave in it; in the sight of the sons of my people, I give it to you; bury your dead.” <sup>12</sup> Abraham bowed before the local people <sup>13</sup> and he said to Ephron in the hearing of the local people, “Hear me, if you will. I will pay the price of the land; take it from me so that I may bury my dead there.” <sup>14</sup> Ephron answered Abraham, <sup>15</sup> “My lord, hear me. A property worth four hundred shekels of silver: what is a that between you and me? Bury your dead.” <sup>16</sup> Abraham agreed with Ephron and Abraham weighed out for Ephron the silver he had named in the hearing of the Hittites, four hundred shekels of silver, according to the merchants’ standard.

<sup>9</sup> The literal translation of ‘price’ is ‘silver’; Abraham insists on payment of the ‘full price’ in order to obtain legal title to the land.

<sup>10</sup> The literal translation of ‘hearing’ is ‘ears’; by metonymy, the ears stand for the presence or proximity (i.e., within earshot) of the persons named.

<sup>11</sup> Before ‘the cave’, the MT (and NJB) repeats ‘I give you’, which is redundant in English.

<sup>12</sup> On the translation of the phrase ‘local people’, see #7.

<sup>13</sup> In place of ‘so that I may bury’, here following the NRSV, the NJB has ‘and I will bury’; after the imperative, the cohortative with the prefixed conjunction expresses purpose or result.

<sup>14</sup> At the end of this verse, the MT adds ‘saying to him’.

<sup>15</sup> Assuming a shekel of 11.5 g, the value of the property was about 4.6 Kg of silver.

<sup>16</sup> The literal translation of ‘agreed with Ephron’ is ‘listened to Ephron’.

יִיְקָם | שְׂדֵה עֶפְרוֹן אֲשֶׁר בַּמַּכְפֵּלָה אֲשֶׁר לִפְנֵי  
מִמְרָא הַשְּׂדֵה וְהַמְעָרָה אֲשֶׁר־בּוֹ וְכָל־הָעֵץ אֲשֶׁר  
בַּשְּׂדֵה אֲשֶׁר בְּכָל־גִּבְלוֹ סָבִיב: יח לְאַבְרָהָם לְמִקְנָה  
לְעֵינֵי בְנֵי־חֵת בְּכָל בְּאֵי שְׁעֵר־עִירוֹ: יט וְאַחֲרֵי־כֵן קָבַר  
אַבְרָהָם אֶת־שָׂרָה אִשְׁתּוֹ אֶל־מְעָרַת שְׂדֵה הַמַּכְפֵּלָה  
עַל־פְּנֵי מִמְרָא הוּא חֶבְרוֹן בְּאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן: כ וַיָּקָם הַשְּׂדֵה  
וְהַמְעָרָה אֲשֶׁר־בּוֹ לְאַבְרָהָם לְאַחֲזֵת־קֶבֶר מֵאֵת בְּנֵי־  
חֵת: {ס}

<sup>17</sup> Thus, Ephron's field at Machpelah opposite Mamre, the field and the cave that was in it, and all the trees that were on it, the whole of its extent in every direction, passed <sup>18</sup> into Abraham's possession in the sight of the Hittites and of all who went in his town gate. <sup>19</sup> After this, Abraham buried his wife Sarah in the cave of the field of Machpelah opposite Mamre, in the country of Canaan. <sup>20</sup> Thus, the field and the cave in it passed from the Hittites into Abraham's possession as a burial site of his own.

<sup>17</sup> In place of 'opposite', here following the NJB, the NRSV has 'to the east of' and NETB has 'next to'.

<sup>18</sup> In place of 'who went in his town gate' (following the MT and NRSV), the NJB has 'the citizens of his town'.

<sup>19</sup> The cave of Machpelah was the tomb of Abraham and Sarah (25:9-10), Isaac (35:27-29) and Rebekah (49:31), Jacob (50:13) and Leah (49:31).

<sup>20</sup> The literal translation of 'burial site' is 'grave'.

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## בראשית פרק כד

א וַאֲבֹרָהֶם זָקֵן בָּא בַּיָּמִים וַיהוָה בֵּרַךְ אֶת־אֲבֹרָהֶם  
בְּכָל: ב וַיֹּאמֶר אֲבֹרָהֶם אֶל־עֶבְדּוֹ זָקֵן בֵּיתוֹ הַמַּשְׁלָל  
בְּכָל־אֲשֶׁר־לוֹ שֵׁם־נָא יִדְדָּה תַּחַת יָרְכִי: ג וַאֲשַׁבְּעֶנּוּ  
בַּיהוָה אֱלֹהֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֱלֹהֵי הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר לֹא־תִקַּח  
אִשָּׁה לְבָנִי מִבְּנוֹת הַכְּנַעֲנִי אֲשֶׁר אֲנֹכִי יוֹשֵׁב בְּקִרְבּוֹ:  
ד כִּי אֶל־אֶרֶצִי וְאֶל־מִוִּלְדָּתִי תֵלֶךְ וְלִקְחָתָהּ אִשָּׁה לְבָנִי  
לְיִצְחָק: ה וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו הָעֶבֶד אוּלַי לֹא־תֵאבְדָהּ הָאִשָּׁה  
לָלֶכֶת אַחֲרַי אֶל־הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת הֵהָשֵׁב אֲשִׁיב אֶת־בְּנִי  
אֶל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר־יֵצֵאתָ מִשָּׁם: ו וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו אֲבֹרָהֶם  
הַשְׁמַר לְךָ פֶּן־תָּשִׁיב אֶת־בְּנִי שָׁמָּה: ז וַיהוָה אֱלֹהֵי  
הַשָּׁמַיִם אֲשֶׁר לָקַחְנִי מִבֵּית אָבִי וּמֵאֶרֶץ מִוִּלְדָּתִי  
וְאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר־לִי וְאֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּע־לִי לֵאמֹר לְזָרְעֶךָ אֶתֵּן  
אֶת־הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת הוּא יִשְׁלַח מַלְאָכּוֹ לִפְנֶיךָ וְלִקְחָתָהּ

<sup>1</sup> Abraham was now old, well on in years, and Yahweh had blessed Abraham in every way. <sup>2</sup> Abraham said to the senior servant of his house, the steward of all he had, "Put your hand under my thigh, <sup>3</sup> I will make you swear by Yahweh, God of heaven and God of earth, that you will not choose a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites among whom I live <sup>4</sup> but go to my land and my kinsfolk to choose a wife for my son Isaac." <sup>5</sup> The servant asked him, "What if the woman does not want to come with me to this land? Must I take your son back to the land whence you came?" <sup>6</sup> Abraham said, "On no account take my son back there. <sup>7</sup> Yahweh, God of heaven, took me from my father's home, and from the land of my kinsfolk, and he swore to me that he would give this land to my offspring. He will send his angel before you and you will choose a wife for my son

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<sup>1</sup> The literal translation of 'in years' is 'in days' (בַּיָּמִים).

<sup>2</sup> The term זָקֵן ('senior servant') may refer to the servant who is oldest in age or senior in authority (or both). The gesture at the end of this verse also occurs in 47:29; contact with the genital organs is intended to make the oath inviolable. Tradition identifies the unnamed servant with Eliezer (see 15:2).

<sup>3</sup> Aloofness from the Canaanites was based upon fear of the corrupting influence of Canaanite culture (Ex 34:15–16, Dt 7:3–4).

<sup>4</sup> The literal translation of 'choose' is 'take'.

<sup>5</sup> In the Hebrew text of 'must I take', the construction is emphatic; the infinitive absolute precedes the imperfect; however, it is difficult to reflect this emphasis in an English translation.

<sup>6</sup> The literal translation of 'on no account take' is 'guard yourself not to take'.

<sup>7</sup> After 'God of heaven' the LXX adds 'and the God of earth' (καὶ ὁ θεὸς τῆς γῆς – cf. v. 3).

אִשָּׁה לְבָנִי מִשָּׁם: <sup>ח</sup> וְאִם-לֹא תֵאבְּהָ הָאִשָּׁה לָלֶכֶת  
אֲחֵרֶיךָ וְנָקִיתִּי מִשְׁבַּעַתִּי זֹאת רַק אֶת-בְּנִי לֹא תִשָּׁב  
שָׁמָּה: <sup>ט</sup> וַיֵּשֶׁם הָעֶבֶד אֶת-יָדוֹ תַּחַת יָרֵךְ אֲבִרָהָם  
אֲדֹנָיו וַיִּשָּׁבַע לוֹ עַל-הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה:

<sup>י</sup> וַיִּקַּח הָעֶבֶד עֶשְׂרֵה גִמְלִים מִגִּמְלֵי אֲדֹנָיו וַיֵּלֶךְ וְכָל-  
טוֹב אֲדֹנָיו בִּידוֹ וַיֵּקֶם וַיֵּלֶךְ אֶל-אַרְם נְהָרַיִם אֶל-עִיר  
נְחוֹר: <sup>יא</sup> וַיְבָרֶךְ הַגִּמְלִים מְחוּץ לָעִיר אֶל-בְּאֵר הַמַּיִם  
לְעֵת עָרֵב לְעֵת צֹאת הַשָּׁאֲבֹת: <sup>יב</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר | יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי  
אֲדֹנִי אֲבִרָהָם הַקָּרֵה-נָא לִפְנֵי הַיּוֹם וַעֲשֵׂה-חֶסֶד עִם  
אֲדֹנִי אֲבִרָהָם: <sup>יג</sup> הִנֵּה אֲנֹכִי נֹצֵב עַל-עֵין הַמַּיִם וּבָנוֹת  
אֲנָשֵׁי הָעִיר יֵצְאוּ לְשָׂאֵב מַיִם: <sup>יד</sup> וְהָיָה הַנֶּעֱרָ אֲשֶׁר  
אָמַר אֵלַיָּה הַטִּי-נָא כַּדָּךְ וְאַשְׁתָּה וְאָמַרָה שְׁתָּה וְגַם-  
גִּמְלֶיךָ אֶשְׁקָה אֹתָהּ הַכֹּחֶתָ לְעַבְדְּךָ לְיִצְחָק וּבָהּ אֲדַע  
כִּי-עָשִׂיתָ חֶסֶד עִם-אֲדֹנִי:

there; <sup>8</sup> and, if the woman does not want to come with you, you will  
be free from this oath. Only do not take my son back there.” <sup>9</sup> Then  
the servant placed his hand under the thigh of his master Abraham  
and swore to him concerning this matter.

<sup>10</sup> The servant took ten of his master’s camels, and all kinds of choice  
gifts from his master, and set out for Aram Naharaim and Nahor’s  
city. <sup>11</sup> He made the camels kneel outside the city by the well, in the  
evening, when women go to draw water. <sup>12</sup> He said, “Yahweh, God  
of my master Abraham, be with me today, and show kindness to my  
master Abraham. <sup>13</sup> Here I stand by the spring as the daughters of  
the city come to draw water. <sup>14</sup> To one girl I will say: Please tilt your  
jar and let me drink. If she says, “Drink, and I will water your  
camels,” may she be the one you have chosen for your servant Isaac;  
thus, I shall know that you have shown kindness to my master.”

<sup>8</sup> If the prospective bride were unwilling to accompany the servant back to Canaan, the servant would be released from his oath to Abraham.

<sup>9</sup> In place of ‘concerning this matter’, here following the MT and NRSV, the NJB has ‘that he would do it’.

<sup>10</sup> ‘Aram Naharaim’ (אַרְם נְהָרַיִם) means ‘Aram of the Two Rivers’, in Upper Mesopotamia, site of Haran, home of Abraham’s kinsfolk (11:31).

<sup>11</sup> After ‘well’, the MT adds ‘of water’.

<sup>12</sup> The NRSV uses ‘steadfast love’ in place of ‘kindness’. The word, חֶסֶד, signifies the loyalty arising from a relationship (e.g. friendship, see 1S 20:8), which motivates the stronger party to show favour to or give help to the weaker; applied to God’s Covenant with human beings, it means benevolent action, loyalty manifest in deeds, or gracious favour.

<sup>13</sup> After ‘spring’, the MT adds ‘of water’ (cf. #11).

<sup>14</sup> The story assumes that the young woman had been appointed by Yahweh to be Isaac’s wife; therefore, events unfold according to divine providence (see vv. 21, 26–27, 50, 56): it would be an enormous test for a young woman to water ten camels; the idea is that such a woman would not only be industrious but hospitable and generous.



טו וַיְהִי־הוא טֶרֶם כָּלָה לְדַבֵּר וְהִנֵּה רִבְקָה יָצְאת אֲשֶׁר יָלְדָה לְבִתּוֹאֵל בֶּן־מִלְכָּה אִשְׁתּוֹ נָחוֹר אָחִי אַבְרָהָם וְכִדָּה עַל־שִׁכְמָה: טז וְהִנֵּעַר טִבַּת מִרְאֵה מְאֹד בְּתוּלָהּ וְאִישׁ לֹא יָדָעָהּ וַתֵּרֶד הָעֵינָה וַתִּמְלֵא כִדָּה וַתַּעַל: זי וַיֵּרָץ הָעֶבֶד לִקְרֹאתָהּ וַיֹּאמֶר הַגְּמִיאִינִי נָא מֵעֵט־מַיִם מִכִּדָּה: יח וַתֹּאמֶר שְׁתֵּה אֲדֹנָי וַתִּמְהַר וַתֵּרֶד כִּדָּה עַל־יָדָהּ וַתִּשְׁקָהּ: יט וַתִּכַּל לְהִשְׁקֹתָהּ וַתֹּאמֶר גֵּם לְגַמְלֶיךָ אֲשָׂאב עַד אִם־כָּלוּ לִשְׁתֹּת: כ וַתִּמְהַר וַתַּעַר כִּדָּה אֶל־הַשִּׁקְתָּ וַתֵּרָץ עוֹד אֶל־הַבְּאֵר לְשָׂאב וַתִּשְׂאֵב לְכָל־גַּמְלָיו: כא וְהָאִישׁ מִשְׁתָּאָה לָהּ מַחֲרִישׁ לְדַעַת הַהֲצִלִּיחַ יְהוָה דַּרְכּוֹ אִם־לֹא:

כב וַיְהִי כֹאֲשֶׁר כָּלוּ הַגַּמְלִים לִשְׁתּוֹת וַיִּקַּח הָאִישׁ נָזֶם זָהָב בֶּקַע מִשְׁקָלוֹ וּשְׁנֵי צַמִּידִים עַל־יָדָיָהּ עֲשָׂרָה זָהָב מִשְׁקָלָם: כג וַיֹּאמֶר בַּת־מִי אַתְּ הַגִּידִי נָא לִי הֵישׁ בֵּית־אֲבִיךָ מָקוֹם לָנוּ לָלִיךְ: כד וַתֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו בַּת־בִּתּוֹאֵל

15 Before he finished speaking, Rebekah came out, the daughter of Bethuel, son of Milcah, wife of Abraham's brother Nahor; she had a jar on her shoulder. 16 The girl was very fair, a virgin whom no man had known; she went down to the spring, filled her jar, and came back. 17 The servant ran to meet her and said, "Please give me a sip of water from your jar." 18 She said, "Drink, my lord," and quickly lowered her jar on her arm and gave him a drink. 19 When she had done so, she said, "I will draw for your camels, too, until they have had enough." 20 She quickly emptied her jar into the trough and ran to the well again to draw and drew for all the camels. 21 The man gazed in silence, to learn if Yahweh had made his journey successful.

22 When the camels had done drinking, the man took a gold ring of half a shekel and two bracelets of ten gold shekels for her arms, 23 and said, "Whose daughter are you? Is there room in your father's house for us to spend the night?" 24 She said, "I am the daughter of Bethuel,

15 The literal translation of 'Rebekah came out' is 'and look, Rebekah was coming out'; using the participle introduced with וְהִנֵּה ('and look').

16 The noun translated 'virgin' (בְּתוּלָה) can also mean 'young woman'.

17 In place of 'jug' (here and in vv. 15, 16, 18 & 20), the NJB has 'pitcher' and the NRSV has 'jar'.

18 The literal translation of 'quickly lowered' is 'hurried and lowered'.

19 In place of 'done so', the MT (and NJB/NRSV) has 'done giving him a drink'; the repetition is here omitted to improve the English style.

20 The literal translation of 'quickly emptied' is 'hurried and emptied'.

21 The term צָלָה in the Hiphil stem (הַהֲצִלִּיחַ) means 'to make successful'; it is a key term in the story (see vv. 40, 42, 56).

22 After 'shekel', the NJB adds 'and put it through her nostrils', following the Samaritan Pentateuch (and cf. v. 47); here, we follow the MT (and NRSV).

23 In place of 'spend the night', here following the MT & NRSV, the NJB, following the LXX (καταλῦσαι), has 'lodge in' (as also in v. 25).

24 The literal translation of Rebekah's answer is, "I am the daughter of Bethuel, the son of Milcah whom she bore to Nahor."



אֲנֹכִי בֶן־מִלְכָּה אֲשֶׁר יָלְדָה לְנָחוֹר: כה וַתֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו  
 גַּם־תִּבְנֶן גַּם־מִסְפּוֹא רֹב עִמָּנוּ גַם־מְקוֹם לָלוֹן: כו וַיִּקְדּוּ  
 הָאִישׁ וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוּ לַיהוָה: כז וַיֹּאמֶר בְּרוּךְ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי  
 אֲדֹנִי אַבְרָהָם אֲשֶׁר לֹא־עָזַב חֶסֶדּוֹ וְאַמְתּוֹ מִעַם אֲדֹנִי  
 אֲנֹכִי בְדֶרֶךְ נַחְנִי יְהוָה בֵּית אַחִי אֲדֹנִי:

כח וַתָּרֶץ הַנַּעֲרָ וַתֵּגֵד לְבֵית אִמָּהּ כַּדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה:  
 כט וּלְרִבְקָה אָח וּשְׁמוֹ לָבָן וַיֵּרֶץ לָבָן אֶל־הָאִישׁ הַחוּצָה  
 אֶל־הָעֵין: ל וַיְהִי כִּרְאֹת אֶת־הַנֶּזֶם וְאֶת־הַעֲמֻדִים עַל־  
 יָדֵי אַחֲתּוֹ וַכְּשָׁמְעוּ אֶת־דְּבָרֵי רִבְקָה אַחֲתּוֹ לֵאמֹר  
 כֹּה־דִבֶּר אֵלַי הָאִישׁ וַיָּבֹא אֶל־הָאִישׁ וְהָנָה עֹמֵד עַל־  
 הַגְּמָלִים עַל־הָעֵין: לא וַיֹּאמֶר בּוֹא בְרוּךְ יְהוָה לָמָּה  
 תַּעֲמַד בַּחוּץ וְאַנְכִי פָנִיתִי הַבַּיִת וּמְקוֹם לַגְּמָלִים:  
 לב וַיָּבֹא הָאִישׁ הַבֵּיתָה וַיִּפְתַּח הַגְּמָלִים וַיִּתֵּן תִּבְנֶן

the son whom Milcah bore to Nahor.” <sup>25</sup> She said, “We have plenty of straw and feed, and a room to spend the night.” <sup>26</sup> The man bowed down and worshipped Yahweh, <sup>27</sup> saying, “Blessed be Yahweh, God of my master Abraham, for not keeping his faithful love from my master. Yahweh has led me to the house of my master’s brother.”

<sup>28</sup> The girl ran to her mother’s house to tell what had happened.

<sup>29</sup> Now Rebekah had a brother called Laban, and Laban ran out to the man at the spring. <sup>30</sup> As soon as he saw the ring and the bracelets on his sister’s arms, and heard his sister Rebekah saying, “Thus the man spoke to me,” he went to the man who was still standing by his camels at the spring. <sup>31</sup> He said, “Come in, blessed of Yahweh. Why stay out here when I have prepared the house and a place for the camels?” <sup>32</sup> The man went to the house and unloaded the camels. He

<sup>25</sup> In place of ‘plenty of’ (following the NRSV & NETB), the NJB has ‘enough’.

<sup>26</sup> For this verse, the LXX reads, “καὶ εὐδοκῆσας ὁ ἄνθρωπος προσεκύνησεν κυρίῳ.” (And, finding favour, the man did obeisance to the LORD.)

<sup>27</sup> The phrase ‘faithful love’ (see also v. 49, 32:11, 47:29, Ex 34:6, Jos 2:14, and 2S 2:6 & 15:20) translates חֶסֶדּוֹ וְאַמְתּוֹ – literally, ‘faithful love and fidelity (or loyalty)’. It denotes the faithful love, the irrevocable benevolence of God for humanity, the persevering piety of humanity towards God, or the loving loyalty of one human being for another (see #Ho 2:21).

<sup>28</sup> The literal translation of ‘what had happened’ is ‘according to these things’.

<sup>29</sup> Some translations place the first clause in parentheses: the disjunctive clause introduces the audience to Laban, who will eventually play an important role in the unfolding story.

<sup>30</sup> The literal translation of ‘found him still standing’ is ‘and look, he was still standing’; the disjunctive clause with the participle following the particle וְהָנָה invites the audience to view the scene through Laban’s eyes.

<sup>31</sup> Laban’s obsession with wealth is apparent; to him it represents how one is ‘blessed of Yahweh’.

<sup>32</sup> The NJB & NRSV understand Laban to be the subject of the verb ‘unloaded’; here (following NETB) we take the subject of this verb as Abraham’s servant; others (NIV, NAB) take the subject of this and subsequent verbs in the verse as indefinite, referring to an unnamed servant.

וּמִסְפּוֹא לְגַמְלִים וּמִיֵּם לְרֶחֶץ רַגְלָיו וְרַגְלֵי הָאֲנָשִׁים  
אֲשֶׁר אִתּוֹ:

לֹא וַיִּשְׂם וַיֹּשֶׁם לִפְנָיו לֶאֱכֹל וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא אֲכַל עַד אִם-  
דִּבַּרְתִּי דְבָרִי וַיֹּאמֶר דְּבַר: <sup>לד</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר עֶבֶד אַבְרָהָם  
אֲנִכִּי: <sup>לה</sup> וַיְהִי בֶרֶךְ אֶת-אֲדֹנָי מְאֹד וַיִּגְדַּל וַיִּתֵּן-לּוֹ צֹאן  
וּבָקָר וְכֶסֶף וְזָהָב וְעֶבְדִּים וְשִׁפְחוֹת וְגַמְלִים וְחֹמְרִים:  
<sup>לו</sup> וַתֵּלֶד שָׂרָה אִשְׁתּוֹ אֶת-אֲדֹנָי בֶּן לֶאֱדֹנָי אַחֲרֵי זִקְנֹתָהּ  
וַיִּתֵּן-לָהּ אֶת-כָּל-אֲשֶׁר-לָהּ: <sup>לז</sup> וַיִּשְׁבַּעַנִּי אֲדֹנָי לֵאמֹר לֹא-  
תִקַּח אִשָּׁה לְבְנִי מִבְּנוֹת הַכְּנַעֲנִי אֲשֶׁר אֲנִכִּי יֹשֵׁב  
בְּאֶרְצוֹ: <sup>לח</sup> אִם-לֹא אֶל-בֵּית-אָבִי תֵלֶךְ וְאֶל-מִשְׁפַּחְתִּי  
וּלְקַחְתָּ אִשָּׁה לְבְנִי: <sup>לט</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל-אֲדֹנָי אֵלַי לֹא-תֵלֶךְ  
הָאִשָּׁה אַחֲרַי: <sup>מ</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלַי יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר-הִתְהַלַּכְתִּי  
לִפְנָיו יִשְׁלַח מַלְאָכּוֹ אִתָּךְ וְהִצְלִיחַ דְּרָכְךָ וּלְקַחְתָּ  
אִשָּׁה לְבְנִי מִמִּשְׁפַּחְתִּי וּמִבֵּית אָבִי: <sup>מא</sup> אַז תִּנָּקֶה  
מֵאֲלֹתַי כִּי תָבֹא אֶל-מִשְׁפַּחְתִּי וְאִם-לֹא יִתְּנוּ לָךְ  
וְהָיִיתָ נָקִי מֵאֲלֹתַי:

provided straw and feed for the camels and water for him and his companions to wash their feet.

<sup>33</sup> They offered him food, but he said, "I will not eat until I have had my say." He said, "Speak." <sup>34</sup> He said, "I am Abraham's servant; <sup>35</sup> Yahweh has greatly blessed my master and he is wealthy: he has given him flocks, herds, silver, gold, men and women slaves, camels, and donkeys. <sup>36</sup> Sarah, my master's wife, bore him a son in her old age and he has given him all he has. <sup>37</sup> My master made swear, "You are not to take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites in whose land I live. <sup>38</sup> You must go to my father's home and to my family to find a wife for my son." <sup>39</sup> I said to my master: What if the woman will not follow me? <sup>40</sup> He said, "Yahweh, before whom I walk, will send his angel to make your journey successful; you shall get a wife for my son from my kinsfolk, from my father's house. <sup>41</sup> Then you will be free from my oath: when you come to my family; even if they refuse you, you will be free from my oath."

<sup>33</sup> In place of 'they offered', here following the Qere (וַיִּשְׂם), the Ketiv opens with 'he offered' (וַיֹּשֶׁם).

<sup>34</sup> For this verse (here following the MT), the LXX reads, "*Kai eipen Pais Abrahām egō eim.*" (And he said, "A servant of Abraham am I.").

<sup>35</sup> In place of 'greatly blessed my master', here following the MT and NRSV, the NJB has 'overwhelmed my master with blessings'.

<sup>36</sup> In place of 'her old age', here following the MT & NRSV, the NJB, following the LXX (*γηρᾶσαι αὐτόν*) and Samaritan Pentateuch, has 'his old age'.

<sup>37</sup> In place of 'in whose land I live' (following the NRSV), NETB has 'among whom I am living'.

<sup>38</sup> In place of 'you must go' (following the MT, LXX and NRSV), the NJB has 'curse you if you do not go' (possibly following the Samaritan Pentateuch).

<sup>39</sup> The verb here translated 'follow' is in the imperfect, indicating desire (literally, 'if she does not wish to follow').

<sup>40</sup> The verb here translated as 'walk' is the Hitpa'el of הָלַךְ, meaning 'live one's life' (cf. 17:1).

<sup>41</sup> The 'oath' (mentioned twice in this verse) belonged to the person to whom it was sworn (Abraham).

מב ואבא היום אליהעין ואמר יהוה אלהי אדני  
אברהם אם-ישך-נא מצליח דרכי אשר אנכי הלך  
עליה: מג הנה אנכי נצב על-עין המים והיה העלמה  
היצאת לשאב ואמרתי אליה השקיני-נא מעט-מים  
מבדך: מד ואמרה אלי גם-אתה שתה וגם לגמליך  
אשאב הוא האשה אשר-הכיה יהוה לבן-אדני:

מה אני טרם אכלה לדבר אל-לבי והנה רבקה יצאת  
וכדה על-שכמה ותרד העינה ותשאב ואמר אליה  
השקיני נא: מו ותמהר ותורד בדה מעליה ותאמר  
שתה וגם-גמליך אשקה ואשת וגם הגמלים  
השקתה: מז ואשאל אתה ואמר בת-מי את ותאמר  
בת-בתואל בן-נחור אשר ילדה-לו מלכה ואשם  
הנזם על-אפה והצמידים עלידיה: מח ואקד  
ואשתחוה ליהוה ואברך את-יהוה אלהי אדני  
אברהם אשר הנחני בדרך אמת לקחת את-בת-אחי

<sup>42</sup> “Arriving today at the spring I said: Yahweh, God of my master Abraham, show me, I pray, if you intend to make my journey a success. <sup>43</sup> Here I stand, by the spring: when a girl comes out to draw and I say to her: Please let me drink a little water from your jar, <sup>44</sup> and she replies, “Drink, and I will draw for your camels too,” let her be the wife Yahweh has chosen for my master’s son.

<sup>45</sup> “I was still considering this when Rebekah came out, her jar on her shoulder; she came down to the spring to draw water. I said to her: Please give me a drink. <sup>46</sup> Quickly, she lowered her pitcher saying, “Drink, and I will water your camels too.” So, I drank, and she watered the camels. <sup>47</sup> I asked her: Whose daughter are you? She replied, “I am the daughter of Bethuel, whom Milcah bore to Nahor.” Then I put this ring in her nose and these bracelets on her arms. <sup>48</sup> I bowed down and worshipped Yahweh and I blessed Yahweh, God of my master Abraham, who had so kindly led me to choose the

<sup>42</sup> The words ‘show me’ (following the NJB) are not in the MT and are here added for clarity.

<sup>43</sup> After ‘draw’, the NJB adds ‘water’; here, we follow the MT (and NRSV).

<sup>44</sup> After ‘drink’, the NJB adds ‘by all means’; here, we follow the MT (and NRSV).

<sup>45</sup> The literal translation of ‘considering’ (here following the NJB) is ‘speaking in my heart’ (as NRSV).

<sup>46</sup> The NJB lacks the last sentence, here following the MT, LXX (καὶ ἔπιον, καὶ τὰς καμήλους μου ἐπότισεν) and NRSV.

<sup>47</sup> The literal translation of Rebekah’s reply is, “The daughter of Bethuel son of Nahor, whom Milcah bore to him.”

<sup>48</sup> Rebekah was actually the granddaughter of Nahor, Abraham’s brother. One can either translate the term בַּת as ‘daughter’ (in which case the term אָה must be translated more generally as ‘relative’ rather than ‘brother’, as in the NRSV) or one can translate בַּת as ‘granddaughter’ (in which case אָה may be translated ‘brother’, as in the NJB & NIV).

אֲדֹנִי לְבָנוֹ: מִטּוֹ וְעַתָּה אִם-יִשְׁכֶּם עֲשִׂים חֶסֶד וְאַמֶּת  
אֶת-אֲדֹנִי הַגִּידוּ לִי וְאִם-לֹא הַגִּידוּ לִי וְאִפְנֶה עַל-יָמִין  
אוֹ עַל-שְׂמָאל:

וַיַּעַן לָבָן וּבְתוּאֵל וַיֹּאמְרוּ מִיְּהוָה יֵצֵא הַדָּבָר לֹא נוֹכַל  
דִּבֶּר אֵלָיְךָ רַע אוֹ-טוֹב: נָא הִנֵּה-רִבְקָה לְפָנֶיךָ קַח וְלֵךְ  
וְתָהִי אִשָּׁה לְבֶן-אֲדֹנֶיךָ כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר יְהוָה: נָב וַיְהִי  
כַּאֲשֶׁר שָׁמַע עֶבֶד אַבְרָהָם אֶת-דְּבָרֵיהֶם וַיִּשְׁתַּחוּ  
אֶרְצָה לַיהוָה: נָג וַיּוֹצֵא הָעֶבֶד כְּלֵי-כֶסֶף וְכְלֵי זָהָב  
וּבְגָדִים וַיִּתֵּן לְרִבְקָה וּמִגְדָּנֹת נָתַן לְאָחִיהָ וּלְאִמָּהּ:

וַיֹּאכְלוּ וַיִּשְׁתּוּ הוּא וְהָאֲנָשִׁים אֲשֶׁר-עִמּוֹ וַיְלִינוּ  
וַיִּקְוֻמוּ בַּבֹּקֶר וַיֹּאמֶר שְׁלַחֲנִי לְאֲדֹנִי: נָה וַיֹּאמֶר אָחִיהָ  
וְאִמָּה תֵּשֶׁב הַנֶּעֱר אִתָּנוּ יָמִים אוֹ עֶשְׂוֹר אַחֵר תֵּלֵךְ:  
נָו וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם אֶל-תֹּאחָרוּ אֹתִי וַיְהִי הַצְלִיחַ דְּרָכִי  
שְׁלַחֲוֹנִי וְאֵלְכָה לְאֲדֹנִי: נָז וַיֹּאמְרוּ נִקְרָא לְנֶעֱר

granddaughter of my master's brother for his son. <sup>49</sup> Now tell me if you are prepared to show constant and true love to my master; if not, say so, and I shall know what to do."

<sup>50</sup> Laban and Bethuel replied, "This is from Yahweh; it is not for us to say yes or no to you. <sup>51</sup> Rebekah is before you; take her and go, and let her be your master's son's wife, as Yahweh has said." <sup>52</sup> When Abraham's servant heard their words, he prostrated himself before Yahweh. <sup>53</sup> He brought out silver and gold jewels and clothes, which he gave to Rebekah; he also gave valuable presents to her brother and to her mother.

<sup>54</sup> They ate and drank, he and the men with him, and stayed all night. When they rose in the morning, he said, "Send me back to my master." <sup>55</sup> Her mother and brother said, "Let the girl stay with us a few days, maybe ten, then she may go." <sup>56</sup> But he replied, "Do not delay me: Yahweh has made my journey a success; let me leave to go

<sup>49</sup> The literal translation of 'know what to do' is 'turn either to the right or to the left'; the expression apparently means that Abraham's servant will know where he should go if there is no further business here.

<sup>50</sup> Laban and Bethuel could not say one way or the other what they wanted, for they viewed the events as God's will.

<sup>51</sup> The verb here translated as 'let her be', a jussive with a prefixed conjunction following the earlier imperatives, indicates purpose or result.

<sup>52</sup> In place of 'prostrated himself', here following the NJB, the NRSV (and others) have 'bowed himself to the ground'.

<sup>53</sup> In place of the opening pronoun, 'he', the MT has 'the servant'.

<sup>54</sup> The literal translation of the 1st sentence is, "And they ate and drank, he and the men who (were) with him and they spent the night."

<sup>55</sup> In place of the opening pronoun, 'her', the NJB (and NETB) have 'Rebekah's'.

<sup>56</sup> The disjunctive clause ('Yahweh has made my journey successful') is circumstantial, indicating a reason for the preceding request.

וַנִּשְׁאַלָהּ אֶת־פִּיהָ: <sup>נח</sup> וַיִּקְרְאוּ לְרִבְקָה וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלֶיהָ  
הֲתֵלְכִי עִם־הָאִישׁ הַזֶּה וְתֹאמַר אֵלָיו: <sup>נט</sup> וַיִּשְׁלְחוּ אֶת־  
רִבְקָה אַחֲתָם וְאֶת־מִנְקָתָהּ וְאֶת־עֶבֶד אַבְרָהָם וְאֶת־  
אֲנָשָׁיו:

<sup>ס</sup> וַיְבָרְכוּ אֶת־רִבְקָה  
וַיֹּאמְרוּ לָהּ  
אַחֲתֵנוּ אַתְּ הִי לְאַלְפֵי רִבְבָה  
וַיִּירֶשׁ זֶרְעֶךָ  
אֶת שַׁעַר שְׂנְאָיו:

<sup>סא</sup> וַתֵּקֶם רִבְקָה וַנַּעֲרֹתֶיהָ וַתִּרְכַּבְנָה עַל־הַגְּמֵלִים  
וַתֵּלְכֶנָּה אַחֲרֵי הָאִישׁ וַיִּקַּח הָעֶבֶד אֶת־רִבְקָה וַיֵּלֶךְ:  
<sup>סב</sup> וַיֵּצֵחֶק בָּא מִבּוֹא בְּאֵר לַחֵי רֹאִי וְהוּא יוֹשֵׁב בְּאֶרֶץ  
הַנֶּגֶב: <sup>סג</sup> וַיֵּצֵא יֵצֶחֶק לָשׁוּחַ בַּשָּׂדֶה לַפְּנוֹת עֶרֶב וַיִּשָּׂא  
עֵינָיו וַיֵּרֶא וְהִנֵּה גְמֵלִים בָּאִים: <sup>סד</sup> וַתִּשָּׂא רִבְקָה אֶת־

back to my master.” <sup>57</sup> They said, “We will call the girl and ask her.”

<sup>58</sup> They called Rebekah and asked her, “Will you go with this man?” She replied, “I will.” <sup>59</sup> So, they let their sister Rebekah go, with her nurse, and Abraham’s servant and his men.

<sup>60</sup> They blessed Rebekah in these words:

“Sister of ours, may you increase  
to thousands and tens of thousands;  
may your descendants gain possession  
of the gates of their enemies.”

<sup>61</sup> Then Rebekah and her maids stood up, mounted the camels, and followed the man. The servant took Rebekah and departed.

<sup>62</sup> Isaac, meanwhile, had come back from Beer Lahai Roi and was settled in the Negeb. <sup>63</sup> Now Isaac went walking in the fields as evening fell; and, looking up, he saw camels approaching; <sup>64</sup> and

<sup>57</sup> The literal translation of ‘ask her’ is ‘ask her mouth’; the NRSV has simply ‘ask her’.

<sup>58</sup> In place of ‘do you want to go’ (following the NJB), the NRSV has ‘will you go’; however, the imperfect verb form used here has a modal nuance, expressing desire.

<sup>59</sup> In place of ‘nurse’ (here following the NJB & NRSV), NETB has ‘female attendant’.

<sup>60</sup> The literal translation of ‘increase to’ (following the NJB) is ‘become’; in place of ‘tens of thousands’ (following the MT & NJB), the NRSV has ‘myriads’.

<sup>61</sup> In place of ‘maids’ (here following the NRSV), the NJB has ‘servants’.

<sup>62</sup> The name בְּאֵר לַחֵי רֹאִי (‘Beer Lahai Roi’) means ‘The well of the Living One who sees me’ (cf. 16:14).

<sup>63</sup> The meaning of the Hebrew term, here translated as ‘walking’ (as NJB & NRSV; NIV has ‘meditating’ and NETB has ‘relaxing’), is uncertain; the word is found only here.

<sup>64</sup> The literal translation of ‘looked up’ his ‘lifted up her eyes’.

עֵינֶיהָ וַתֵּרָא אֶת־יִצְחָק וַתִּפֹּל מֵעַל הַגָּמֶל: <sup>סה</sup> וַתֹּאמֶר  
 אֶל־הָעֶבֶד מִי־הָאִישׁ הַלֹּזֵה הַהֹלֵךְ בַּשָּׂדֶה לִקְרֹאתָנוּ  
 וַיֹּאמֶר הָעֶבֶד הוּא אֲדֹנִי וַתִּקַּח הַצִּעִיף וַתִּתְכַסּ:  
<sup>סו</sup> וַיְסַפֵּר הָעֶבֶד לִיִּצְחָק אֶת כָּל־הַדְּבָרִים אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה:  
<sup>סז</sup> וַיְבֹאֶה יִצְחָק הָאֵהֱלָה שָׂרָה אִמּוֹ וַיִּקַּח אֶת־רֵבְקָה  
 וַתְּהִי־לוֹ לְאִשָּׁה וַיֶּאֱהָבָהּ וַיִּנָּחֵם יִצְחָק אַחֲרֵי  
 אִמּוֹ: {פ}

Rebekah looked up and, when she saw Isaac, she jumped down from  
 her camel <sup>65</sup> and asked the servant, "Who is that man walking  
 through the fields to meet us?" The servant replied, "That is my  
 master;" then she took her veil and hid her face. <sup>66</sup> The servant told  
 Isaac the whole story, <sup>67</sup> and Isaac led Rebekah into his tent and made  
 her his wife; and he loved her. Thus, Isaac was consoled for the loss  
 of his mother.

<sup>65</sup> The order of the introductory clause and the direct discourse has been rearranged in the translation for stylistic reasons.

<sup>66</sup> In place of 'the whole story', here following the NJB, the NRSV has 'all the things he had done' and NETB has 'everything that had happened'.

<sup>67</sup> In place of 'the loss of his mother' (following the NJB), the NRSV has 'his mother's death'; the MT has simply 'after his mother', but this must refer to Sarah's death.



## GENESIS 25

## בראשית פרק כה

<sup>1</sup> Abraham took another wife whose name was Keturah; <sup>2</sup> she bore him Zimram, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak and Shuah. <sup>3</sup> Jokshan fathered Sheba and Dedan; the sons of Dedan were the Asshurim, the Letushim and the Leummim. <sup>4</sup> The sons of Midian were Ephah, Ephher, Hanoch, Abida and Eldaah. All these are sons of Keturah.

<sup>5</sup> Abraham gave everything he owned to Isaac. <sup>6</sup> But, to the sons of his concubines Abraham gave presents and, during his lifetime, he sent them away from his son Isaac eastward, to the east country.

<sup>7</sup> The number of years that Abraham lived was a hundred and seventy-five. <sup>8</sup> Then Abraham breathed his last, dying at a ripe old age, an old man who had lived his full span of years; and he was gathered to his people. <sup>9</sup> His sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in

<sup>א</sup> וַיִּסַּף אַבְרָהָם וַיִּקַּח אִשָּׁה וּשְׁמָהּ קֶטוּרָה: <sup>ב</sup> וַתֵּלֶד לּוֹ אֶת־זִמְרָם וְאֶת־יֶקְשָׁן וְאֶת־מֶדָן וְאֶת־מִדְיָן וְאֶת־יִשְׁבָּק וְאֶת־שׁוּא: <sup>ג</sup> וַיִּקְשָׁן יָלַד אֶת־שֶׁבָא וְאֶת־דֶּדָן וּבְנֵי דֶדָן הֵיוּ אֲשׁוּרִים וּלְטוּשִׁים וּלְלֻמִּים: <sup>ד</sup> וּבְנֵי מִדְיָן עֵיפָה וְעַפְרָי וְחִנֹּךְ וְאַבִּידָע וְאֵלְדָּא: כָּל־אֵלֶּה בְנֵי קֶטוּרָה:

<sup>ה</sup> וַיִּתֵּן אַבְרָהָם אֶת־כָּל־אֲשֶׁר־לוֹ לְיִצְחָק: <sup>ו</sup> וּלְבָנֵי הַפְּלִגְשִׁים אֲשֶׁר לְאַבְרָהָם נָתַן אַבְרָהָם מִתְּנַת וַיִּשְׁלַחם מֵעַל יִצְחָק בָּנוֹ בְּעוֹדָנוֹ חַי קְדָמָה אֶל־אֶרֶץ קְדָם:

<sup>ז</sup> וְאֵלֶּה יְמֵי שְׁנֵי־חַיֵּי אַבְרָהָם אֲשֶׁר־חִי מֵאָת שָׁנָה וְשִׁבְעִים שָׁנָה וְחֲמֵשׁ שָׁנִים: <sup>ח</sup> וַיָּגַע וַיָּמָת אַבְרָהָם בְּשִׁיבָה טוֹבָה זָקֵן וְשֹׁבֵעַ וַיֵּאָסֶף אֶל־עַמּוּיוֹ: <sup>ט</sup> וַיִּקְבְּרוּ אוֹתוֹ יִצְחָק וַיִּשְׁמַעֵאל בְּנוֹ אֶל־מַעֲרַת הַמַּכְפֵּלָה אֶל־

## GENESIS 25

- <sup>1</sup> The literal translation of 'took another wife' is 'added and took a wife'. For 'Keturah' (קֶטוּרָה), LXX reads *Χεττουρα*.
- <sup>2</sup> In the LXX, the names in this verse are *Ζεμραν* (Zemran), *Ιεξαν* (Jezan), *Μαδαν* (Madan), *Μαδιαμ* (Madiam), *Ιεσβοκ* (Iesbok) and *Σουε* (Soue).
- <sup>3</sup> The names 'Sheba' (שֶׁבָא) & 'Dedan' (דֶּדָן) appear in 10:7 as descendants of Ham through Cush and Raamah. Since these two names are usually taken as place names, one plausible suggestion is that some of Abraham's descendants lived in those regions and took names linked with it.
- <sup>4</sup> In the LXX, the sons of Midian (*Μαδιαμ*) are: *Γαιφα* (Gaïpha), *Αφερ* (Apher), *Ενωχ* (Enoch), *Αβιρα* (Abira) and *Ελραγα* (Elraga).
- <sup>5</sup> In place of 'everything he owned', the NJB has 'all his possessions'.
- <sup>6</sup> An alternative reading for 'the east country' is 'the land of the east', following the LXX (γῆν ἀνατολῶν).
- <sup>7</sup> The literal translation of this verse is: "And these are the days of the years of the lifetime of Abraham that he lived – one hundred and seventy-five years."
- <sup>8</sup> According to the ancient Israelite view, Abraham joined his deceased ancestors in Sheol, the land of the dead.
- <sup>9</sup> The 'cave of Machpelah' was the place Abraham had purchased as a burial place for his wife Sarah (23:17–18).

שָׁדָה עֶפְרוֹן בֶּן־צֶחֶר הַחִתִּי אֲשֶׁר עַל־פְּנֵי מִמְרָא:  
 'הַשָּׂדֶה אֲשֶׁר־קָנָה אַבְרָהָם מֵאֵת בְּנֵי־חֵת שָׁמָּה קָבַר  
 אַבְרָהָם וְשָׂרָה אִשְׁתּוֹ: י<sup>א</sup> וַיְהִי אַחֲרֵי מוֹת אַבְרָהָם  
 וַיְבָרֶךְ אֱלֹהִים אֶת־יִצְחָק בָּנוֹ וַיָּשָׁב יִצְחָק עַם־בְּאֵר  
 לַחֵי רֹאִי: {פ}

י<sup>ב</sup> וְאֵלֶּה תִּלְדֹת יִשְׁמָעֵאל בֶּן־אַבְרָהָם אֲשֶׁר יִלְדָה הַגֵּר  
 הַמִּצְרַיִת שִׁפְחַת שָׂרָה לְאַבְרָהָם: י<sup>ג</sup> וְאֵלֶּה שְׁמוֹת בְּנֵי  
 יִשְׁמָעֵאל בְּשִׁמְתָם לְתוֹלְדָתָם בְּכֹר יִשְׁמָעֵאל נְבַיּוֹת  
 וְקֶדָר וְאַדְבֵּעַל וּמִבְשָׁם: י<sup>ד</sup> וּמִשְׁמַע וְדוּמָה וּמִשָּׂא:  
 טו<sup>ו</sup> חֲדָד וְתִימָא יִטּוֹר נַפִּישׁ וְקֶדְמָה: טז<sup>ז</sup> אֵלֶּה הֵם בְּנֵי  
 יִשְׁמָעֵאל וְאֵלֶּה שְׁמֹתָם בְּחֻצֵּיהֶם וּבְטִירָתָם שְׁנִים־  
 עָשָׂר נְשִׂאִים לְאַמְתָּם: יז<sup>ח</sup> וְאֵלֶּה שְׁנֵי חַיֵּי יִשְׁמָעֵאל  
 מֵאֵת שְׁנָה וּשְׁלֹשִׁים שָׁנָה וְשִׁבְעַת שָׁנִים וַיָּגָע וַיָּמָת  
 וַיֵּאָסֶף אֶל־עַמּוּיוֹ: יח<sup>ט</sup> וַיִּשְׁכְּנוּ מַחֲוִילָה עַד־שׁוּר אֲשֶׁר  
 עַל־פְּנֵי מִצְרַיִם בְּאֶכָּה אֲשׁוּרָה עַל־פְּנֵי כָל־אֲחָיו  
 נָפַל: {פ}

the cave of Machpelah opposite Mamre, in the field of Ephron the Hittite, son of Zohar – <sup>10</sup> the field that Abraham had bought from the Hittites. There, Abraham and his wife Sarah were buried. <sup>11</sup> After Abraham's death, God blessed his son Isaac, and Isaac lived near Beer Lahai Roi.

<sup>12</sup> These are the sons of Ishmael, the son of Abraham by Hagar, Sarah's Egyptian slave-girl. <sup>13</sup> These are the names of the sons of Ishmael in order of their birth: Ishmael's first-born son was Nebaioth; then Kedar, Adbeel, Mibsam, <sup>14</sup> Mishma, Dumah, Massa, <sup>15</sup> Hadad, Tema, Jetur, Naphish and Kedemah. <sup>16</sup> These are the sons of Ishmael, and these are their names, by their settlements and encampments, twelve chiefs of as many tribes. <sup>17</sup> The number of years that Ishmael lived was one hundred and thirty-seven. Then he breathed his last, died, and was gathered to his people. <sup>18</sup> They settled from Havilah to Shur, which is to the east of Egypt, on the way to Asshur. He settled alongside of all his people.

<sup>10</sup> On the use of the term 'Hittites', see #23:3.

<sup>11</sup> The term 'blessed' in includes all the gifts that God granted to Isaac but fertility was not one, for Rebekah was barren for 20 years (see v. 21).

<sup>12</sup> Ishmael's descendants (17:20) are the North Arabian tribes.

<sup>13</sup> The meaning of the phrase translated 'in order of their birth' (literally, 'according to their records') is unclear.

<sup>14</sup> According to the LXX, the names in this verse are: *Μασμα* (Masma), *Ιδουμα* (Idouma) and *Μασση* (Masse).

<sup>15</sup> According to the LXX, the names in this verse are *Χοδδαδ* (Koddad), *Θαιμαν* (Thaiman), *Ιετουρ* (Jetour), *Ναφες* (Naphes) and *Κεδμα* (Kedma).

<sup>16</sup> Like later Israel, the Ishmaelites were organized into twelve tribes, each with a tribal prince.

<sup>17</sup> In place of 'was gathered to his people' (following the MT), the LXX has 'was added to his family' (*προσσετέθη πρὸς τὸ γένος αὐτοῦ*).

<sup>18</sup> In place of 'Asshur', here following the MT (אֲשׁוּר), the NJB & NRSV, following the LXX, have 'Assyria' (*Ἀσσυρίους* – 'the Assyrians').

יט וְאֵלֶּה תּוֹלְדֹת יִצְחָק בֶּן־אַבְרָהָם אַבְרָהָם הוּלִיד  
אֶת־יִצְחָק: כ וַיְהִי יִצְחָק בֶּן־אַרְבָּעִים שָׁנָה בְּקַחְתּוֹ  
אֶת־רִבְקָה בַּת־בְּתוּאֵל הָאֲרָמִי מִפָּדָן אָרֶם אֲחֻת לָבָן  
הָאֲרָמִי לֹא לְאִשָּׁה:

כא וַיַּעֲתֵר יִצְחָק לַיהוָה לִנְכַח אִשְׁתּוֹ כִּי עֲקָרָה הִוא  
וַיַּעֲתֵר לֹא יְהוָה וַתַּהַר רִבְקָה אִשְׁתּוֹ: כב וַיִּתְרַצְצוּ  
הַבָּנִים בְּקִרְבָּהּ וַתֹּאמֶר אִם־כֵּן לִמָּה זֶה אֲנֹכִי וַתֵּלֶךְ  
לִדְרֹשׁ אֶת־יְהוָה: כג וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה לָהּ

שְׁנֵי גֵיִם גּוֹיִם בְּבֶטְנְךָ  
וּשְׁנֵי לְאֻמִּים מִמֶּעֶיךָ יִפְרְדּוּ  
וְלֶאֱחָד מֵלֵאם יֵאָמֵן  
וְרֵב יַעֲבֹד צָעִיר:

כד וַיִּמְלְאוּ יָמֶיהָ לֵלֶדֶת וְהִנֵּה תוֹמֵם בְּבֶטְנָה: כה וַיֵּצֵא  
הָרִאשׁוֹן אֲדָמוֹנִי כָּלּוֹ כְּאֹדֶרֶת שֹׁעַר וַיִּקְרְאוּ שְׁמוֹ עֵשָׂו:  
כו וְאַחֲרֵי־כֵן יָצָא אָחִיו וַיְדֹ אֲחֻת בַּעֲקֵב עֵשָׂו וַיִּקְרָא

<sup>19</sup> This is the story of Isaac, son of Abraham. <sup>20</sup> Abraham was the father of Isaac. Isaac was forty years old when he married Rebekah, the daughter of Bethuel the Aramaean of Paddan-Aram, and the sister of Laban the Aramaean.

<sup>21</sup> Isaac prayed to Yahweh for his wife, as she was barren. Yahweh heard his prayer and his wife Rebekah conceived. <sup>22</sup> The children struggled together inside her and she said, "If this is the way of it, why go on?" So, she consulted Yahweh <sup>23</sup> and Yahweh said to her:

"There are two nations in your womb,  
your issue will be two rival peoples.  
One nation shall have the mastery of the other,  
and the elder shall serve the younger."

<sup>24</sup> When her time to give birth was at hand, there were twins in her womb. <sup>25</sup> The first came out red, all over, like a hairy cloak; so, he was named Esau. <sup>26</sup> Then his brother came out, with his hand grasping

<sup>19</sup> What follows for several chapters is *not* the account of Isaac, except briefly, but the account of Jacob and Esau.

<sup>20</sup> We learn here that Isaac married 35 years before Abraham died, that Rebekah was barren for 20 years, and that Abraham would have lived to see Jacob and Esau begin to grow up.

<sup>21</sup> The verb עָתַר ('prayed to') also appears in the story of God's judgment on Egypt, in which Moses asked Yahweh to remove the plagues. The cognate word in Arabic means 'to slaughter for sacrifice' and the word is used in Zp 3:10 to describe worshipers who bring offerings.

<sup>22</sup> After 'go on', the NJB adds 'living', following the *Peshitta*; here, we follow the *MT*.

<sup>23</sup> The *Kethib*/*Qere* difference here would benefit from an explanation.

<sup>24</sup> The fact that Rebekah was pregnant with twins is already told in vv. 22 & 23.

<sup>25</sup> The word אֲדָמוֹנִי ('red') forms a wordplay on the Edomites, Esau's descendants. There is another wordplay involving the name and descendants of Esau: שֹׁעַר ('hairy'): the Edomites will later live in and around Mount Seir (Nb 24:18), named for its wooded nature.

<sup>26</sup> The name 'Jacob' is a play on the Hebrew word for 'heel' (עֵקֶב).

שְׁמוֹ יַעֲקֹב וַיִּצְחָק בֶּן־שָׁשִׁים שָׁנָה בְּלֶדֶת אֹתָם:  
 כִּי וַיִּגְדְּלוּ הַנְּעָרִים וַיְהִי עֲשׂוֹ אִישׁ יָדַע צִיד אִישׁ שָׂדֶה  
 וַיַּעֲקֹב אִישׁ תָּם יֹשֵׁב אֹהֶלִים: כח וַיֹּאֲהֵב יִצְחָק אֶת־  
 עֲשׂוֹ כִּי־צִיד בְּפִיו וּרְבֵקָה אֲהָבַת אֶת־יַעֲקֹב:  
 כט וַיִּזְדּוּ יַעֲקֹב נָזִיד וַיָּבֹא עֲשׂוֹ מִן־הַשָּׂדֶה וְהוּא עֵיף:  
 ל וַיֹּאמֶר עֲשׂוֹ אֶל־יַעֲקֹב הֲלִעִיטָנִי נָא מִן־הָאָדָם הָאָדָם  
 הַזֶּה כִּי עֵיף אָנֹכִי עַל־כֵּן קָרָא־שְׁמוֹ אֱדוֹם: לא וַיֹּאמֶר  
 יַעֲקֹב מִכְּרָה כִּי־וּם אֶת־בְּכֹרְתִי לִי: לב וַיֹּאמֶר עֲשׂוֹ הִנֵּה  
 אָנֹכִי הוֹלֵךְ לָמוֹת וְלִמְהֵרָה לִי בְכֹרָה: לג וַיֹּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב  
 הַשִּׁבְעָה לִּי כִּי־וּם וַיִּשָּׁבַע לוֹ וַיִּמְכֹּר אֶת־בְּכֹרְתוֹ לְיַעֲקֹב:  
 לד וַיַּעֲקֹב נָתַן לַעֲשׂוֹ לֶחֶם וּנְזִיד עֲדָשִׁים וַיֹּאכַל וַיִּשָּׂת  
 וַיָּקָם וַיֵּלֶךְ וַיִּבֹז עֲשׂוֹ אֶת־הַבְּכֹרָה: {פ}

Esau's heel; so, he was named Jacob. Isaac was sixty years old when she bore them. <sup>27</sup> When the boys grew up, Esau was a skilled hunter, a man of the land, but Jacob was a quiet man, living in tents. <sup>28</sup> Isaac loved Esau, for he had a taste for game; but Rebekah loved Jacob. <sup>29</sup> Once, Jacob had cooked a stew, and Esau returned from the land exhausted. <sup>30</sup> Esau said to Jacob, "Feed me the red stew, that red stew there; I am hungry" – hence the name given to him, Edom. <sup>31</sup> Jacob said, "First sell me your birthright." <sup>32</sup> Esau said, "I am about to die; what use is my birthright to me?" <sup>33</sup> Jacob said, "First give me your oath;" he gave him his oath and sold his birthright to Jacob. <sup>34</sup> Then Jacob gave him bread and lentil soup, and after eating and drinking he got up and went. Thus, Esau despised his birthright.

<sup>27</sup> The disjunctive clause at the end of the verse juxtaposes Jacob with Esau and draws attention to the striking differences. In contrast to Esau, a man of the field, Jacob was civilized, as the phrase 'living in tents' signifies. Whereas Esau was a skilful hunter, Jacob was calm and even-tempered (תָּם, which normally has the idea of 'blameless').

<sup>28</sup> The word for 'game' (צִיד) is the same word as 'hunter' in the previous verse; here, it is a metonymy, referring to that which the hunter kills.

<sup>29</sup> The verb 'cooked' is וָיִד, which sounds like the word for 'hunter' (צִיד); this is deliberate: the hunter becomes the hunted in this story. The former means 'to cook' or 'to boil' but, by the sound play with the latter, it comes to mean 'set a trap by cooking'. The rare term לָעֵט ('feed') is used in later Hebrew for feeding animals; if this nuance was attached to the word in the biblical period, then it may depict Esau in a negative light.

<sup>30</sup> The word 'red' (אָדָם) describes the stew that Esau gasped for and conveys the nature of Esau and his descendants.

<sup>31</sup> By law, the firstborn son took precedence over his brothers, and on his father's death received a double share of the inheritance and became the head of the family.

<sup>32</sup> The literal translation of 'what use will my birthright be to me' is 'and what is this to me, a birthright'.

<sup>33</sup> The literal translation of 'first' is 'today' (as also in v. 31).

<sup>34</sup> The style here is typical of Hebrew narrative; after the tension is resolved with the dialogue, the working out of it is recorded in a rapid sequence of verbs ('gave', 'eating', 'drinking', 'got up', 'went'); see also 3:1–7 for another example.

## GENESIS 26

## בראשית פרק כו

<sup>1</sup> There was a famine in the land, after the famine that occurred in the time of Abraham, and Isaac went to Abimelech, the Philistine king at Gerar. <sup>2</sup> Yahweh appeared to him and said, “Do not go down into Egypt; stay in the land I shall tell you of. <sup>3</sup> Stay for the present here in this land, and I will be with you and bless you. For, it is to you and your offspring that I will give all these lands, and I will fulfil the oath I swore to your father Abraham. <sup>4</sup> I will make your offspring as many as the stars of heaven, and I will give them all these lands; and all the nations of the world shall bless themselves by your offspring <sup>5</sup> because Abraham kept my charge, my commandments, statutes, and laws.” <sup>6</sup> So, Isaac settled in Gerar.

<sup>7</sup> When the men of the place asked him about his wife he said, “She is my sister,” for he feared to say, “my wife,” in case they killed him on Rebekah’s account, for she was beautiful. <sup>8</sup> When he had been

<sup>א</sup> ויהי רעב בארץ מלבד הרעב הראשון אשר היה בימי אברהם וילך יצחק אל-אבימלך מלך-פלשתים גררה: <sup>ב</sup> וירא אליו יהוה ויאמר אל-תֵּרַד מִצְרַיִם שֶׁכֶן בארץ אשר אמר אליך: <sup>ג</sup> גֹּר בארץ הזאת ואהיה עִמָּךְ ואברכך כִּי-לֹךְ ולזרעך אתן את-כל-הָאָרֶץ האל והקמתי את-השבעה אשר נשבעתי לאברהם אביך: <sup>ד</sup> והרביתי את-זרעך ככוכבי השמים ונתתי לזרעך את כל-הָאָרֶץ האל והתברכו בזרעך כל גויי הארץ: <sup>ה</sup> עֵקֶב אשר-שמע אברהם בקלי וישמר משמֹרתי מצוֹתֵי חֻקוֹתֵי וְתוֹרֹתֵי: <sup>ו</sup> וישב יצחק בגרר:

<sup>ז</sup> וישאלו אנשי המקום לאשתו ויאמר אחתי הוא כי ירא לאמר אשתי פן-יהרגני אנשי המקום על-רבקה כי-טובת מראה הוא: <sup>ח</sup> ויהי כי ארכו-לו שם הימים

## GENESIS 26

- <sup>1</sup> Isaac scarcely appears in the text except in his father’s story (Chs 21, 22 & 24) and in that of his sons (25:19–28, 27, 28:1–9 & 35:27–29). Only this chapter treats him directly, but the episodes parallel the life of Abraham and are linked by the figure of Abimelech and the ‘Philistines’.
- <sup>2</sup> The words ‘do not go down into Egypt’ echo 12:10 – which reports that ‘Abram went down to Egypt’ – but state the opposite.
- <sup>3</sup> The verb גֹּר (*stay*) means ‘to live temporarily without ownership of land’.
- <sup>4</sup> On the use of the phrase ‘bless themselves’, see #22:18.
- <sup>5</sup> The language of this verse is clearly interpretive; for, Abraham did not have all the ‘commandments, statutes and laws’.
- <sup>6</sup> For this verse, here following the NRSV & NETB, the NJB has, “So Isaac stayed at Gerar;” the LXX uses the verb ‘dwelt’ (κατῳακησεν).
- <sup>7</sup> Unlike Sarah, Rebekah was not actually her husband’s half-sister.
- <sup>8</sup> Another play on words, as in 21:9: Isaac (יִצְחָק) fondles (מִצְחֵק) Rebekah (see 17:17, 18:12ff & 21:6).



וַיִּשְׁקֹף אֲבִימֶלֶךְ מִלֶּדֶךָ פְּלִשְׁתִּים בְּעַד הַחֲלוֹן וַיֵּרָא וְהִנֵּה  
 יִצְחָק מְצַחֵק אֶת רֵבֶקָה אִשְׁתּוֹ: <sup>ט</sup> וַיִּקְרָא אֲבִימֶלֶךְ  
 לַיִּצְחָק וַיֹּאמֶר אֵד הִנֵּה אִשְׁתְּךָ הִוא וַאֲיֵךְ אָמַרְתָּ  
 אֶחָתִי הִוא וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו יִצְחָק כִּי אָמַרְתִּי פֶן־אָמוּת  
 עָלַיהָ: <sup>י</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר אֲבִימֶלֶךְ מַה־זֹּאת עָשִׂיתָ לָּנוּ כְּמַעַט  
 שָׂכַב אֶחָד הָעָם אֶת־אִשְׁתְּךָ וְהִבֵּאתָ עָלֵינוּ אִשָּׁם:  
<sup>יא</sup> וַיֵּצֵא אֲבִימֶלֶךְ אֶת־כָּל־הָעָם לֵאמֹר הִנֵּנִי בְּאִישׁ הַזֶּה  
 וּבְאִשְׁתּוֹ מוֹת יוֹמָת: <sup>ב</sup> וַיִּזְרַע יִצְחָק בְּאֶרֶץ הַהוּא  
 וַיִּמְצָא בִשְׁנָה הַהוּא מֵאָה שְׁעָרִים וַיִּבְרַכְהוּ יְהוָה:  
<sup>יג</sup> וַיִּגְדַּל הָאִישׁ וַיֵּלֶךְ הַלּוֹךְ וַגְּדֹל עַד כִּי־גָדַל מְאֹד:  
<sup>יד</sup> וַיְהִי־לּוֹ מִקְנֵה־צֹאן וּמִקְנֵה בָקָר וַעֲבָדָה רַבָּה וַיִּקְנָאוּ  
 אֹתוֹ פְּלִשְׁתִּים:

<sup>טו</sup> וְכָל־הַבְּאֵרֹת אֲשֶׁר חָפְרוּ עֲבָדֵי אָבִיו בְּיָמֵי אַבְרָהָם  
 אָבִיו סָתְמוּם פְּלִשְׁתִּים וַיִּמְלְאוּם עָפָר: <sup>טז</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר  
 אֲבִימֶלֶךְ אֶל־יִצְחָק לֵךְ מֵעִמָּנוּ כִּי־עֲצַמְתָּ מִמֶּנּוּ מְאֹד:  
<sup>יז</sup> וַיֵּלֶךְ מִשָּׁם יִצְחָק וַיֵּחַן בְּנַחֲל־גֶרָר וַיָּשָׁב שָׁם: <sup>יח</sup> וַיָּשָׁב

there a long time, Abimelech the Philistine king looked out of a window and saw Isaac fondling his wife, Rebekah. <sup>9</sup> Abimelech called Isaac and said, "So, she is your wife! Why did you say she was your sister?" Isaac said to him, "Because I thought I might die on her account." <sup>10</sup> Abimelech said, "What is this you have done to us? One of the people might easily have lain with your wife, and you would have brought guilt on us." <sup>11</sup> So, Abimelech ordered all the people: "Whoever touches this man or his wife shall be put to death." <sup>12</sup> Isaac sowed seed in the land and, that year, reaped a hundredfold; for, Yahweh blessed him. <sup>13</sup> The man became rich; he prospered increasingly until he was very wealthy. <sup>14</sup> He had such flocks, herds, and so many servants, that the Philistines envied him.

<sup>15</sup> The Philistines had sealed and filled with dirt all the wells dug by his father's servants in the days of his father Abraham. <sup>16</sup> Abimelech said to Isaac, "Leave us, for you have become much more powerful than we are." <sup>17</sup> So, Isaac left; he camped in the Gerar Valley and

<sup>9</sup> For clarity, NETB translates 'on her account' (here following the MT, NJB and NRSV) as 'to get her'.

<sup>10</sup> The pronoun 'this' adds emphasis; some (e.g. NETB) translate Abimelech's opening remark as, "What in the world have you done to us?"

<sup>11</sup> The literal translation of 'touches' is 'strikes'; here, the verb has the nuance of 'harms in any way'.

<sup>12</sup> Isaac is portrayed as a semi-nomad who settled down long enough to raise crops but moved about to find food and water for his flocks.

<sup>13</sup> The literal translation of 'rich' is 'great'; here, it refers primarily to Isaac's material wealth, although reputation/influence are included.

<sup>14</sup> The verb translated 'envied' refers here to intense jealousy or envy that leads to hostile action (see v. 15).

<sup>15</sup> The literal translation of 'sealed and filled with dirt' is 'stopped them up and filled them with dirt'.

<sup>16</sup> The reason for the expulsion of Isaac from Philistine territory foreshadows that used later by the Egyptians to justify their oppression of Israel.

<sup>17</sup> The 'Gerar Valley' was actually a wadi – a dry river bed where the water would flow in the (rare/short) rainy season.



יִצְחָק וַיַּחְפְּרוּ אֶת־בְּאֵרֵת הַמַּיִם אֲשֶׁר חָפְרוּ בְיָמֵי  
אַבְרָהָם אֲבִיו וַיִּסְתָּמוּם פְּלִשְׁתִּים אַחֲרֵי מוֹת אַבְרָהָם  
וַיִּקְרָא לָהֶן שִׁמּוֹת כַּשֵּׁמֹת אֲשֶׁר־קָרָא לָהֶן אָבִיו:

יט וַיַּחְפְּרוּ עַבְדֵי־יִצְחָק בְּנַחַל וַיִּמְצְאוּ־שָׁם בְּאֵר מַיִם  
חַיִּים: כ וַיְרִיבוּ רַעֲי גֵר עִם־רַעֲי יִצְחָק לֵאמֹר לָנוּ  
הַמַּיִם וַיִּקְרָא שֵׁם־הַבְּאֵר עֵשֶׂק כִּי הִתְעַשְׂקוּ עִמּוֹ:  
כא וַיַּחְפְּרוּ בְּאֵר אַחֶרֶת וַיְרִיבוּ גַם־עָלֶיהָ וַיִּקְרָא שְׁמָהּ  
שִׁטְנָה: כב וַיַּעֲתֵק מִשָּׁם וַיַּחְפֹּר בְּאֵר אַחֶרֶת וְלֹא רָבוּ  
עָלֶיהָ וַיִּקְרָא שְׁמָהּ רְחֹבוֹת וַיֹּאמֶר כִּי־עָתָה הִרְחִיב  
יְהוָה לָנוּ וּפָרִינוּ בָאָרֶץ:

כג וַיַּעַל מִשָּׁם בְּאֵר שָׁבַע: כד וַיָּרָא אֵלָיו יְהוָה בַּלַּיְלָה  
הַהוּא וַיֹּאמֶר

אֲנֹכִי אֱלֹהֵי אַבְרָהָם אָבִיךָ  
אַל־תִּירָא כִּי־אֲתָךְ אֲנֹכִי  
וּבִרְכָתִיךָ וְהִרְבִּיתִי אֶת־זֶרְעֶךָ  
בְּעֵבֹר אַבְרָהָם עַבְדִּי:

stayed there.<sup>18</sup> Isaac dug again the wells dug in the days of his father Abraham and sealed by the Philistines after Abraham's death, and he gave them the same names as his father had given them.

<sup>19</sup> Isaac's servants dug in the valley and found a well of spring water;  
<sup>20</sup> the shepherds of Gerar quarrelled with Isaac's shepherds, saying, "The water is ours!" So, Isaac named the well Esek, as they contended with him.<sup>21</sup> They dug another well and they quarrelled over that one; so, he named it Sitnah.<sup>22</sup> He left there and dug another well and there was no quarrel over it; so, he named it Rehoboth, saying, "Now Yahweh has made room for us and we can thrive in the land."

<sup>23</sup> From here, he went up to Beersheba. <sup>24</sup> Yahweh appeared to him that night and said:

"I am the God of your father Abraham.

Do not be afraid! For, I am with you.

I will bless you and make your offspring many in number on account of my servant Abraham."

<sup>18</sup> In place of 'dug in the days of his father Abraham', here following the MT and NRSV, the NJB, following the LXX (ὁ ὥρυσαν οἱ παῖδες Ἀβραὰμ τοῦ πατρὸς), has 'dug by the servants of Abraham his father'.

<sup>19</sup> The literal translation of 'spring' is 'living' (the WEBBE has 'flowing'); this refers to a well supplied by subterranean streams (cf. Sg 4:15).

<sup>20</sup> 'Esek' (עֵשֶׂק) means 'quarrel' or 'contention'.

<sup>21</sup> 'Sitnah' (שִׁטְנָה) means 'accusation' or 'enmity'.

<sup>22</sup> 'Rehoboth' (רְחֹבוֹת) means 'room' or 'space'.

<sup>23</sup> For this verse, the LXX reads, "And he ascended from there towards the Well of the Oath." (Ἀνέβη δὲ ἐκεῖθεν ἐπὶ τὸ φρέαρ τοῦ ὅρκου.)

<sup>24</sup> Patriarchal religion was essentially that of the "God of the father(s)," (28:13, 31:5, 32:10) until the revelation of the name, Yahweh (Ex 3:13-15). It was a nomadic religion; God revealed himself to the ancestor of a group, which he would henceforth protect and guide.

כה ויבן שם מזבח ויקרא בשם יהוה ויטשם אהלֹו  
 ויכרושם עבדי־יצחק באר:  
 כו ואבימלך הלך אליו מגרר ואחזת מרעהו ופיכל  
 שר־צבאו: כז ויאמר אלהם יצחק מדוע באתם אלי  
 ואתם שנאתם אתי ותשלחוני מאתכם: כח ויאמרו  
 ראו ראינו כ־יהיה יהוה | עמך ונאמר תהי נא אלה  
 בינותינו בינינו ובינך ונכרתה ברית עמך: כט אם־  
 תעשה עמנו רעה כאשר לא נגענוך וכאשר עשינו  
 עמך רק־טוב ונשלחך בשלום אתה עתה ברוך  
 יהוה: ל ויעש להם משתה ויאכלו וישתו:  
 לא וישכימו בבקר וישבעו איש לאחיו וישלחם יצחק  
 וילכו מאתו בשלום: לב ויהי | ביום ההוא ויבאו עבדי  
 יצחק ויגדו לו על־אדות הבאר אשר חפרו ויאמרו  
 לו מצאנו מים: לג ויקרא אתה שבעה על־פן שם־  
 העיר באר שבע עד היום הזה: {ס}

25 There he built an altar and invoked the name of Yahweh. There, he pitched his tent and there, Isaac's servants sank a well.  
 26 Then Abimelech came from Gerar, with his adviser Ahuzzath and the captain of his army, Phicol. 27 Isaac asked them, "Why do you come to me, since you hate me and made me leave you?" 28 They said, "We see clearly that Yahweh is with you; so, we say: Let there be an oath between us and let us make a covenant with you., 29 so you will do us no harm, as we never hurt you but were only kind to you and sent you away in peace. Now you have Yahweh's blessing."  
 30 He then made them a feast and they ate and drank.  
 31 Rising early in the morning, they exchanged oaths. Then Isaac bade them farewell and they departed in peace. 32 Now, that same day, Isaac's servants brought him news of the well they had dug. "We have found water!" they said to him. 33 Therefore, he called the well Sheba, and so the name of this town is Beersheba to this day.

25 The expression 'invoked the name of Yahweh' refers to worshiping God through prayer and sacrifice (see 4:26; 12:8; 13:4; 21:33).

26 The term מרעהו ('his advisor'), here following the NJB & NRSV may not designate an official position but simply a close personal friend.

27 The disjunctive clause, 'since you hate me', is circumstantial, expressing the reason for his question.

28 The pronoun 'us' here is exclusive: it refers to just the Philistine contingent (the following 'you' refers to Isaac).

29 The Philistines are making an observation, not pronouncing a blessing, so the translation reads 'you have' rather than 'may you have' (cf. NAB).

30 In place of 'ate and drank', here following the MT, NJB & NRSV, NETB has 'celebrated'.

31 The literal translation of 'exchanged oaths' is 'they swore an oath, a man to his brother'.

32 The LXX opens this verse with the familiar 'it came to pass' (ἐγένετο).

33 Here, we read 'Sheba' (שבע - oath) in accordance with the LXX (Ὀρκος) & NJB (and in context), instead of following the MT, which has 'Shibea' (שבעה - seven); the NRSV (and others) have 'Shibah'. See 21:22-30.

לִדְּוִיָּהוּ עָשׂוּ בֶן־אַרְבָּעִים שָׁנָה וַיִּקַּח אִשָּׁה אֶת־יְהוּדִית
34 When Esau was forty years old, he married Judith, the daughter of

בֶּת־בְּאֵרִי הַחִתִּי וְאֶת־בָּשֶׁמֶת בַּת־אֵילָן הַחִתִּי:
35 Beeri the Hittite, and Basemath, the daughter of Elon the Hittite.

לָהּ וַתַּהֲיֶינָּה מֵרַת רֹיַח לְיִצְחָק וּלְרֵבְקָה: {ס}
35 These were a bitter disappointment to Isaac and Rebekah.

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34 The verse begins with the temporal indicator (*‘when’*, literally, *‘and it happened’*), making the first clause subordinate to the next.

35 For this verse, here following the *NJB*, the *NRSV* reads, *“And they made life bitter for Isaac and Rebekah.”*

## GENESIS 27

## בראשית פרק כז

<sup>1</sup> Now, Isaac had grown old, and his eyes were so dim that he could not see. He called his elder son Esau and he said to him, "My son!" He replied, "I am here." <sup>2</sup> Then he said, "See, now, I am old and I do not know when I may die. <sup>3</sup> Take your weapons, your quiver and bow; go into the land and hunt me some game. <sup>4</sup> Make me the savoury food I like and bring it to me to eat, so I may bless you before I die." <sup>5</sup> Now, Rebekah was listening when Isaac spoke to his son Esau. So, when Esau went into the country to hunt game, <sup>6</sup> Rebekah said to her son Jacob, "Look, I heard your father saying to your brother Esau, <sup>7</sup> "Bring me some game and make a savoury for me. Then I shall eat and bless you in the presence of Yahweh before I die." <sup>8</sup> Now my son, listen to me and do as I tell you. <sup>9</sup> Go to the flock, and bring me back two good kids, so that I can prepare the kind of

## GENESIS 27

- <sup>1</sup> The literal translation of 'elder' is 'greater' (in terms of age).
- <sup>2</sup> The particle הִנֵּה ('see') here introduces a logically foundational statement, upon which the coming instruction will be based.
- <sup>3</sup> For the word translated as 'game', here following the Qere (צִיד), the Ketiv has צִידה; the word is from the same root as צוּדָה ('hunt').
- <sup>4</sup> The use of נַפְשִׁי ('my soul', here translated as 'I') as the subject emphasises that the blessing will be made with all Isaac's desire and vitality. Deathbed blessings were important in the life and literature of ancient peoples (48:8–20, 49:1–28, Dt 33, Jos 23). It was believed that the blessing, like the curse (v. 12), released a power that effectively determined the character and destiny of the recipient (Nb 22–24).
- <sup>5</sup> At the end of this verse, the NJB, following the LXX (πατρὶ αὐτοῦ), add 'for his father'; here, we follow the MT (& NRSV).
- <sup>6</sup> In place of 'look, I heard', the NJB has 'I have just heard'; the use of הִנֵּה ('look') invites the reader to view the scene through Rebekah's eyes.
- <sup>7</sup> In her report to Jacob, Rebekah plays down Isaac's strong desire to bless Esau by leaving out נַפְשִׁי ('my soul', cf. v. 4).
- <sup>8</sup> In place of 'listen to me and do as I tell you' (here following the NJB), the NRSV, translating the idiom, has 'obey my word as I command you'.
- <sup>9</sup> Following the imperative, the cohortative ('prepare') with the prefixed conjunction indicates purpose or result.

וַאֲעֲשֶׂה אֹתָם מִטַּעַמִּים לְאָבִיךָ כַּאֲשֶׁר אָהֵב: 'וְהִבֵּאתָ לְאָבִיךָ וְאָכַל בְּעֶבֶר אֲשֶׁר יְבָרְכְךָ לִפְנֵי מוֹתוֹ:

י<sup>א</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב אֶל־רִבְקָה אִמּוֹ הֲנֵן עָשׂוּ אָחִי אִישׁ שֹׁעַר וְאָנֹכִי אִישׁ חֶלֶק: י<sup>ב</sup> אֲוִלִי יִמְשְׁנִי אָבִי וְהָיִיתִי בְּעֵינָיו כַּמִּתְעַתֵּעַ וְהִבֵּאתִי עָלַי קָלִלָה וְלֹא בִרְכָה: י<sup>ג</sup> וְתֹאמַר לוֹ אִמּוֹ עָלַי קָלִלְתָּךְ בְּנִי אֲדָה שְׁמַע בְּקוֹלִי וְלֹךְ קַח־לִי: י<sup>ד</sup> וַיֵּלֶךְ וַיִּקַּח וַיָּבֵא לְאִמּוֹ וַתַּעַשׂ אִמּוֹ מִטַּעַמִּים כַּאֲשֶׁר אָהֵב אָבִיו: י<sup>טו</sup> וַתִּקַּח רִבְקָה אֶת־בְּגָדֵי עָשׂוּ בְּנֵה הַגָּדֹל הַחֲמֹדֹת אֲשֶׁר אָתָּה בַּבַּיִת וַתִּלְבָּשׁ אֶת־יַעֲקֹב בְּנֵה הַקָּטָן: י<sup>טז</sup> וְאֵת עֶרְתַּי גִּדְּיֵי הָעֲזִים הַלְבִּישָׁה עַל־יָדָיו וְעַל חִלְקַת צוּאָרָיו: י<sup>יז</sup> וַתִּתֵּן אֶת־הַמִּטַּעַמִּים וְאֶת־הַלֶּחֶם אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂתָה בְּיַד יַעֲקֹב בְּנֵה:

י<sup>יח</sup> וַיָּבֵא אֶל־אָבִיו וַיֹּאמֶר אָבִי וַיֹּאמֶר הֲנִנִּי מִי אָתָּה בְּנִי: י<sup>יט</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב אֶל־אָבִיו אָנֹכִי עָשׂוּ בְּכֹרֶךָ עֲשִׂיתִי כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְתָּ אֵלַי קוּם־נָא שְׁבָה וְאָכַלְהָ מִצִּידִי

savoury your father likes. <sup>10</sup> Then you can take it to your father for him to eat so that he may bless you before he dies."

<sup>11</sup> Jacob said to his mother Rebekah, "Look, my brother Esau is hairy but I have smooth skin. <sup>12</sup> If my father touches me, he will see that I am cheating him, and I shall bring down a curse on myself and not a blessing." <sup>13</sup> His mother said to him, "On me be the curse, my son! Obey me! Go and fetch me them." <sup>14</sup> So, he went to get them, brought them to his mother, and she made the kind of savoury his father liked. <sup>15</sup> Rebekah took her elder son Esau's best clothes, which she had in the house and put them on her younger son, Jacob, <sup>16</sup> covering his arms and the smooth part of his neck with the skins of the kids. <sup>17</sup> And she gave the savoury and the bread she made to her son Jacob.

<sup>18</sup> He went to his father and said, "Father." And he said, "I am here; who are you, my son?" <sup>19</sup> Jacob said to his father, "I am Esau, your firstborn; I have done as you told me. Now get up and eat my game,

<sup>10</sup> The verbs, 'take' & 'eat' are perfects with a *vav* (ו) prefix, carrying forward the nuance of the verbs of instruction in the previous verse.

<sup>11</sup> The literal translation of 'I have smooth skin' is 'I am a smooth-skinned man'.

<sup>12</sup> The literal translation of the opening of this verse is, "Perhaps my father will feel me and I will be in his eyes like a mocker."

<sup>13</sup> In place of 'listen to my' (following the MT and NJB), the NRSV (translating the idiom) has 'obey my word'. (cf. #8).

<sup>14</sup> In place of the pronoun 'she' (following the NJB), the MT (and NRSV) repeats 'his mother'.

<sup>15</sup> In place of 'she had' (following the NJB), the MT (and NRSV) has 'was with her'.

<sup>16</sup> The literal translation of 'arms' is 'hands'; how the skins were attached is not specified in the text: NLT reads 'she made him a pair of gloves'.

<sup>17</sup> The literal translation of 'gave' is 'gave ... into the hands of'.

<sup>18</sup> Isaac's question shows that the deception is going to require more subterfuge than Rebekah anticipated: Jacob will have to pull off the deceit.

<sup>19</sup> Jacob's words, though not reported by Rebekah to Jacob (see #7) accurately reflect what Isaac actually said to Esau (see #4).

בַּעֲבוּר תְּבָרַכְנִי נַפְשִׁי: <sup>כ</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר יִצְחָק אֶל־בְּנוֹ מִהֲזֶה  
מִהֲרַת לְמַצָּא בְנִי וַיֹּאמֶר כִּי הִקְרָה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ לְפָנַי:  
<sup>כא</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר יִצְחָק אֶל־יַעֲקֹב גֹּשְׁה־נָא וְאִמְשֻׁךָ בְנִי  
הֲאֵתָה זֶה בְנִי עָשׂוֹ אִם־לֹא: <sup>כב</sup> וַיִּגַּשׁ יַעֲקֹב אֶל־יִצְחָק  
אָבִיו וַיִּמְשְׁהוּ וַיֹּאמֶר הַקֹּל קוֹל יַעֲקֹב וְהַיָּדִים יָדֵי עָשׂוֹ:  
<sup>כג</sup> וְלֹא הִכִּירוֹ כִּי־הָיוּ יָדָיו כַּיָּדֵי עָשׂוֹ אֲחִיו שְׁעָרָת  
וַיְבָרְכֵהוּ: <sup>כד</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר אֵתָה זֶה בְנִי עָשׂוֹ וַיֹּאמֶר אָנִי:  
<sup>כה</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר הַגֹּשְׁה לִי וְאֲכָלָה מִצֵּיד בְנִי לְמַעַן תְּבָרַכְךָ  
נַפְשִׁי וַיִּגַּשְׁלוּ וַיֹּאכֵל וַיָּבֵא לוֹ יֵין וַיִּשֶׁת: <sup>כו</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו  
יִצְחָק אָבִיו גֹּשְׁה־נָא וּשְׁקֵה־לִּי בְנִי: <sup>כז</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו  
יִצְחָק אָבִיו גֹּשְׁה־נָא וּשְׁקֵה־לִּי בְנִי: <sup>כח</sup> וַיִּגַּשׁ וַיִּשְׁקֵלּוּ  
וַיֵּרַח אֶת־רִיחַ בְּגָדָיו וַיְבָרְכֵהוּ וַיֹּאמֶר רֵיחַ בְּנִי

כְּרִיחַ שְׂדֵה  
אֲשֶׁר בֵּרַכְו יְהוָה:

so you can bless me.” <sup>20</sup> Isaac said to his son, “How did you succeed so quickly?” He said, “Yahweh your God put it in my path.” <sup>21</sup> Isaac said to Jacob, “Come near and let me touch you, my son, to know if you are my son Esau or not.” <sup>22</sup> Jacob went to his father Isaac, who felt him and said, “The voice is Jacob’s voice but the arms are the arms of Esau!” <sup>23</sup> He did not recognise him, for his arms were hairy like his brother Esau’s, so he blessed him. <sup>24</sup> He said, “Are you really my son Esau?” He replied, “I am.” <sup>25</sup> Isaac said, “Bring it here that I may eat my son’s game and bless you.” He brought it to him and he ate; he gave him wine and he drank. <sup>26</sup> His father Isaac said to him, “Come near and kiss me, my son.” <sup>27</sup> He went closer and kissed his father, who smelled the smell of his clothes. He blessed him saying:

“Yes, the smell of my son  
is like the smell of a fertile land blessed by Yahweh.

<sup>20</sup> To bring God into the lie seems blasphemous to us but the oriental mentality ascribed every event to God, ignoring ‘secondary causes’.

<sup>21</sup> The literal translation of ‘to know if you are my son Esau or not’ is, “Are you this one, Esau, my son, or not?”

<sup>22</sup> Although Isaac’s eyesight was weak (v. 1), his hearing was still sufficiently acute to recognise Jacob’s voice.

<sup>23</sup> Rebekah’s ruse with the goatskins succeeded in convincing Isaac that Jacob was Esau.

<sup>24</sup> Here, for the third time, Jacob lies to his father.

<sup>25</sup> The literal translation of ‘bless you’ is ‘that my soul may bless you’; the presence of the term נַפְשִׁי (‘my soul’) as the subject emphasises Isaac’s heartfelt desire to do this (cf. #4). The conjunction indicates that the ritual meal must be first eaten before the formal blessing may be given.

<sup>26</sup> It is not clear from this verse whether or not Isaac is now convinced that Jacob is Esau; the request to ‘come closer’ may be to allow him to further test the case with his sense of smell (v. 27).

<sup>27</sup> The blessing of vv. 27–29, promising to Jacob, the shepherd, rural prosperity, like that of Esau (vv. 39–40), affects not the patriarchs themselves but the peoples sprung from them.



כח וַיִּתֵּן־לֶךָ הָאֱלֹהִים

מִטֵּל הַשָּׁמַיִם

וּמִשְׁמַנֵּי הָאָרֶץ

וְרֹב דָּגָן וְתִירֹשׁ:

כט יַעֲבֹדוך עַמִּים

וַיִּשְׁתַּחוּ וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוּ לֶךָ לְאֻמִּים

הֵוָה גִּבֹּר לְאַחֶיךָ

וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוּ לֶךָ בְּנֵי אִמְךָ

אֲרֵרֶיךָ אֲרוּר

וּמְבָרְכֶיךָ בְּרוּךְ:

<sup>28</sup> May God give you

dew from heaven,

and the riches of the earth,

abundance of grain and wine!

<sup>29</sup> May nations serve you

and peoples bow down before you!

Be master of your brothers;

let your mother's other sons bow low before you!

Accursed be whoever curses you

and blessed be whoever blesses you!"

ל וַיְהִי כַּאֲשֶׁר כָּלָה יִצְחָק לְבָרֵךְ אֶת־יַעֲקֹב וַיְהִי אַךְ יֵצֵא  
יֵצֵא יַעֲקֹב מֵאֵת פְּנֵי יִצְחָק אָבִיו וַעֲשׂוֹ אֶחָיו בָּא  
מִצִּידוֹ: <sup>לא</sup> וַיַּעַשׂ גִּם־הוּא מִטַּעַמִּים וַיָּבֵא לְאָבִיו וַיֹּאמֶר  
לְאָבִיו יָקָם אָבִי וַיֹּאכַל מִצִּיד בְּנִי בַעֲבֹר תְּבַרְכֵנִי  
נַפְשִׁיךָ: <sup>לב</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ יִצְחָק אָבִיו מִי־אַתָּה וַיֹּאמֶר אָנֹכִי  
בְּנֶךָ בְּכֹרֶךָ עָשׂוֹ: <sup>לג</sup> וַיִּחַרַּד יִצְחָק חֲרָדָה גְּדֹלָה עַד־  
מְאֹד וַיֹּאמֶר מִי־אֲפֹא הוּא הַצִּיד־צִיד וַיָּבֵא לִי וְאָכַל  
מִכָּל בְּטָרִם תְּבוּאָה וַאֲבָרְכָהוּ גִם־בְּרוּךְ יִהְיֶה: <sup>לד</sup> כְּשִׁמְעַ

<sup>30</sup> As soon as Isaac had finished blessing Jacob, and just as Jacob was leaving the presence of his father Isaac, his brother Esau returned from hunting. <sup>31</sup> He too made a savoury and brought it to his father; he said to him, "Father, get up and eat the game your son has brought and then bless me!" <sup>32</sup> His father Isaac asked him, "Who are you?" "I am your firstborn son, Esau," he said. <sup>33</sup> At this Isaac trembled violently and said, "Who was it, then, that went hunting and brought me game? I ate it before you came; I blessed him, and blessed he will

<sup>28</sup> The literal translation of 'richness' is 'fatness'.

<sup>29</sup> The *Kethib/Qere* difference here warrants an explanation.

<sup>30</sup> The literal translation of 'returned from hunting' is 'came from his hunt'.

<sup>31</sup> The literal translation of 'then bless me' is 'so that your soul can bless me' (see #4).

<sup>32</sup> The literal translation of 'I am your firstborn son' is 'I (am) your son, your firstborn'.

<sup>33</sup> Blessings and curses, once pronounced, were regarded as efficacious and irrevocable.

עָשׂוֹ אֶת־דְּבָרֵי אָבִיו וַיִּצְעַק צַעֲקָה גְּדֹלָה וּמְרָה עַד־  
מָאֵד וַיֹּאמֶר לְאָבִיו בְּרַכְנִי גַם־אֲנִי אָבִי: <sup>לח</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר בָּא  
אֲחִיד בְּמִרְמָה וַיִּקַּח בְּרִכְתְּךָ:

<sup>לו</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר הֲכִי קָרָא שְׁמוֹ יַעֲקֹב וַיַּעֲקֹבֵנִי זֶה פַעַמִּים  
אֶת־בְּכֹרְתִי לָקַח וְהִנֵּה עַתָּה לָקַח בְּרִכְתִּי וַיֹּאמֶר  
הֲלֹא־אֵצְלָתָ לִי בְרָכָה: <sup>לז</sup> וַיַּעַן יִצְחָק וַיֹּאמֶר לַעֲשׂוֹ הֲנִי  
גָבִיר שְׁמָתִיו לָךְ וְאֶת־כָּל־אֲחָיו נָתַתִּי לְךָ לַעֲבָדִים וְדָגָן  
וְתִירָשׁ סִמַּכְתִּיו וְלֶכָה אִפּוֹא מָה אַעֲשֶׂה בְנִי:  
<sup>לח</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר עָשׂוֹ אֶל־אָבִיו הַבְּרָכָה אַחַת הוּא־לְךָ אָבִי  
בְּרַכְנִי גַם־אֲנִי אָבִי וַיֵּשָׂא עָשׂוֹ קֶלֶד וַיִּבֶד:

<sup>לט</sup> וַיַּעַן יִצְחָק אָבִיו וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו

הֲנִי מִשְׁמַנֵּי הָאָרֶץ  
יְהִי מוֹשְׁבֶךָ  
וּמִטַּל הַשָּׁמַיִם מֵעַל:  
וְעַל־חֶרֶבְךָ תַּחֲיֶה <sup>מ</sup>  
וְאֶת־אֲחִידְךָ תַּעֲבֹד

remain!" <sup>34</sup> When Esau heard his father's words, he cried out loudly and bitterly to his father, "father, bless me too!" <sup>35</sup> But he replied, "Your brother came with guile and took your blessing."

<sup>36</sup> Esau said, "Rightly is his name Jacob: he has tripped me up twice! First, he took my birthright and now he has taken my blessing!" He asked, "Have you kept a blessing for me?" <sup>37</sup> Isaac answered Esau, "See, I have made him your lord; I have made all his brothers his servants and given him grain and wine. What can I do for you, my son?" <sup>38</sup> Esau said to his father, "Was that your only blessing, father? Give me a blessing too, father." Then Esau burst into tears.

<sup>39</sup> Then his father Isaac gave him this answer:

"Indeed, far from the riches of the earth  
shall be your dwelling-place,  
far from the dew that falls from heaven.  
<sup>40</sup> You shall live by your sword,  
and you shall serve you brother.

<sup>34</sup> The literal translation of 'cried out loudly and bitterly' is 'yelled (with) a great and bitter yell to excess'.

<sup>35</sup> Alternative readings for 'took' are 'took away' and 'received'.

<sup>36</sup> Note the play on the words בְּכֹרְתִי ('birthright') and בְּרִכְתִּי ('blessing'). When originally given, the name Jacob was a play on the word 'heel' (see #25:26); Esau gives the name a negative connotation here, meaning 'to trip up', 'to supplant'.

<sup>37</sup> The literal translation of 'master' (גָבִיר) is 'lord'. The feminine form of this rare noun means 'mistress' or 'queen-mother'.

<sup>38</sup> Before 'Esau burst into tears', the NJB, following the LXX (κατανυχθεντος δε Ισαακ), adds 'Isaac was vexed'; here, we follow the MT.

<sup>39</sup> The literal translation of 'indeed' (הִנֵּה) is 'look'.

<sup>40</sup> The translation, 'you win your freedom', is uncertain.

וְהָיָה כַּאֲשֶׁר תִּרְדּוּ  
וּפָרַקְתָּ עָלָיו מֵעַל צוּאֲרָךְ:

<sup>מא</sup> וַיִּשְׂטֹם עֲשׂוֹ אֶת־יַעֲקֹב עַל־הַבְּרָכָה אֲשֶׁר בֵּרַכוּ  
אָבִיו וַיֹּאמֶר עֲשׂוֹ בָלְבֹו יִקְרְבוּ יָמַי אֲבָל אֲבִי וְאַהֲרָגָה  
אֶת־יַעֲקֹב אָחִי: <sup>מב</sup> וַיִּגַּד לְרִבְקָה אֶת־דְּבָרֵי עֲשׂוֹ בְנָה  
הַגָּדֹל וַתִּשְׁלַח וַתִּקְרָא לְיַעֲקֹב בְּנָה הַקָּטָן וַתֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו  
הִנֵּה עֲשׂוֹ אָחִיךָ מִתְנַחֵם לָךְ לְהָרְגֶךָ: <sup>מג</sup> וְעַתָּה בְנִי  
שָׁמַע בְּקוֹלִי וְקוּם בָּרַח־לָךְ אֶל־לְבָן אָחִי חָרָנָה:  
<sup>מד</sup> וַיֵּשְׁבֶתָ עִמּוֹ יָמִים אַחָדִים עַד אֲשֶׁר־תָּשׁוּב חֲמַת  
אָחִיךָ: <sup>מה</sup> מָה עַד־שׁוּב אֶף־אָחִיךָ מִמֶּךָ וְשָׂכַח אֶת אֲשֶׁר־  
עָשִׂיתָ לוֹ וְשָׁלַחְתִּי וּלְקַחְתִּיךָ מִשָּׁם לָמָּה אֶשְׁכַּל גַּם־  
שְׁנֵיכֶם יוֹם אֶחָד:

<sup>מו</sup> וַתֹּאמֶר רִבְקָה אֶל־יִצְחָק קַצְתִּי בְחַיֵּי מִפְּנֵי בָנוֹת חֵת  
אִם־לִקַּח יַעֲקֹב אִשָּׁה מִבָּנוֹת־חֵת כָּאֵלֶּה מִבָּנוֹת  
הָאָרֶץ לָמָּה לִי חַיִּים:

But when you win your freedom,  
you shall shake his yoke from your neck."

<sup>41</sup> Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing his father had given him and thought: "The time to mourn for my father will soon be here. Then I will kill my brother Jacob." <sup>42</sup> When the words of Esau, her elder son, were told to Rebekah, she called her younger son Jacob and said to him, "Look, your brother Esau means to take revenge and kill you. <sup>43</sup> Now, my son, listen to my voice; flee at once to my brother Laban in Haran. <sup>44</sup> Stay with him a while, until your brother's fury cools, <sup>45</sup> until your brother's anger against you cools, and he forgets what you have done to him. Then I will send to bring you back. Why should I lose you both in one day?"

<sup>46</sup> Rebekah said to Isaac, "I am tired to death because of the daughters of Heth. If Jacob marries one of the daughters of Heth like these, one of the women of the land, what good will my life be?"

<sup>41</sup> An alternative translation for 'hated' is 'bore a grudge against'; the verb (שָׂטַם) describes persistent hatred.

<sup>42</sup> The literal translation of 'summoned' is 'sent and called for'.

<sup>43</sup> In place of 'listen to my voice', following the MT & NJB, the NRSV, translating the idiom, has 'obey my voice'.

<sup>44</sup> The literal translation of 'a while' is 'a few days'.

<sup>45</sup> If Esau were to shed Jacob's blood, he would have been liable to blood-revenge (Nb 35:19).

<sup>46</sup> Note that the ק in קַצְתִּי is written as a 'small letter' here and in most Hebrew MSS.

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## בראשית פרק כח

<sup>א</sup> וַיִּקְרָא יִצְחָק אֶל-יַעֲקֹב וַיְבָרֶךְ אֹתוֹ וַיֹּצִיאוֹ וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ לֹא-תִקַּח אִשָּׁה מִבְּנוֹת כְּנָעַן: <sup>ב</sup> קוּם לֵךְ פָּדְנָה אֶרֶם בֵּיתָה בְּתוֹאֵל אָבִי אִמֶּךָ וְקַח-לָךְ מִשָּׁם אִשָּׁה מִבְּנוֹת לְבֶן אָחִי אִמֶּךָ: <sup>ג</sup> וְאֵל שְׁדֵי יִבְרָךְ אֶתְךָ וַיַּפְרֶךְ וַיִּרְבֶּךָ וְהָיִיתָ לְקַהֲל עַמִּים: <sup>ד</sup> וַיִּתֵּן-לָךְ אֶת-בְּרַכַּת אֲבִרְהָם לָךְ וּלְזֶרְעֶךָ אַתָּה לְרִשְׁתָּךְ אֶת-אֶרֶץ מְגֻרֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר-נָתַן אֱלֹהִים לְאַבְרָהָם: <sup>ה</sup> וַיִּשְׁלַח יִצְחָק אֶת-יַעֲקֹב וַיֵּלֶךְ פָּדְנָה אֶרֶם אֶל-לָבָן בֶּן-בְּתוֹאֵל הָאֲרָמִי אָחִי רִבְקָה אִם יַעֲקֹב וַעֲשׂו: <sup>ו</sup> וַיֵּרָא עֲשׂו כִּי-בָרַךְ יִצְחָק אֶת-יַעֲקֹב וַיִּשְׁלַח אֹתוֹ פָּדְנָה אֶרֶם לְקַח-תָּלוּ מִשָּׁם אִשָּׁה בְּבָרְכּוֹ אֹתוֹ וַיֵּצֵא עָלָיו לֵאמֹר לֹא-תִקַּח אִשָּׁה מִבְּנוֹת כְּנָעַן: <sup>ז</sup> וַיִּשְׁמַע יַעֲקֹב אֶל-אָבִיו וְאֶל-אִמּוֹ וַיֵּלֶךְ פָּדְנָה אֶרֶם: <sup>ח</sup> וַיֵּרָא עֲשׂו כִּי רָעוֹת בָּנוֹת כְּנָעַן בְּעֵינֵי יִצְחָק אָבִיו: <sup>ט</sup> וַיֵּלֶךְ עֲשׂו אֶל-יִשְׁמָעֵאל וַיִּקַּח אֶת-מַחְלַת בַּת-

<sup>1</sup> Isaac called Jacob, blessed him, and told him: "You must not marry a Canaanite. <sup>2</sup> Go now to Paddan-Aram, the home of Bethuel, your mother's father, and take a wife from the daughters of Laban, your mother's brother. <sup>3</sup> May El Shaddai bless you and make you fruitful and numerous, so you become a group of nations, <sup>4</sup> and grant you the blessing of Abraham, you, and your seed, so you may possess the land where you live now, which God gave to Abraham." <sup>5</sup> Isaac sent Jacob away and he went to Paddan-Aram, to Laban the son of Bethuel, the Aramaean, and brother of Rebekah, Jacob's and Esau's mother. <sup>6</sup> Esau saw that Isaac had blessed Jacob and sent him to Paddan-Aram to take a wife there and that, in blessing him, he had charged him: "You shall not marry a Canaanite," <sup>7</sup> and that Jacob obeyed his father and mother and went to Paddan-Aram. <sup>8</sup> Esau saw the women of Canaan did not please his father Isaac, <sup>9</sup> so Esau went

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- <sup>1</sup> The literal translation of 'Canaanite woman' is 'daughter of Canaan'.
- <sup>2</sup> The literal translation of 'go now' is 'arise, go'; the first of the two imperatives is adverbial and stresses the immediacy of the departure.
- <sup>3</sup> The perfect verbal form with *vav* consecutive here indicates consequence: the collocation וְהָיִיתָ + לֵ means 'become'.
- <sup>4</sup> In the phrase 'of Abraham', the name 'Abraham' (אַבְרָהָם) is an objective genitive; this refers to the blessing that God gave to Abraham.
- <sup>5</sup> An alternative reading of 'away' (as NJB & NRSV) is 'on his way' (as NETB).
- <sup>6</sup> The infinitive construct with the preposition and the suffix in 'in blessing him' form a temporal clause.
- <sup>7</sup> In place of 'obeying', following the NRSV, the NJB has 'in obedience to'.
- <sup>8</sup> The literal translation of 'did not please' is 'were evil in the eyes of'.
- <sup>9</sup> For 'Mahalath' (מַחְלַת) and 'Nebaioth' (נְבַיּוֹת), the LXX reads, respectively, Μαελαθ and Ναβαιωθ.

יִשְׁמָעֵאל בֶּן־אַבְרָהָם אֲחֹת נְבִיּוֹת עַל־נָשָׁיו לֹא  
לְאִשָּׁה: {ס}

to Ishmael and took, with the wives he had, Mahalath, Nebaioth's sister and daughter of Abraham's son Ishmael, for a wife.

י' וַיֵּצֵא יַעֲקֹב מִבְּעֵר שָׁבַע וַיֵּלֶךְ חֲרָנָה: י"א וַיִּפְּגַע בַּמָּקוֹם  
וַיֵּלֶן שָׁם כִּי־בָא הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ וַיִּקַּח מֵאֲבֵנֵי הַמָּקוֹם וַיִּשֶׂם  
מִרְאֲשֵׁיתוֹ וַיִּשְׁכַּב בַּמָּקוֹם הַהוּא: י"ב וַיַּחֲלֵם וְהִנֵּה סֹלֶם  
מֵצֵב אֶרְצָה וְרֹאשׁוֹ מֵגִיעַ הַשָּׁמַיְמָה וְהִנֵּה מַלְאֲכֵי  
אֱלֹהִים עֹלִים וִירְדִים בּוֹ: י"ג וְהִנֵּה יְהוָה נֹצֵב עָלָיו  
וַיֹּאמֶר אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי אַבְרָהָם אָבִיךָ וְאֱלֹהֵי יִצְחָק  
הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אַתָּה שֹׁכֵב עָלֶיהָ לְךָ אֶתְנַנָּה וְלִזְרַעְךָ:  
י"ד וְהִנֵּה זֶרַעְךָ כְּעֹפֶר הָאָרֶץ וּפְרֻצַּת יָמָה וְקִדְמָה וְצַפְנָה  
וְנִגְבָּה וְנִבְרָכוּ בְךָ כָּל־מִשְׁפַּחַת הָאָדָמָה וּבִזְרַעְךָ:  
ט"ו וְהִנֵּה אֲנֹכִי עֹמֵד וְשִׁמְרָתִיךָ בְּכָל אֲשֶׁר־תֵּלֵךְ  
וְהִשְׁבַּתִּיךָ אֶל־הָאָדָמָה הַזֹּאת כִּי לֹא אֶעֱזֹבְךָ עַד אֲשֶׁר  
אֶסְעִיטִי אֶת אֲשֶׁר־דִּבַּרְתִּי לְךָ: ט"ז וַיִּיקֶן יַעֲקֹב

<sup>10</sup> Jacob left Beersheba and set out for Haran. <sup>11</sup> He reached a certain place and spent the night there, as the sun had set; he took one of the stones of the place, put it under his head, and lay down there. <sup>12</sup> And he dreamt of a ladder set on the earth with its top reaching to heaven; and the angels of God were going up it and coming down; <sup>13</sup> and Yahweh stood over it and said, "I am Yahweh, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac. I will give to you and your offspring the land on which you lie. <sup>14</sup> Your offspring shall be like the dust on the earth; you shall spread to the west, the east, the north, and the south, and all the tribes of the earth shall bless themselves by you and your offspring. <sup>15</sup> Know that I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and bring you back to this land; for, I will not leave

<sup>10</sup> The narrative of vv. 10–22 is in part an Elohistic tradition: the dream of the ladder (see #12) leading to heaven, a Mesopotamian idea symbolised by stepped towers or ziggurats, and Jacob's vow and the foundation of the shrine at Bethel (vv. 18 & 20–22). With this is combined a Yahwistic tradition: an apparition of Yahweh who renews the promises made to Abraham and Isaac, and whom Jacob acknowledges as his God (vv. 13–16, 19, and the end of v. 21). Both enhanced the prestige of the shrine at Bethel (1K 12:29–30).

<sup>11</sup> Bethel was at this time unsettled. According to ancient belief, oracles could be received by sleeping in a holy place (1S 3).

<sup>12</sup> The word סֹלֶם ('ladder') occurs only here in the OT but there appears to be an Accadian cognate *simmiltu* (with metathesis of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> consonants and a feminine ending) which has a specialised meaning of 'stairway' or 'ramp'.

<sup>13</sup> The Hebrew word for 'father' can be used in a broader sense than the English word, in this case referring to Abraham (Jacob's grandfather).

<sup>14</sup> The word here translated 'ground' is the same as that in the previous verse, where it is translated 'land'. Literally translated, this verse ends, "they will pronounce blessings by you, all the families of the earth, and by your offspring."

<sup>15</sup> The literal translation of 'Know that I am with you' is 'Look, I (am) with you'.

מִשְׁנֹתָו וַיֹּאמֶר אֲכַן יֵשׁ יְהוָה בַּמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה וְאַנְכִי לֹא  
יָדַעְתִּי: <sup>ז</sup> וַיִּירָא וַיֹּאמֶר מִה־נֹּרָא הַמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה אֵין זֶה  
כִּי אִם־בֵּית אֱלֹהִים וְזֶה שַׁעַר הַשָּׁמַיִם: <sup>יח</sup> וַיִּשְׁכֹּם יַעֲקֹב  
בַּבֹּקֶר וַיִּקַּח אֶת־הָאֶבֶן אֲשֶׁר־שָׁם מֵרֹאשְׁתּוֹ וַיִּשֶׁם  
אֹתָהּ מִצְבֵּה וַיִּצֹק שֶׁמֶן עַל־רֹאשָׁהּ: <sup>יט</sup> וַיִּקְרָא אֶת־שֵׁם־  
הַמָּקוֹם הַהוּא בֵּית־אֵל וְאוּלָם לֹזוֹ שֵׁם־הָעִיר  
לְרֹאשֻׁנָּה:

<sup>כ</sup> וַיֵּדֶר יַעֲקֹב נֶדֶר לֵאמֹר אִם־יְהִיָּה אֱלֹהִים עִמָּדִי  
וְשָׁמְרָנִי בַדֶּרֶךְ הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר אָנֹכִי הוֹלֵךְ וְנָתַן־לִי לֶחֶם  
לֵאכֹל וּבִגְד לְלַבֵּשׁ: <sup>כא</sup> וְשָׁבְתִי בְשָׁלוֹם אֶל־בֵּית אָבִי  
וְהָיָה יְהוָה לִי לֵאלֹהִים: <sup>כב</sup> וְהָאֶבֶן הַזֹּאת אֲשֶׁר־שָׁמַתִּי  
מִצְבֵּה יְהִיָּה בֵּית אֱלֹהִים וְכָל אֲשֶׁר תִּתֵּן־לִי עֹשֹׂר  
אֶעֱשֶׂרְנָהּ לָךְ:

you until I have done what I promised you.” <sup>16</sup> Then Jacob woke from his sleep and said, “Surely, Yahweh is in this place and I never knew it!” <sup>17</sup> He was afraid and said, “How awesome this place is: nothing less than a house of God; this is the gate of heaven!” <sup>18</sup> Rising early in the morning, Jacob took the stone he had put under his head and set it up as a cairn, pouring oil on top of it. <sup>19</sup> He named the place Bethel but, before that, the name of the town was Luz.

<sup>20</sup> Jacob made this vow, “If God goes with me and keeps me safe on this journey I am making, if he gives me food to eat and clothes to wear, <sup>21</sup> and if I return home safely to my father, then Yahweh shall be my God. <sup>22</sup> This stone, which I have set up as a cairn, shall be a house of God, and I will surely pay you a tenth part of all you give to me.”

<sup>16</sup> In place of ‘surely’, here following the NRSV, the NJB has ‘truly’.

<sup>17</sup> In place of ‘awesome’, here following the NRSV, the NJB has ‘awe-inspiring’.

<sup>18</sup> The stone marks the place of God’s presence and is anointed with oil as a formal act of worship. Practices of this kind were common in the Canaanite cult and in the Semitic world in general but were subsequently condemned by the Law and the Prophets (Ex 23:24). Even in this passage, a more spiritual conception goes with the idea of a divine dwelling on earth: Bethel is the ‘gate of heaven’, God’s true home (1K 8:27).

<sup>19</sup> ‘Bethel’ means ‘House of God’.

<sup>20</sup> The term here translated as ‘bread’ can be used for food in general.

<sup>21</sup> The literal translation of ‘return home safely to my father’ is ‘return in peace to the house of my father’.

<sup>22</sup> The northern sanctuary at Bethel, which flourished from the time of Jeroboam I (1K 12:26–29) to its destruction by Josiah (2K 23:15).



## GENESIS 29

## בראשית פרק כט

א וַיֵּשָׂא יַעֲקֹב רִגְלָיו וַיֵּלֶךְ אֶרֶצָה בְּנִי־קְדָם: ב וַיֵּרָא  
וְהִנֵּה בָּאָר בְּשׂוּדָה וְהִנֵּה־שָׁם שְׁלֹשָׁה עֲדָרֵי־צֹאן  
רֹבְצִים עָלֶיהָ כִּי מִן־הַבָּאָר הָהוּא יִשְׁקוּ הָעֲדָרִים  
וְהָאֵבֶן גְּדֹלָה עַל־פִּי הַבָּאָר: ג וַנֹּאסְפוּ־שָׁמָּה כָּל־  
הָעֲדָרִים וַיִּגְלְלוּ אֶת־הָאֵבֶן מֵעַל־פִּי הַבָּאָר וַהֲשִׁקּוּ אֶת־  
הַצֹּאן וַהֲשִׁיבוּ אֶת־הָאֵבֶן עַל־פִּי הַבָּאָר לַמָּקוֹמָה:  
ד וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם יַעֲקֹב אַחִי מֵאֵין אַתֶּם וַיֹּאמְרוּ מִחָרָן  
אֲנַחְנוּ: ה וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם הִידְעַתֶּם אֶת־לָבָן בֶּן־נָחוֹר  
וַיֹּאמְרוּ יָדַעְנוּ: ו וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם הַשְׁלוֹם לוֹ וַיֹּאמְרוּ שְׁלוֹם  
וְהִנֵּה רַחֵל בָּתּוֹ בָּאָה עִם־הַצֹּאן: ז וַיֹּאמֶר הֵן עוֹד הַיּוֹם  
גְּדוֹל לֹא־עַתָּה הָאֶסְף־הַמִּקְנֶה הַשֹּׁקֵי הַצֹּאן וּלְכוּ רְעוּ:  
ח וַיֹּאמְרוּ לֹא נוֹכַל־עַד אֲשֶׁר יֵאָסְפוּ כָּל־הָעֲדָרִים וַיִּגְלְלוּ  
אֶת־הָאֵבֶן מֵעַל־פִּי הַבָּאָר וַהֲשִׁקִּינוּ הַצֹּאן:

<sup>1</sup> Then Jacob went to the land of the Easterners. <sup>2</sup> He looked and saw in the fields a well with three flocks of sheep beside it; for, from this well the flocks were watered and the stone on the mouth of the well was large; <sup>3</sup> so, they gathered the flocks there, then rolled the stone off the mouth of the well, water the sheep, then put the stone back in place over the mouth of the well. <sup>4</sup> Jacob said to them, "My brothers, where are you from?" They said, "We are from Haran." <sup>5</sup> He asked them, "Do you know Laban son of Nahor?" They said, "We do." <sup>6</sup> He asked them, "Is he well?" They said, "Yes, and here comes his daughter Rachel with the sheep." <sup>7</sup> He said, "See, it is still daylight, not yet time to bring the animals in; water the sheep and take them back to pasture." <sup>8</sup> They said, "We can't until all flocks are gathered; then we roll the stone off the well's mouth and water the sheep."

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- <sup>1</sup> The 'Easterners' (literally 'sons of the east'), a general expression (11:2), is applied here to the Aramaeans.
- <sup>2</sup> As elsewhere in the Book of Genesis, the particle הִנֵּה ('look') is used to draw the reader into the story.
- <sup>3</sup> In place of 'put back the stone', the LXX has 'restored the stone' (ἀπεκαθίσταν τον λίθον).
- <sup>4</sup> The NJB lacks the opening 'my', here following the NRSV.
- <sup>5</sup> Laban was actually Nahor's grandson, not his 'son'.
- <sup>6</sup> The literal translation of 'is it well with him' is 'is there peace to him'.
- <sup>7</sup> The verbal forms in the latter part of this verse are imperatives, but Jacob would hardly be giving direct orders to someone else's shepherds: the nuance here is probably one of advice.
- <sup>8</sup> Local custom prevented the use of the well until all entitled parties were there to get their fair share; thus, the stone was bigger than one person could lift (vv. 2-3).

ט עֹדְנֹו מְדַבֵּר עִמָּם וְרָחֵל| בָּאָה עַם־הַצֹּאן אֲשֶׁר  
 לְאֲבִיהָ כִּי רָעָה הָיָה: וַיְהִי כַּאֲשֶׁר רָאָה יַעֲקֹב אֶת־  
 רָחֵל בַּת־לָבָן אָחִי אִמּוֹ וְאֶת־צֹאן לָבָן אָחִי אִמּוֹ וַיֵּגֶשׁ  
 יַעֲקֹב וַיִּגֹּל אֶת־הָאֶבֶן מֵעַל פִּי הַבְּאֵר וַיִּשְׁק אֶת־צֹאן  
 לָבָן אָחִי אִמּוֹ: יא וַיִּשְׁק יַעֲקֹב לְרָחֵל וַיִּשָּׂא אֶת־קֻלּוֹ  
 וַיֵּבֶד: יב וַיֹּגֵד יַעֲקֹב לְרָחֵל כִּי אָחִי אֲבִיהָ הוּא וְכִי בֶן־  
 רִבְקָה הוּא וַתָּרֶץ וַתֵּגֵד לְאֲבִיהָ: יג וַיְהִי כַּשְּׁמַע לָבָן  
 אֶת־שְׁמַע יַעֲקֹב בֶּן־אֲחִיתוֹ וַיֵּרֶץ לִקְרֹאתוֹ וַיַּחֲבֹק־לּוֹ  
 וַיִּנָּשֶׁק־לּוֹ וַיְבִיֵּאֵהוּ אֶל־בֵּיתוֹ וַיְסַפֵּר לָלָבָן אֶת כָּל־  
 הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה: יד וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ לָבָן אַךְ עַצְמִי וּבְשָׁרִי  
 אֶתָּה וַיֵּשֶׁב עִמּוֹ חֹדֶשׁ יָמִים:  
 טו וַיֹּאמֶר לָבָן לְיַעֲקֹב הֲכִי־אָחִי אֶתָּה וְעַבַּדְתָּנִי חָנָם  
 הַגִּידָה לִּי מַה־מְשַׁכְּרֶתָּךְ: טז וּלְלָבָן שְׁתֵּי בָנוֹת שֵׁם

9 He was still talking to them, when Rachel came with her father's sheep, for she was a shepherdess. 10 As soon as Jacob saw Rachel, the daughter of his uncle Laban, and the sheep of his uncle Laban, he came up and, rolling the stone off the mouth of the well, he watered the sheep of his uncle Laban. 11 Jacob kissed Rachel and wept aloud. 12 He told Rachel he was her father's kinsman and Rebekah's son, and she ran to tell her father. 13 As soon as he heard her speak of his sister's son, Jacob, Laban ran to meet him; and, embracing him, he kissed him warmly, and brought him to his house. Jacob told Laban all that had happened, 14 and Laban said to him, "Indeed you are my bone and flesh!" Jacob stayed with him for a month. 15 Laban said to Jacob, "Because you are my kinsman, are you to work for me for nothing? Tell me what wages you want." 16 Now Laban

9 In place of 'for she was a shepherdess', here following the MT & NJB, the NRSV, following the LXX (αὐτὴ γὰρ ἔβοσκειν τὰ πρόβατα), has 'for she kept them (the sheep)'.

10 The text says nothing initially about the beauty of Rachel; but the reader is struck by the repetition of 'his uncle Laban': Jacob's primary motive at this stage is to ingratiate himself with Laban

11 The literal translation of 'wept aloud' is 'lifted up his voice and wept'; the idiom calls deliberate attention to the fact that Jacob wept out loud.

12 The literal translation of 'kinsman' is 'brother'.

13 The last sentence of this verse is understood to mean that Jacob told Laban everything that had happened between himself and Esau.

14 Laban's response sounds warm enough but the presence of 'indeed' may suggest that Laban had to be convinced of Jacob's identity before permitting him to stay.

15 The verb translated 'are you to work' is the perfect with the vav consecutive; the nuance in the question is deliberative.

16 The literal translation of 'now Laban had two daughters' is 'and to Laban (there were) two daughters'; the disjunctive clause (introduced here by a conjunction and a prepositional phrase) provides supplemental material that is important to the story.

הַגְדִּלָּהּ לֵאָה וְשֵׁם הַקְטָנָה רָחֵל: <sup>יז</sup> וְעֵינֵי לֵאָה רַכּוֹת  
וְרָחֵל הָיְתָה יִפְתָּ-תָּאֵר וְיִפְתַּ מְרֹאֶה: <sup>יח</sup> וַיֵּאָהֱב יַעֲקֹב  
אֶת־רָחֵל וַיֹּאמֶר אֶעֱבֹדְךָ שִׁבְעַ שָׁנִים בְּרָחֵל בְּתָךְ  
הַקְטָנָה: <sup>יט</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר לְבֶן טוֹב תִּתֵּנִי אֵתָה לָךְ מִתַּתִּי אֵתָה  
לְאִישׁ אַחֵר שָׁבָה עִמָּדִי:

<sup>כ</sup> וַיַּעֲבֹד יַעֲקֹב בְּרָחֵל שִׁבְעַ שָׁנִים וַיְהִיו בְּעֵינָיו כִּיָּמִים  
אֶחָדִים בְּאַהֲבָתוֹ אֵתָה: <sup>כא</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב אֶל־לְבֶן הָבָה  
אֶת־אִשְׁתִּי כִּי מָלְאוּ יָמִי וְאִבּוֹאָה אֵלֶיהָ: <sup>כב</sup> וַיֹּאסֹף לְבֶן  
אֶת־כָּל־אֲנָשֵׁי הַמָּקוֹם וַיַּעַשׂ מִשְׁתֶּה: <sup>כג</sup> וַיְהִי בָעֶרֶב  
וַיִּקַּח אֶת־לֵאָה בָּתּוֹ וַיָּבֵא אֵתָה אֵלָיו וַיָּבֵא אֵלֶיהָ:  
<sup>כד</sup> וַיֵּתֶן לְבֶן לָהּ אֶת־זִלְפָּה שִׁפְחָתוֹ לְלֵאָה בָּתּוֹ שִׁפְחָה:  
<sup>כה</sup> וַיְהִי בַּבֹּקֶר וַהֲנֵה־הוּא לֵאָה וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל־לְבֶן מַה־

had two daughters, the elder named Leah, and the younger Rachel.  
<sup>17</sup> Leah had tender eyes but Rachel was shapely and beautiful, <sup>18</sup> and  
Jacob loved Rachel. So, said, “I will serve you for seven years for your  
younger daughter Rachel.” <sup>19</sup> Laban replied, “It is better for me to  
give her to you than to a stranger; stay with me.”

<sup>20</sup> So, to win Rachel, Jacob worked seven years and they seemed to  
him just a few days, for he loved her so much. <sup>21</sup> Then Jacob said to  
Laban, “Give me my wife that I may go in to her, for my time is  
finished.” <sup>22</sup> Laban gathered all the people of the place together and  
made a feast. <sup>23</sup> In the evening, he brought his daughter Leah to  
Jacob, and he went into her. <sup>24</sup> Laban gave his maid Zilpah to be his  
daughter Leah’s maid. <sup>25</sup> In the morning, there was Leah; so, he said

<sup>17</sup> It is not clear what is meant by ‘tender’ (or ‘delicate’) eyes (here following *NETB*); the expression may mean she had appealing (‘lovely’) eyes (cf. *NJB*, *NRSV*, *NLT*), though some suggest that they were plain, not having the brightness normally expected: either way, she did not measure up to her gorgeous sister. The literal translation of ‘shapely and beautiful’ is ‘beautiful of form and beautiful of appearance’.

<sup>18</sup> Jacob asks for Rachel as a reward for service (cf. Jos 15:16–17, 1S 17:25, 18:17) instead of paying the usual marriage price (Ex 22:16–17, Dt 22:29).

<sup>19</sup> The literal translation of ‘stranger’ is ‘another man’.

<sup>20</sup> This verse does not necessarily imply that Jacob’s time passed quickly; more likely, it means that the price seemed insignificant when compared to what he was getting in the bargain.

<sup>21</sup> The verb ‘go in’ in this context refers to sexual intercourse (i.e., the consummation of the marriage).

<sup>22</sup> In place of ‘people’, here following the *NJB* & *NRSV*, the *MT* has ‘men’.

<sup>23</sup> In place of ‘went into’, here literally translating the euphemism, other English translations use terms like ‘slept with’ (*NJB*), ‘lay with’ or ‘knew’. Laban’s deception of Jacob by giving him the older daughter instead of the younger was God’s way of disciplining the deceiver (Jacob) who tricked his older brother (Esau).

<sup>24</sup> This verse gives information parenthetical to the narrative.

<sup>25</sup> The success of Laban’s stratagem is explained by the custom, which still exists, of keeping the bride veiled until the wedding night (see 24:65).

זאת עשית לי הלא ברחל עבדתי עמך ולמה רמיתני: <sup>כו</sup> ויאמר לבן לא-יעשה כן במקומנו לתת הצעירה לפני הבכירה: <sup>כז</sup> מלא שבע זאת ונתנה לך גם-את-זאת בעבדה אשר תעבד עמדי עוד שבע-שנים אחרות: <sup>כח</sup> ויעש יעקב כן ומלא שבע זאת ויתן-לו את-רחל בתו לו לאשה: <sup>כט</sup> ויתן לבן לרחל בתו את-בילה שפחתו לה לשפחה: <sup>ל</sup> ויבא גם אל-רחל ויאהב גם-את-רחל מלאה ויעבד עמו עוד שבע-שנים אחרות:

<sup>לא</sup> וירא יהוה כי-שנואה לאה ויפתח את-רחמה ורחל עקרה: <sup>לב</sup> ותהר לאה ותלד בן ותקרא שמו ראובן כי אמרה כי-ראה יהוה בענני כי עתה יאהבני אישי: <sup>לג</sup> ותהר עוד ותלד בן ותאמר כי-שמע יהוה

to Laban, “What is this you have done to me? Did I not work for you to win Rachel? Why have you tricked me?” <sup>26</sup> Laban said, “It is not the custom in our land to give the younger before the elder. <sup>27</sup> Finish this marriage week and I will give you the other one too in return for your serving me seven more years.” <sup>28</sup> Jacob did so and, when the week was over, Laban gave him his daughter Rachel as his wife. <sup>29</sup> Laban gave his daughter Rachel his maid Bilhah to be her maid. <sup>30</sup> He went into Rachel also and he loved Rachel more than Leah; he served Laban seven more years.

<sup>31</sup> Yahweh saw that Leah was unloved, so he opened her womb; but Rachel remained barren. <sup>32</sup> Leah conceived and bore a son whom she named Reuben, “Because,” she said, “Yahweh saw my misery; now my husband will love me.” <sup>33</sup> Again, she conceived and bore a son,

<sup>26</sup> The literal translation of ‘it is not the custom in our country’ is ‘it is not done so in our place’.

<sup>27</sup> The celebrations lasted for seven days (Jg 14:12, Tb 8:20, 10:7). Marriage with two sisters was allowed before the legislation of Lv 18:18.

<sup>28</sup> The literal translation of ‘week’ is ‘seven (days)’.

<sup>29</sup> This verse gives information parenthetical to the narrative.

<sup>30</sup> In place of the opening pronoun (‘he’ – here following the MT), the NJB & NRSV have ‘Jacob’.

<sup>31</sup> The section, 29:31–30:24, connects the tribes of Israel with the patriarchal line through Jacob’s twelve children. This is the earliest form of the ‘twelve-tribal system’, which later went through various stages of development. Here, the figure of twelve is reached by the inclusion of Dinah, who was later to be replaced by Benjamin, born in Canaan (35:16ff). Levi, which later became a priestly tribe, was replaced by dividing Joseph into Ephraim and Manasseh. The Hebrew word, here translated as ‘unloved’, literally means ‘hated’; here the word means the less favoured wife in a polygamous household.

<sup>32</sup> In this and the following chapter, the rivalry between Leah and Rachel is used to explain the proper names of the sons of Jacob: some of these popular etymologies are obscure. ‘Reuben’ (ראובן) means ‘look, a son’.

<sup>33</sup> ‘Simeon’ (שמעון) derives from שמע (‘he has heard’).

כִּי־שָׁנְאוּהָ אָנֹכִי וַיִּתֶּן־לִי גַם־אֶת־זֶה וַתִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ  
שִׁמְעוֹן: <sup>לד</sup> וַתֵּהָר עוד וַתֵּלֶד בֶּן וַתֹּאמֶר עֲתָה הַפַּעַם  
יִלְוֶה אִישִׁי אֵלַי כִּי־יִלְדָתִי לוֹ שְׁלֹשָׁה בָנִים עַל־כֵּן  
קָרָא־שְׁמוֹ לֵוִי: <sup>לה</sup> וַתֵּהָר עוֹד וַתֵּלֶד בֶּן וַתֹּאמֶר הַפַּעַם  
אוֹדָה אֶת־יְהוָה עַל־כֵּן קָרָאָה שְׁמוֹ יְהוּדָה וַתַּעֲמֵד  
מִלְדֹּת:

saying, "Yahweh heard that I was unloved, so he has given me this one too;" and she named him Simeon. <sup>34</sup> Again, she conceived and bore a son, saying, "This time my husband will cling to me, for I have born him three sons;" so, she named him Levi. <sup>35</sup> Again, she conceived and bore a son, saying, "This time I will praise Yahweh;" so, she named him Judah. Then she had no more children.

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<sup>34</sup> 'Levi' (לֵוִי) probably derives from יִלְוֶה ('he will cling').

<sup>35</sup> 'Judah' (יְהוּדָה) derives from אוֹדָה ('I shall praise').

## בראשית פרק ל

## GENESIS 30

א וַתֵּרָא רָחֵל כִּי לֹא יֵלְדָה לְיַעֲקֹב וַתִּקְנָא רָחֵל  
בַּאֲחֹתָהּ וַתֹּאמֶר אֶל־יַעֲקֹב הִבֵּה־לִּי בָנִים וְאִם־אֵין  
מִתָּה אֲנֹכִי: ב וַיַּחֲרֹאֲף יַעֲקֹב בְּרָחֵל וַיֹּאמֶר הֲתַחַת  
אֱלֹהִים אֲנֹכִי אֲשֶׁר־מִנַּע מִמֶּךָּ פְּרִי־בֶטֶן: ג וַתֹּאמֶר הִנֵּה  
אֲמַתִּי בִלְהָה בָּא אֵלַיהָ וְתִלְדַּל עַל־בְּרָכִי וְאִבְנָה גַם־  
אֲנֹכִי מִמֶּנָּה: ד וַתִּתֵּן־לוֹ אֶת־בִּלְהָה שִׁפְחָתָהּ לְאִשָּׁה  
וַיָּבֹא אֵלֶיהָ יַעֲקֹב: ה וַתַּהַר בִּלְהָה וַתֵּלֶד לְיַעֲקֹב בֶּן:  
ו וַתֹּאמֶר רָחֵל דָּנָנִי אֱלֹהִים וְגַם שָׁמַע בְּקֻלִּי וַיִּתֵּן־לִי בֶן  
עַל־כֵּן קִרְאָה שְׁמוֹ דָּן: ז וַתַּהַר עוֹד וַתֵּלֶד בִּלְהָה  
שִׁפְחַת רָחֵל בֶּן שֵׁנִי לְיַעֲקֹב: ח וַתֹּאמֶר רָחֵל נִפְתָּלִי  
אֱלֹהִים | נִפְתַּלְתִּי עִם־אֲחֹתִי גַם־יִכָּלְתִּי וַתִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ  
נִפְתָּלִי:

<sup>1</sup> When Rachel saw that she bore Jacob no child, she envied her sister and said to Jacob, "Give me sons or I shall die!" <sup>2</sup> Jacob became furious with Rachel and said, "Am I in God's place? It is he who has refused you motherhood." <sup>3</sup> So, she said, "Here is my maid, Bilhah; go in to her so that she may bear upon my knees, so that I may have children through her!" <sup>4</sup> So, she gave him her maid Bilhah as a wife. Jacob went into her <sup>5</sup> and Bilhah conceived and bore Jacob a son. <sup>6</sup> Then Rachel said, "God has vindicated me; yes, he has heard my prayer and given me a son." So, she named him Dan. <sup>7</sup> Again, Rachel's maid Bilhah conceived and bore Jacob a second son; <sup>8</sup> and Rachel said, "I have fought God's fight with my sister, and I have won"; so, she named him Naphtali.

## GENESIS 30

<sup>1</sup> In place of 'sons', here following the MT, the NJB & NRSV repeat 'child(ren)'.

<sup>2</sup> The literal translation of 'refused you motherhood' (following the NJB) is 'withheld from you the fruit of the womb'.

<sup>3</sup> The expression, 'bear upon my knees', is an idiomatic way of saying that Bilhah will be simply a surrogate mother; Rachel will adopt the child as her own.

<sup>4</sup> In place of 'went into', here literally translating the euphemism, other English translations use terms like 'slept with' (NJB), 'lay with' or 'knew'.

<sup>5</sup> In place of 'bore Jacob a son', here following the NRSV, the NJB has 'bore a son by Jacob'.

<sup>6</sup> 'Dan' (דָּן) derives from דָּנָנִי ('he has vindicated').

<sup>7</sup> Literally translated, this verse reads, "and she conceived again and Bilhah, the servant of Rachel, bore a second son for Jacob."

<sup>8</sup> 'Naphtali' (נִפְתָּלִי) derives from נִפְתַּלְתִּי ('I have fought').



ט וַתֵּרָא לֵאָה כִּי עַמְדָּה מְלֻדָּת וַתִּקַּח אֶת־זִלְפָּה שִׁפְחָתָהּ וַתִּתֵּן אֹתָהּ לִיעֶקֶב לְאִשָּׁה: י וַתֵּלֶד זֶלְפָּה שִׁפְחַת לֵאָה לִיעֶקֶב בֶּן: יא וַתֹּאמֶר לֵאָה בֶּגֶד בָּא גָד וַתִּקְרָא אֶת־שְׁמוֹ גָּד: יב וַתֵּלֶד זִלְפָּה שִׁפְחַת לֵאָה בֶּן שֵׁנִי לִיעֶקֶב: יג וַתֹּאמֶר לֵאָה בְּאִשְׁרֵי כִי אֲשֶׁרוֹנִי בָנוֹת וַתִּקְרָא אֶת־שְׁמוֹ אֲשֶׁר:

יד וַיְלֶךְ רְאוּבֵן בְּיָמֵי קְצִיר־חֲטִים וַיִּמְצָא דֹּדָאִים בַּשָּׂדֶה וַיָּבֵא אֹתָם אֶל־לֵאָה אִמּוֹ וַתֹּאמֶר רַחֵל אֵל־לֵאָה תִּנִּינָא לִי מִדֹּדָאֵי בְנֶךָ: טו וַתֹּאמֶר לָהּ הֲמַעַט קָחְתִּיךָ אֶת־אִשְׁתִּי וְלָקַחְתָּ גַם אֶת־דֹּדָאֵי בְנִי וַתֹּאמֶר רַחֵל לָכֵן יִשְׁכַּב עִמָּךְ הַלַּיְלָה תַּחַת דֹּדָאֵי בְנֶךָ: טז וַיָּבֵא יַעֲקֹב מִן־הַשָּׂדֶה בָּעֶרְבַּ וַתֵּצֵא לֵאָה לִקְרָאתוֹ וַתֹּאמֶר אֵלַי תָּבוֹא כִּי שָׁכַר שְׂכָרְתִּיךָ בְּדֹדָאֵי בְנִי וַיִּשְׁכַּב עִמָּה בַּלַּיְלָה הַהוּא: יז וַיִּשְׁמַע אֱלֹהִים אֶל־לֵאָה וַתֵּהָר וַתֵּלֶד לִיעֶקֶב בֶּן חַמִּישִׁי: יח וַתֹּאמֶר לֵאָה נָתַן

<sup>9</sup> Now Leah, since she had no more children, gave her maid Zilpah to Jacob as a wife. <sup>10</sup> So, Leah's maid Zilpah bore Jacob a son. <sup>11</sup> Then Leah exclaimed, "What good fortune!" So, she named him Gad. <sup>12</sup> Leah's maid Zilpah bore Jacob a second son. <sup>13</sup> Then Leah said, "What happiness! Women will call me happy!" So, she named him Asher.

<sup>14</sup> At the time of wheat harvest, Reuben found some mandrakes and brought them to his mother Leah. Rachel said to Leah, "Give me some of your son's mandrakes." <sup>15</sup> But she said, "Is it not enough to have taken my husband that you would take my son's mandrakes too?" So, Rachel said, "Then let him lie with you tonight in return for your son's mandrakes." <sup>16</sup> When Jacob came back from the fields that night, Leah went to meet him, saying, "You must lie with me, for I have hired you with your son's mandrakes;" and he slept with her that night. <sup>17</sup> God heard Leah, and she conceived and bore Jacob a

<sup>9</sup> The literal translation of 'gave her ... to Jacob' is 'she took her ... and gave her to Jacob' (as in the NJB & NRSV); however, the verbs 'took' and 'gave' are treated as a hendiadys in the translation, here following NETB.

<sup>10</sup> In place of 'bore Jacob a son', here following the NRSV, the NJB has 'gave birth to a son by Jacob' (cf. #5).

<sup>11</sup> 'Gad' (גָּד) derives from גָּד ('good fortune'); the Qere has בָּא גָּד (literally, 'good fortune has arrived') in place of the Ketiv reading of בֶּגֶד (literally, 'with good fortune', if we take the initial ב as a preposition indicating accompaniment).

<sup>12</sup> In place of 'bore Jacob a second son', here following the NRSV, the NJB has 'gave birth to a second son by Jacob' (cf. #10).

<sup>13</sup> 'Asher' (אֲשֶׁר) derives either from אֲשֶׁר ('happiness') or אֲשֶׁרוֹנִי ('they will call me happy').

<sup>14</sup> The word for 'mandrakes' (דֹּדָאִים) is formed from the same root as 'love'; the ancients accounted it an aphrodisiac.

<sup>15</sup> In place of 'she said', here following the MT (& NRSV), the NJB has 'Leah replied'.

<sup>16</sup> The literal translation of 'lie with' (שָׁכַב) is 'come in to' – the usual Hebrew euphemism for sexual relations.

<sup>17</sup> This was the fifth son that Leah had given Jacob.

אֱלֹהִים שָׁכָרִי אֲשֶׁר־נָתַתִּי שְׂפָחָתִי לְאִישִׁי וַתִּקְרָא  
שְׁמוֹ יִשָּׁשכָר: <sup>יט</sup> וַתֵּהָר עוֹד לֵאָה וַתֵּלֶד בֶּן־שְׁשִׁי  
לְיַעֲקֹב: <sup>כ</sup> וַתֹּאמֶר לֵאָה זִבְלָנִי אֱלֹהִים | אֹתִי זָבַד טוֹב  
הַפֶּעַם יִזְבְּלָנִי אִישִׁי כִּי־יִלְדָתִי לוֹ שֵׁשָׁה בָנִים וַתִּקְרָא  
אֶת־שְׁמוֹ זְבֻלוֹן: <sup>כא</sup> וְאַחֲרַיִלְדָּה בֵּת וַתִּקְרָא אֶת־שְׁמָהּ  
דִּינָה:

<sup>כב</sup> וַיִּזְכֹּר אֱלֹהִים אֶת־רַחֵל וַיִּשְׁמַע אֱלֹהִים וַיִּפְתַּח  
אֶת־רַחֲמָהּ: <sup>כג</sup> וַתֵּהָר וַתֵּלֶד בֶּן וַתֹּאמֶר אֶסָּף אֱלֹהִים  
אֶת־חַרְפָּתִי: <sup>כד</sup> וַתִּקְרָא אֶת־שְׁמוֹ יוֹסֵף לֵאמֹר יֹסֵף  
יְהוָה לִי בֶן אַחֵר:

<sup>כה</sup> וַיְהִי כַּאֲשֶׁר יִלְדָה רַחֵל אֶת־יוֹסֵף וַיֹּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב אֶל־  
לְבָן שְׁלַחֲנִי וְאֶלְכָה אֶל־מְקוֹמִי וְלֹאֲרָצִי: <sup>כו</sup> תָּנָה אֶת־  
נָשִׁי וְאֶת־יִלְדֵי אֲשֶׁר עִבַּדְתִּי אֹתָךְ בָּהֶן וְאֶלְכָה כִּי אֵתָּה

fifth son. <sup>18</sup> Then Leah said, "God has paid my wages for giving my maid to my husband;" so, she named him Issachar. <sup>19</sup> Again, Leah conceived and bore Jacob a sixth son, <sup>20</sup> saying, "God has given me a fine gift; now my husband will honour me, for I have borne six sons to him;" so, she named him Zebulun. <sup>21</sup> Later, she bore a daughter and named her Dinah.

<sup>22</sup> Then God remembered Rachel; he listened to her and opened her womb. <sup>23</sup> She conceived and bore a son, saying, "God has taken away my shame." <sup>24</sup> So, she named him Joseph, saying, "May Yahweh give me another son!"

<sup>25</sup> When Rachel had borne Joseph, Jacob said to Laban, "Release me, so I can go home to my own land. <sup>26</sup> Give me my wives for whom I have served you, and my children, so that I can go; you know very

<sup>18</sup> 'Issachar' (יִשָּׁשכָר) derives from שָׁכָרִי ('he has paid wages').

<sup>19</sup> This was the sixth son that Leah had given Jacob.

<sup>20</sup> 'Zebulun' (זְבֻלוֹן) derives from יִזְבְּלָנִי ('he will honour me').

<sup>21</sup> Note the almost parenthetical nature of this verse; there is no etymology of the name 'Dinah' (דִּינָה).

<sup>22</sup> I place of 'listened to', the NJB had 'heard' and the NRSV has 'heeded'.

<sup>23</sup> The literal translation of 'shame' is 'reproach' – a cutting taunt or painful ridicule, but here it probably refers by metonymy to Rachel's barren condition, which was considered shameful in this culture and was the reason why she was the object of taunting and ridicule.

<sup>24</sup> 'Joseph' (יוֹסֵף) means 'may he add' but there also a wordplay on אֶסָּף ('he has taken away', cf. v. 23).

<sup>25</sup> For Jacob to ask to leave would mean that seven more years had passed; thus, all Jacob's children were born within the range of seven years of each other, with Joseph coming right at the end of the seven years.

<sup>26</sup> In one sense, Laban had already 'given' Jacob his two daughters as wives (29:21, 28); here, Jacob was asking for permission to take his own family along with him on the journey back to Canaan.

יִדְעַתְּ אֶת־עֲבֹדְתִי אֲשֶׁר עָבַדְתִּיךָ: <sup>כז</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו לְבֶן  
אִם־נָא מִצְאָתִי חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ נַחֲשֵׁתִי וַיְבָרְכֵנִי יְהוָה  
בְּגִלְגָּלְךָ: <sup>כח</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר נִקְבָּה שְׂכָרְךָ עָלַי וְאַתָּנָה: <sup>כט</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר  
אֵלָיו אַתָּה יִדְעַתְּ אֵת אֲשֶׁר עָבַדְתִּיךָ וְאֵת אֲשֶׁר־הָיָה  
מִקְנֶךָ אִתִּי: <sup>ל</sup> כִּי מָעַט אֲשֶׁר־הָיָה לְךָ לִפְנֵי וַיִּפְרֹץ לְרֹב  
וַיְבָרֶךְ יְהוָה אֶתְךָ לְרֹגְלִי וְעַתָּה מָתִי אֶעֱשֶׂה גַם־אֲנֹכִי  
לְבֵיתִי: <sup>לא</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר מָה אֶתֶּן־לְךָ וַיֹּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב לֹא־תִתֶּן־  
לִי מְאוֹמָה אִם־תַּעֲשֶׂה־לִּי הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה אָשׁוּבָה אֶרְעָה  
צֹאנְךָ אֲשָׁמֶר:

<sup>לב</sup> אֶעֱבֹר בְּכָל־צֹאנְךָ הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה מִשָּׁם כָּל־שֶׁהָ נִקְדָּה  
וְטָלוּא וְכָל־שֶׁהָ־חוּם בַּפְּשָׁבִים וְטָלוּא וְנִקְדָּה בְּעֵזִים  
וְהָיָה שְׂכָרִי: <sup>לג</sup> וְעַתָּה־בִּי צִדְקָתִי בְיוֹם מָחָר כִּי־תָבוֹא

well the work I have done for you.” <sup>27</sup> Laban said to him, “If you will allow me to say so, I learned from the omens that Yahweh blessed me for your sake; <sup>28</sup> name your wages and I will pay you.” <sup>29</sup> He replied, “You know well how hard I have worked for you and how your stock has fared with me. <sup>30</sup> The little you had before I came has increased greatly and Yahweh blessed you wherever I turned; but when am I to provide for my own house?” <sup>31</sup> He said, “What shall I pay you?” And Jacob replied, “You shall not pay me anything: if you do this for me, I will again tend your flock and keep it.

<sup>32</sup> “Today, I will go through all your flock, taking out of it every black sheep and every speckled or spotted animal among the goats; such shall be my wages, <sup>33</sup> and my honesty shall answer for me later; when

<sup>27</sup> In the NJB, Laban opens with, “If I have done what pleases you,” followed by an ellipsis; a footnote suggests that ‘hear me’ or ‘stay here’ is to be understood.

<sup>28</sup> The literal translation of this verse is, “set your wage for me so I may give (it).”

<sup>29</sup> Literally translated, this verse ends with, “and how your cattle were with me.”

<sup>30</sup> The literal translation of ‘increased enormously’ is ‘broken out with respect to abundance’.

<sup>31</sup> ‘Continue to tend’ (following NETB) translates the Hebrew idiom ‘I will return, I will tend’.

<sup>32</sup> The text of vv. 32–43 is difficult to interpret. The story is clearly ancient: in Eastern flocks, the sheep are usually white and the goats are black. For his wages, Jacob asks the abnormal animals (black sheep and white-spotted goats); Laban agrees, shrewdly as he thinks. Ancient cattle and sheep breeders believed that the female, at the time of conception, was influenced by visual impressions that affect the colour of the offspring. Thus, Jacob’s plot is briefly this: **1:** He sees to it that, when the goats mate (vv. 37–39), they are in sight of white-striped rods; this affects the formation of the embryo. **2:** At the same time, he makes sure that the sheep are looking at the black goats in the flock (v. 40). **3:** He selects the robust strains, leaving the weaker animals and their offspring to Laban. In this way, Jacob takes his ‘honourable’ revenge.

<sup>33</sup> Jacob would have to be considered completely honest here, for he would have no control over the kind of animals born; and there could be no disagreement over which animals were his wages.

עַל־שֹׁכְרִי לַפָּנִיךָ כֹּל אֲשֶׁר־אֵינָנוּ נֹקֵד וְטָלוּא בְּעֵזִים  
וְחוּם בְּכִשְׂבִּים גָּנוּב הוּא אֹתִי: <sup>לד</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר לָבָן הֵן לֹו יְהִי  
כַּדְבָּרְךָ: <sup>לה</sup> וַיִּסֶּר בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא אֶת־הַתִּישִׁים הָעֶקְדִים  
וְהַטְּלָאִים וְאֵת כָּל־הָעֵזִים הַנִּקְדּוֹת וְהַטְּלָאֵת כֹּל  
אֲשֶׁר־לָבָן בּוֹ וְכָל־חוּם בְּכִשְׂבִּים וַיִּתֵּן בְּיַד־בְּנָיו:  
<sup>לו</sup> וַיֵּשֶׁם דֶּרֶךְ שְׁלֹשֶׁת יָמִים בֵּינוֹ וּבֵין יַעֲקֹב וַיַּעֲקֹב רָעָה  
אֶת־צֹאן לָבָן הַנּוֹתָרָת:

<sup>לז</sup> וַיִּקַּח־לוֹ יַעֲקֹב מִקָּל לִבְנֵה לַח וְלוֹז וְעֶרְמוֹן וַיַּפְצֵל  
בֵּהֶן פְּצָלוֹת לִבְנוֹת מַחֲשֵׁף הַלָּבָן אֲשֶׁר עַל־הַמְּקָלוֹת:  
<sup>לח</sup> וַיִּצַּג אֶת־הַמְּקָלוֹת אֲשֶׁר פָּצַל בְּרֹהֲטִים בְּשִׁקְתּוֹת  
הַמַּיִם אֲשֶׁר תָּבֵאֵן הַצֹּאן לִשְׁתּוֹת לִנְכַח הַצֹּאן וַיַּחֲמֶנָה  
בְּבֹאֵן לִשְׁתּוֹת: <sup>לט</sup> וַיַּחֲמוּ הַצֹּאן אֶל־הַמְּקָלוֹת וַתֵּלְדוּן  
הַצֹּאן עֶקְדִים נִקְדִים וְטָלָאִים: <sup>מ</sup> וְהַכְּשָׁבִים הִפְרִיד  
יַעֲקֹב וַיִּתֵּן פָּנָי הַצֹּאן אֶל־עֶקֶד וְכָל־חוּם בְּצֹאן לָבָן  
וַיִּשְׁתַּלּוּ עֲדָרִים לְבָדּוֹ וְלֹא שָׁתָם עַל־צֹאן לָבָן:

you come to check my wages, every goat I have that is not speckled or spotted, and every sheep that is not black shall be counted stolen.”

<sup>34</sup> Laban said, “Good! Let it be as you say.” <sup>35</sup> That day, he took out the striped and speckled he-goats and all the spotted and speckled she-goats, every one that had white on it, and all the black sheep, and gave them to his sons, <sup>36</sup> and put three days’ journey between himself and Jacob. Jacob took care of the rest of Laban’s flock.

<sup>37</sup> Jacob gathered fresh branches of poplar, almond, and plane, and peeled white strips in them, exposing the white of the branches. <sup>38</sup> He put the peeled branches in front of the flocks, in the water troughs, where the animals came to drink; and the animals bred when they came to drink. <sup>39</sup> They bred in front of the branches and so produced striped, spotted, and speckled young. <sup>40</sup> Jacob set apart the sheep and he turned the animals towards the striped or black sheep in Laban’s flock. He did not put his own droves with Laban’s flock. <sup>41</sup> Whenever

<sup>34</sup> The literal translation of Laban’s reply, “Good, let it be according to your word.”

<sup>35</sup> After ‘gave them to’, the MT adds ‘the hands of’.

<sup>36</sup> Laban is delighted with the terms, and promptly proceeds to violate the spirit of the bargain by removing to a safe distance all the grown animals that would be likely to produce the specified spots; he apparently thought that by separating out the spotted, striped, and dark coloured animals he could minimise the production of spotted, striped, or dark offspring that would then belong to Jacob.

<sup>37</sup> In place of ‘branches’ (throughout this section), the NRSV, following the LXX (ῥάβδους), has ‘rods’.

<sup>38</sup> It was generally believed that placing such ‘visual aids’ before the animals as they were mating influenced the appearance of their offspring.

<sup>39</sup> The verb here translated as ‘bred’ can also mean ‘to be in heat’, ‘to conceive’ or ‘to become pregnant’.

<sup>40</sup> The literal translation of ‘turned the animals’ is ‘set the animals’ faces’.

<sup>41</sup> Literally translated, this verse opens, “And at every breeding-heat of the flock.”

מא והיה בכל־יחם הצאן המקשרות ושם יעקב את־  
המקלות לעיני הצאן ברהטים ליחמנה במקלות:  
מב ובהעטף הצאן לא ישים והיה העטפים ללבן  
והקשרים ליעקב: מג ויפרץ האיש מאד מאד ויהי־לו  
צאן רבות ושפחות ועבדים וגמלים וחמרים:

the sturdy animals were in heat, Jacob put the branches where the animals could see them, in the troughs, that they might breed in front of the branches; <sup>42</sup> but, when the animals were feeble, he did not put them there; thus, Laban got the feeble, and Jacob the sturdy, <sup>43</sup> so he grew extremely rich and he owned large flocks, with men and women slaves, camels, and donkeys.

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<sup>42</sup> The literal translation of 'Laban got the feeble' is 'the feeble were for Laban'.

<sup>43</sup> The literal translation of 'he owned' is 'there were to him'.

## בראשית פרק לא

א וישמע את־דברי בני־לבן לאמר לקח יעקב את כל־אשר לאבינו ומאשר לאבינו עשה את כל־הכבוד הזה: ב וירא יעקב את־פני לבן והנה איננו עמו בתמול שלשום: ג ויאמר יהוה אל־יעקב שוב אל־ארץ אבותיך ולמולדתך ואהיה עמך: ד וישלח יעקב ויקרא לרחל וללאה השדה אל־צאנו: ה ויאמר להן ראה אנכי את־פני אביכן כי־איננו אלי בתמול שלשם ואלהי אבי היה עמדי: ו ואתנה ידעתן כי בכל־כחי עבדתי את־אביכן: ז ואביכן התל בי והחלף את־משכרתי עשרת מנים ולא־נתנו אלהים להרע עמדי: ח אס־פה יאמר נקדים יהיה שכרך וילדו כל־הצאן נקדים ואס־פה יאמר עקדים יהיה שכרך וילדו כל־

## GENESIS 31

<sup>1</sup> He heard that the sons of Laban were saying, "Jacob has taken all that was our father's; he has gained all this wealth at our father's expense." <sup>2</sup> Jacob saw from Laban's face that things were not as they had been. <sup>3</sup> Yahweh said to Jacob, "Go back to the land of your fathers and your kindred; and I will be with you." <sup>4</sup> So, Jacob called Rachel and Leah to the fields where his flocks were <sup>5</sup> and said to them, "I see from your father's face that I am out of favour with him now; but the God of my father has been with me. <sup>6</sup> You know that I have served your father with all my strength. <sup>7</sup> Your father has tricked me, ten times changing my wages, yet God has not let him harm me. <sup>8</sup> If he said, "The spotted shall be your wages," all the flock bore spotted; if he said, "The striped shall be your wages," then all

### GENESIS 31

- <sup>1</sup> The word translated as 'wealth' (הכבוד) has the basic idea of 'weight'; if one is heavy with possessions, then that one is wealthy. Abraham, Jacob, and Joseph all became wealthy when they left the Promised Land; Jacob's wealth foreshadows what will happen to Israel when they leave the land of Egypt (Ex 12:35-38).
- <sup>2</sup> Jacob knew from the expression on Laban's face that his attitude toward him had changed – Jacob had become *persona non grata*.
- <sup>3</sup> In place of 'fathers', the NRSV has 'ancestors', although the only ancestors Jacob had there were his grandfather Abraham and his father Isaac.
- <sup>4</sup> Jacob discusses the situation with his wives because, in ancient society, they legally belonged to their *father's* house (v. 14) and were part of the property (Rt 4:5, 10).
- <sup>5</sup> The literal translation of the first part of this verse is, "I see the face of your father that he is not toward me as formerly."
- <sup>6</sup> In place of 'with all my strength', following the MT, NJB & NRSV, NETB has 'as hard as I could'.
- <sup>7</sup> The rare verb here translated as 'tricked' means to make a fool of someone; it involves deceiving someone so that their public reputation suffers (see Ex 8:25).
- <sup>8</sup> In the protasis ('if' sections) of this verse, the imperfect verbal form has a customary nuance – whatever *he would say* worked to Jacob's benefit.



הִצָּאן עֲקָדִים: <sup>ט</sup> וַיֹּצֵל אֱלֹהִים אֶת־מִקְנֶה אָבִיכֶם וַיִּתֶּן לִי: <sup>י</sup> וַיְהִי בַּעַת יָחַם הַצָּאן וְאִשָּׁא עֵינַי וָאֵרָא בַּחֲלוֹם וַהֲנֵה הָעֲתִידִים הָעֲלִים עַל־הַצָּאן עֲקָדִים נִקְדִּים וּבָרָדִים: <sup>יא</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלַי מַלְאָךְ הָאֱלֹהִים בַּחֲלוֹם יַעֲקֹב וָאָמַר הִנְנִי: <sup>יב</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר שָׂא־נָא עֵינֶיךָ וּרְאֵה כָּל־הָעֲתִידִים הָעֲלִים עַל־הַצָּאן עֲקָדִים נִקְדִּים וּבָרָדִים כִּי רָאִיתִי אֶת כָּל־אֲשֶׁר לָבָן עָשָׂה לָךְ: <sup>יג</sup> אָנֹכִי הָאֵל בֵּית־אֵל אֲשֶׁר מִשְׁחַת שֵׁם מִצְבֵּה אֲשֶׁר נָדַרְתָּ לִּי שֵׁם נֹדֶר עֲתָה קוֹם צֵא מִן־הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת וְשׁוּב אֶל־אָרֶץ מוֹלְדְּתְךָ:

<sup>יד</sup> וַתֵּעַן רָחֵל וְלֵאָה וַתֹּאמְרֶנָּה לוֹ הַעוֹד לָנוּ חֶלֶק וְנַחֲלָה בְּבֵית אָבִינוּ: <sup>טו</sup> הֲלוֹא נִכְרִיּוֹת נִחְשְׁבָנוּ לוֹ כִּי מִכְרָנוּ וַיֹּאכַל גַּם־אֶכּוֹל אֶת־כֶּסֶפֶּנוּ: <sup>טז</sup> כִּי כָל־הָעֶשֶׂר אֲשֶׁר הִצִּיל אֱלֹהִים מֵאֲבִינוּ לָנוּ הוּא וְלִבְנֵינוּ וְעֲתָה כָּל־אֲשֶׁר אָמַר אֱלֹהִים אֵלֶיךָ עֲשֵׂה:

the flock bore striped. <sup>9</sup> Thus, God has taken your father's livestock and given it to me. <sup>10</sup> At the time when the animals were on heat, I looked up in a dream and saw that the males covering the females of the flock were striped, spotted, or mottled. <sup>11</sup> In the dream, the angel of God said to me, "Jacob!" I said, "I am here." <sup>12</sup> He said, "Look up and see: all the males mounting the females of the flock are striped, spotted, or mottled; for, I have seen all that Laban has done to you. <sup>13</sup> I am the God of Bethel, where you poured oil on a cairn and where you made a vow to me. Now, leave this land at once and return to the land of your birth.""

<sup>14</sup> The, Rachel and Leah answered him, "Have we any share left in the inheritance of our father's House? <sup>15</sup> Does he not treat us as foreigners? For, he has sold us and used up all our money? <sup>16</sup> Surely all the riches God has taken from our father belong to us and to our children. So, do all that God has told you."

<sup>9</sup> An alternative reading for 'taken' is 'snatched away'.

<sup>10</sup> This verse begins with the temporal indicator (literally, 'and it happened in the time').

<sup>11</sup> In place of 'said', here following the MT and NRSV, the NJB has 'called'. Here and in v. 10, the LXX has 'sleep' (ὑπνω) in place of 'dream'.

<sup>12</sup> In place of 'mounting' (i.e. mating with), the NJB has simply 'on'.

<sup>13</sup> In place of 'the God of Bethel', the NJB, following the LXX (θεὸς ὁ ὀφθείς σοι ἐν τόπῳ θεοῦ) has 'God, the one appearing to you at the place of God'.

<sup>14</sup> In place of 'a share in the inheritance' (following the NJB), the NRSV has 'a portion or inheritance'; the two nouns 'share' and 'inheritance' form a hendiadys.

<sup>15</sup> In Upper Mesopotamia, it was considered miserly if a father-in-law did not return to his daughter a part of the sum paid over by the husband at the time of the marriage, but Laban exploited Jacob's services for himself alone.

<sup>16</sup> An alternative reading for 'taken' is 'snatched away' (cf. #9).

יז וַיָּקָם יַעֲקֹב וַיִּשָּׂא אֶת־בָּנָיו וְאֶת־נָשָׁיו עַל־הַגְּמָלִים:  
יח וַיִּנְהֲג אֶת־כָּל־מִקְנֵהוּ וְאֶת־כָּל־רֶכְשׁוֹ אֲשֶׁר רָכַשׁ  
מִקְנֵה קְנִיָּו אֲשֶׁר רָכַשׁ בְּפָדָן אַרָם לָבֹא אֶל־יִצְחָק  
אָבִיו אֶרֶצָה כְּנָעַן: יט וּלְבֵן הַלֵּךְ לָגֹז אֶת־צֹאֲנֹו וְתִגְנֹב  
רֶחֶל אֶת־הַתְּרָפִים אֲשֶׁר לְאָבִיהָ: כ וַיִּגְנֹב יַעֲקֹב אֶת־  
לֵב לְבֵן הָאֲרָמִי עַל־בְּלִי הַגִּיד לוֹ כִּי בָרַח הוּא:  
כא וַיִּבְרַח הוּא וְכָל־אֲשֶׁר־לוֹ וַיָּקָם וַיַּעֲבֹר אֶת־הַנָּהָר  
וַיֵּשֶׁם אֶת־פָּנָיו הָר הַגִּלְעָד:

כב וַיֵּגֵד לְלֵבָן בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁלִישִׁי כִּי בָרַח יַעֲקֹב: כג וַיִּקַּח  
אֶת־אָחִיו עִמּוֹ וַיִּרְדְּף אַחֲרָיו דֶּרֶךְ שִׁבְעַת יָמִים וַיִּדְּבֹק  
אֹתוֹ בְּהָר הַגִּלְעָד: כד וַיָּבֹא אֱלֹהִים אֶל־לֵבָן הָאֲרָמִי

<sup>17</sup> Jacob arose and put his children and his wives on camels, <sup>18</sup> and he drove all his livestock before him, with all he had acquired, the livestock belonging to him, which he had acquired in Paddan-Aram, to go to his father Isaac in the land of Canaan. <sup>19</sup> When Laban had gone to shear his flock, Rachel stole the household idols belonging to her father. <sup>20</sup> Jacob outwitted Laban the Aramaean by giving him no inkling of his flight. <sup>21</sup> He fled with all he had and went away, crossing the River and making for Mount Gilead.

<sup>22</sup> Three days later, Laban was told that Jacob had fled. <sup>23</sup> Taking his brothers with him, he pursued him for seven days and overtook him in the hill country of Gilead. <sup>24</sup> But God came by night in a dream to

<sup>17</sup> In place of 'arose' (following the MT and NRSV), the NJB has 'made ready'.

<sup>18</sup> Some consider the latter part of this verse to be an addition.

<sup>19</sup> 'Household idols' is from the Hebrew, 'teraphim' (תְּרָפִים) – small domestic idols; in Hurrian law, possession of these could constitute a legal title to an estate, especially in exceptional circumstances.

<sup>20</sup> The literal translation of 'outwitted' (following the NJB) is 'stole the heart of', an expression which apparently means 'deceived' (as in the NRSV). The repetition of the verb 'to steal' shows that Jacob and Rachel are kindred spirits; any thought that Laban would have resigned himself to their departure was now out of the question.

<sup>21</sup> The River mentioned would be the Euphrates; the NRSV names it (although the MT and LXX do not).

<sup>22</sup> Like the preceding section, the narrative of vv. 22–42 is attributed to Old Epic sources.

<sup>23</sup> The literal translation of 'for seven days' is 'after a journey of seven days'.

<sup>24</sup> The phrase 'neither bless nor curse' (following NETB) would translate literally as, 'speak neither good nor evil to'; the precise meaning of the expression, which occurs only here and in v. 29, is uncertain. Since Laban proceeded to speak to Jacob at length, it cannot mean to maintain silence (as suggested by the NJB – 'on no account say anything whatever to' and NRSV – 'say not a word ... either good or bad'); nor does it seem to be a prohibition against criticism (see vv. 26–30). Most likely it refers to a formal pronouncement, whether it be a blessing or a curse; Laban was to avoid saying anything to Jacob that would be intended to enhance him or to harm him.

בְּחֶלֶם הַלַּיְלָה וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ הַשֹּׁמֵר לָךְ פֶּן־תְּדַבֵּר עִם־  
יַעֲקֹב מְטֹיֵב עַד־רָע: כה וַיִּשָּׂג לָבֵן אֶת־יַעֲקֹב וַיַּעֲקֹב  
תָּקַע אֶת־אָהֳלוֹ בְּהָר וּלָבֵן תָּקַע אֶת־אָהָיו בְּהַר  
הַגִּלְעָד:

כו וַיֹּאמֶר לָבֵן לִיַּעֲקֹב מָה עָשִׂיתָ וַתִּגְנֹב אֶת־לִבִּי  
וַתִּנְהַג אֶת־בָּנָי כְּשִׁבְיוֹת חָרָב: כז לָמָּה נִחַבְּתָה  
לְבָרְחַ וַתִּגְנֹב אֹתִי וְלֹא־הִגַּדְתָּ לִּי וְאַשְׁלַחְךָ בְּשֹׁמְחָה  
וּבְשָׂרִים בְּתָף וּבְכִנּוֹר: כח וְלֹא נִטְשָׁתָנִי לְנִשְׁק לְבָנִי  
וּלְבָנָתִי עִתָּה הַסְּכַלְתָּ עֲשׂוֹ: כט יֵשׁ־לֵאלֹל יָדִי לַעֲשׂוֹת  
עִמָּכֶם רָע וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבִיכֶם אֲמַשׁ אֶמֶר אֵלַי לֵאמֹר  
הַשֹּׁמֵר לָךְ מִדְּבַר עִם־יַעֲקֹב מְטֹיֵב עַד־רָע: ל וְעִתָּה  
הַלֵּךְ הִלַכְתָּ כִּי־נִכְסֶף נִכְסַּפְתָּה לְבֵית אֲבִיךָ לָמָּה  
גִּנַּבְתָּ אֶת־אֱלֹהֵי:

לא וַיַּעַן יַעֲקֹב וַיֹּאמֶר לְלָבֵן כִּי יָרֵאתִי כִּי אֲמָרְתִּי פֶן־  
תִּגְזֹל אֶת־בְּנוֹתַי מֵעַמִּי: לב עַם אֲשֶׁר תִּמְצָא אֶת־  
אֱלֹהֶיךָ לֹא יִחְיֶה נִגֵּד אֶחָיו הַכֹּרֶלֶךְ מָה עָמְדִי וְקַח־

Laban the Aramaean and said to him, "Take care that you neither bless nor curse Jacob." <sup>25</sup> Laban caught up with Jacob, who had pitched his tent in the hills; and Laban pitched camp in the hill country of Gilead.

<sup>26</sup> Laban said to Jacob, "What have you done, tricking me and driving my daughters off like prisoners of war? <sup>27</sup> Why did you flee secretly, stealing and not telling me, so that I could send you on your way rejoicing, with songs, tambourines, and the lyre? <sup>28</sup> You did not even let me kiss my sons and daughters; you have behaved like a fool. <sup>29</sup> It is in my power to do you harm but the God of your father said to me last night, "Do not bless nor curse Jacob." <sup>30</sup> Now, it may be you really went because you had such a longing for your father's House. But why did you steal my gods?"

<sup>31</sup> Jacob answered Laban, "I was afraid, thinking you would snatch your daughters from me. <sup>32</sup> But whoever is found with your gods shall not live; in the presence of your brothers, point out what I have

<sup>25</sup> The juxtaposition of disjunctive clauses (note the pattern conjunction + subject + verb in both) indicates synchronism of action.

<sup>26</sup> The literal translation of 'prisoners of war' (following the NJB) is 'captives of the sword' (as NRSV).

<sup>27</sup> An alternative reading of 'lyre' is 'harp'; before 'tambourines', the NJB adds 'and with music of the'.

<sup>28</sup> In place of 'you have behaved like a fool', following the NJB, the NRSV has 'what you have done is foolish'.

<sup>29</sup> The pronoun, 'your', is singular in the LXX (σου) and Samaritan Pentateuch, but plural in the MT.

<sup>30</sup> The last sentence (Laban's question) is dropped into the speech rather suddenly.

<sup>31</sup> Jacob's answer is a not a response to the question about Laban's household gods that immediately precedes it, but to the earlier question about his motivation for leaving so quickly and secretly (see v. 27).

<sup>32</sup> The literal translation of 'point out ... and take it' is 'recognise for yourself what is with me and take for yourself'.

לָךְ וְלֹא־יָדַע יַעֲקֹב כִּי רָחֵל גָּנְבָתָם: <sup>לג</sup> וַיָּבֹא לְבֶן בָּאֵהָל יַעֲקֹב | וּבָאֵהָל לֵאָה וּבָאֵהָל שְׁתֵּי הָאִמָּהוֹת וְלֹא מָצָא וַיֵּצֵא מֵאֵהָל לֵאָה וַיָּבֹא בָאֵהָל רָחֵל: <sup>לד</sup> וְרָחֵל לָקְחָה אֶת־הַתְּרָפִים וַתִּשְׁמֶם בְּכַר הַגִּמְלָה וַתֵּשֶׁב עֲלֵיהֶם וַיִּמְשֹׁשׁ לְבֶן אֶת־כָּל־הָאֵהָל וְלֹא מָצָא: <sup>לה</sup> וַתֹּאמֶר אֶל־אָבִיהָ אֶל־יִחִיר בְּעֵינַי אֲדֹנָי כִּי לֹא אוֹכַל לָקוֹם מִפְּנֵיךְ כִּי־דָרְךָ נָשִׁים לִי וַיַּחֲפֹשׂ וְלֹא מָצָא אֶת־הַתְּרָפִים:

<sup>לו</sup> וַיִּחַר לִיעֲקֹב וַיִּרְבּ בְּלֶבֶן וַיַּעַן יַעֲקֹב וַיֹּאמֶר לְלֶבֶן מַה־פָּשְׁעִי מַה חָטָאתִי כִּי דָלַקְתָּ אַחֲרַי: <sup>לז</sup> כִּי־מִשְׁשַׁת אֶת־כָּל־כְּלִי מַה־מָּצָאתָ מִכָּל כְּלִי־בֵיתְךָ שִׁים כֹּה נִגַּד אַחֵי וְאַחֶיךָ וַיִּזְכִּיחוּ בֵּין שְׁנֵינוּ: <sup>לח</sup> זֶה עֲשָׂרִים שָׁנָה אֲנֹכִי עֹמֵךְ רֹחֵלֶיךָ וְעֹזֶיךָ לֹא שָׁכְלוּ וְאֵילִי צֹאנְךָ לֹא אֲכָלְתִּי: <sup>לט</sup> טֶרֶפָה לֹא־הִבֵּאתִי אֵלֶיךָ אֲנֹכִי אֲחֻטָּנָה מִיָּדִי תִּבְקָשָׁנָה גָּנַבְתִּי יוֹם וּגְנַבְתִּי לַיְלָה:

that is yours and take it.” Now Jacob did not know that Rachel had stolen them. <sup>33</sup> Laban went into Jacob’s tent, and into Leah’s tent, and the tent of the two maids, but he found nothing. He left Leah’s tent and entered Rachel’s. <sup>34</sup> Now, Rachel had taken the idols, put them in the camel’s litter, and sat on them. Laban went through everything in the tent but found nothing. <sup>35</sup> Then Rachel said to her father, “Do not be angry, my lord, that I cannot rise before you; for, the way of women is upon me.” Laban searched but did not find the idols.

<sup>36</sup> Jacob was angry and upbraided Laban; Jacob asked Laban, “What is my sin? What is my sin, that you have hotly pursued me? <sup>37</sup> In going through my goods, did you find anything from your house? Set it here before my brothers and yours, so they may judge between us two. <sup>38</sup> In the twenty years I was with you, your ewes and your she-goats never miscarried, and I did not eat rams of your flock. <sup>39</sup> Those mauled by wild beasts I did not bring back to you but bore the loss; you claimed it from me, whether stolen by day or by night.

<sup>33</sup> The literal translation of ‘found nothing’ is ‘did not find’ – no direct object is provided in the MT, but the ‘household gods’ are implied.

<sup>34</sup> The ‘camel’s litter’ was probably some sort of basket-saddle, a cushioned saddle with a basket bound on.

<sup>35</sup> The narrator ridicules the idols upon which Rachel sat in her time of ‘uncleanness’ (Lv 15:19–23).

<sup>36</sup> The verb translated ‘hotly pursued’ is used elsewhere of soldiers chasing defeated enemies (1S 17:53).

<sup>37</sup> In place of ‘yours’, the MT has ‘your brothers’.

<sup>38</sup> The literal translation of ‘with you’ is ‘under you’.

<sup>39</sup> A shepherd was exonerated if he could produce the remains of the animal alleged to have been killed by wild beasts (Ex 22:12, see Am 3:12).

מִהֵיְיָתִי בַיּוֹם אֲכַלְנִי חֶרֶב וְקָרָח בַּלַּיְלָה וְתִדְד שְׁנָתִי  
מִמַּעֲיָנִי: <sup>מא</sup> זֶה-לִּי עֲשָׂרִים שָׁנָה בְּבֵיתְךָ עֲבַדְתִּיךָ אַרְבַּע-  
עָשָׂרָה שָׁנָה בְּשִׁתִּי בְנֹתֶיךָ וְשֵׁשׁ שָׁנִים בְּצֹאנְךָ וְתַחֲלֹף  
אֶת-מִשְׁכָּרְתִּי עֲשֹׂרַת מָנִים: <sup>מב</sup> לֹאִלִּי אֱלֹהֵי אָבִי אֱלֹהֵי  
אֲבֹרָהֶם וּפָחַד יִצְחָק הָיָה לִּי כִּי עָתָה רִיקָם שְׁלַחְתָּנִי  
אֶת-עֹנִי וְאֶת-יָגִיעַ כַּפִּי רָאָה אֱלֹהִים וַיּוֹכַח אֹמֶשׁ:

<sup>מג</sup> וַיַּעַן לָבָן וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל-יַעֲקֹב הַבָּנוֹת בְּנֹתֵי וְהַבָּנִים בָּנֵי  
וְהָצֹאֵן צֹאֲנִי וְכֹל אֲשֶׁר-אַתָּה רֹאֶה לִי-הוּא וְלִבְנֹתֵי  
מָה-אֶעֱשֶׂה לָאֵלֶּה הַיּוֹם אֹו לִבְנֵיהֶן אֲשֶׁר יִלְדוּ:  
<sup>מד</sup> וְעָתָה לָכֶּה נִכְרְתָה בְרִית אֲנִי וְאַתָּה וְהָיָה לְעֵד בֵּינִי  
וּבֵינְךָ:

<sup>מה</sup> וַיִּקַּח יַעֲקֹב אֶבֶן וַיְרִימָהּ מַצְבָּה: <sup>מו</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב  
לְאֶחָיו לִקְטוּ אֲבָנִים וַיִּקְחוּ אֲבָנִים וַיַּעֲשׂוּ-גֵל וַיֹּאכְלוּ  
שָׁם עַל-הַגֵּל: <sup>מז</sup> וַיִּקְרָא-לּוֹ לָבָן יָגֵר שְׁהָדוּתָא וַיַּעֲקֹב

<sup>40</sup> “By day, the fierce heat consumed me and the cold by night, and sleep fled from my eyes. <sup>41</sup> These twenty years I was in your house; I served fourteen years for your two daughters and six years for your flock; and you changed my wages ten times. <sup>42</sup> If the God of my father, the God of Abraham, the Fear of Isaac, had not been with me, you would have sent me away empty-handed. But God saw my weariness, and the work of my hands, and rebuked you last night.”

<sup>43</sup> Laban answered Jacob, “The daughters are my daughters, the sons are my sons, the sheep are my sheep, and all that you see is mine. But what can I do today about my daughters and about the sons they have borne? <sup>44</sup> Come now, let us make a covenant, you and I; and let it serve as a witness between us.”

<sup>45</sup> Then Jacob took a stone and set it up as a pillar. <sup>46</sup> Jacob said to his kinsmen, “Gather stones,” and they took stones and made a cairn. They ate there, by the cairn, and <sup>47</sup> Laban called it Jegar-Sahadutha

<sup>40</sup> The literal translation of ‘cold’ is ‘frost, ice’.

<sup>41</sup> In place of ‘served you’, NETB has the more accusatory ‘worked for you like a slave’.

<sup>42</sup> ‘Fear of Isaac’ (יִצְחָק) (פָּחַד) is a name for God that appears only here and in v. 53; in place of ‘Fear’, here following the NRSV and JPS, the NJB has ‘Kinsman’; an alternative is ‘The Awesome One of Isaac’.

<sup>43</sup> Two narratives are combined in vv. 43–54: **1:** A pact regulating the frontier between Laban and Jacob, with an explanation of the name Gilead (= Galeed, see #47). **2:** An agreement concerning Laban’s daughters, wives of Jacob (v. 50), with an explanation of the name Mizpah (see #49).

<sup>44</sup> The NJB uses an ellipsis in place of the semicolon; it is possible that some words of the text have been lost.

<sup>45</sup> Before ‘pillar’, NETB inserts the word ‘memorial’; the LXX uses ‘monument’ (στήλη).

<sup>46</sup> The meal was that of the covenant (v. 54) at which, it was believed, God was present.

<sup>47</sup> ‘Jegar-Sahadutha’ (יָגֵר שְׁהָדוּתָא) means, in Aramaic, ‘The heap of witness’; ‘Galeed’ (גֵּלְעָד) means the same in Hebrew.



קרא לו גלעד: <sup>מח</sup> ויאמר לבן הגל הזה עד ביני ובינך  
היום על-כן קרא-שמו גלעד: <sup>מט</sup> והמצפה אשר אמר  
יצף יהיה ביני ובינך כי נסתור איש מרעהו: <sup>נ</sup> אם-  
תענה את-בנותי ואם-תקח נשים על-בנותי אין איש  
עמנו ראה אלהים עד ביני ובינך: <sup>נא</sup> ויאמר לבן  
ליעקב הנה הגל הזה והנה המצבה אשר יריתי ביני  
ובינך: <sup>נב</sup> עד הגל הזה ועדה המצבה אם-אני לא-  
אעבר אליך את-הגל הזה ואם-אתה לא-תעבר אלי  
את-הגל הזה ואת-המצבה הזאת לרעה: <sup>נג</sup> אלהי  
אברהם ואלהי נחור ישפטו בינינו אלהי אביהם  
וישבע יעקב בפחד אביו יצחק: <sup>נד</sup> ויזבח יעקב זבח  
בהר ויקרא לאחיו לאכל-לחם ויאכלו לחם וילינו  
בהר:

but Jacob called it Galeed. <sup>48</sup> Laban said, “This cairn is a witness between us today.” That is why he named it Galeed, <sup>49</sup> and the pillar Mizpah; for, he said, “Let Yahweh watch between us when we are out of sight of each other. <sup>50</sup> If you ill-treat my daughters or marry other women beside my daughters, even though no one is with us, remember: God is witness between us.” <sup>51</sup> Then Laban said to Jacob, “Here is this cairn I have set between us, and here is the pillar. <sup>52</sup> This cairn is a witness, and the pillar bears witness: I must not pass this cairn to attack you, and you must not pass this cairn and this pillar to attack me. <sup>53</sup> May the God of Abraham and the god of Nahor judge between us.” Then Jacob swore by the Fear of his father Isaac; <sup>54</sup> and Jacob offered a sacrifice on the mountain and invited his brothers to eat; they ate the meal and passed the night on the mountain.

<sup>48</sup> In place of ‘between us’ (literally ‘between you and me’), NETB has ‘our agreement’.

<sup>49</sup> ‘Mizpah’ (מצפה) means ‘Watch-post’; this ‘Mizpah benediction’ is a prayer that God would oversee the treaty (since neither Jacob nor Laban could trust each other) and guarantee that both parties live up to the contract.

<sup>50</sup> The literal translation of ‘remember’ is ‘see’.

<sup>51</sup> Literally translated, this verse reads, “And Laban said to Jacob, ‘Behold this heap and behold the pillar which I have set between men and you.’”

<sup>52</sup> The literal translation of ‘cairn’ is ‘heap’.

<sup>53</sup> The verb translated ‘judge’ is plural, suggesting that Laban has more than one ‘god’ in mind. The Samaritan Pentateuch and the LXX (αγορεύει), in an effort to make the statement monotheistic, have a singular verb. But Laban was polytheistic, as shown by his household idols (cf. 31:19).

<sup>54</sup> Presumably, the meal was a type of peace offering, where the person bringing the offering ate the animal being sacrificed.



## בראשית פרק לב

## GENESIS 32

א וַיִּשְׁכֶּם לְבֹן בִּבְקָר וַיִּנְשֹׁק לְבָנָיו וּלְבָנוֹתָיו וַיְבָרֶךְ  
אֹתָהֶם וַיֵּלֶךְ וַיָּשָׁב לְבֹן לְמִקְמוֹ: ב וַיַּעֲקֹב הָלַךְ לְדַרְכּוֹ  
וַיַּפְגְּעוּ-בּוֹ מַלְאֲכֵי אֱלֹהִים: ג וַיֹּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב כַּאֲשֶׁר רָאִם  
מַחֲנֶה אֱלֹהִים זֶה וַיִּקְרָא שֵׁם-הַמָּקוֹם הַהוּא  
מַחֲנִים: {פ}

ד וַיִּשְׁלַח יַעֲקֹב מַלְאָכִים לְפָנָיו אֶל-עֲשָׂו אָחִיו אֲרָצָה  
שֵׁעִיר שְׂדֵה אֲדוֹם: ה וַיֹּצֵא אֹתָם לֵאמֹר כֹּה תֹאמְרוּן  
לְאֲדֹנִי לַעֲשׂו כֹּה אָמַר עַבְדְּךָ יַעֲקֹב עַם-לְבֹן גִּרְתִּי  
וְאַחֲרַי עַד-עַתָּה: ו וַיְהִי-לִי שׂוֹר וַחֲמֹר צֹאן וְעֶבֶד  
וְשִׁפְחָה וְאֲשַׁלְּחָה לְהַגִּיד לְאֲדֹנִי לְמִצְאָחוֹן בְּעֵינֶיךָ:  
ז וַיָּשָׁבוּ הַמַּלְאָכִים אֶל-יַעֲקֹב לֵאמֹר בָּאנוּ אֶל-אֲחִיךָ  
אֶל-עֲשָׂו וְגַם הָלַךְ לִקְרֹאתָךְ וְאַרְבַּע-מֵאוֹת אִישׁ

<sup>1</sup> Laban rose early the next morning, kissed his sons and daughters, and blessed them. Then Laban departed and returned to his home.

<sup>2</sup> While Jacob was going on his way, angels of God met him <sup>3</sup> and, on seeing them, he said, "This is God's camp," and he named the place Mahanaim.

<sup>4</sup> Jacob sent messengers before him to his brother Esau in the land of Seir, the country of Edom, <sup>5</sup> telling them, "Say this to my lord Esau, "Thus says your servant Jacob: I have been staying with Laban until <sup>6</sup> now, and have oxen, donkeys, flocks, and men and women slaves. I send news of this to my lord that I might find favour in his sight.""

<sup>7</sup> The messengers returned to Jacob saying, "We went to your brother Esau and he is coming to meet you; and four hundred men are with

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<sup>1</sup> This verse is 31:55 in the NRSV and subsequent verse numbers are therein accordingly decremented; here, we follow the MT (and NJB).

<sup>2</sup> The phrase, 'angels of God', occurs only here and in 28:12 in the OT: Jacob saw a vision of angels just before he left Canaan; now, he encounters angels as he prepares to return there.

<sup>3</sup> 'Mahaneh' (מַחֲנֶה – camp) explains the name 'Mahanaim' (מַחֲנִים), which was to become important in later Israelite history (2S 2:8–9, 17:24–29, 1K 4:14). Here, in the dual form, it means 'two camps', to which allusion is made in vv. 8 & 11.

<sup>4</sup> Jacob, having reached Esau's territory, takes the usual precautions of a caravan approaching hostile country.

<sup>5</sup> The story recounts Jacob's grovelling in fear before Esau as he calls his brother his 'lord', as if to minimise what had been done 20 years ago.

<sup>6</sup> In place of 'I send' (following the NJB), the NRSV has 'I have sent'; the form is a preterite with the *vav* consecutive and can be rendered as an English present tense – as the Hebrew perfect/preterite allows – much like an epistolary aorist in Greek. The form assumes the temporal perspective of the one who reads the message.

<sup>7</sup> In place of 'saying' (following the MT and NRSV), the NJB has 'and told him'.

עָמָו: <sup>ח</sup> וַיִּירָא יַעֲקֹב מְאֹד וַיֵּצֵר לוֹ וַיַּחַץ אֶת־הָעָם  
אֲשֶׁר־אִתּוֹ וְאֶת־הָעֹצֵן וְאֶת־הַבָּקָר וְהַגְּמָלִים לְשָׁנִי  
מַחֲנֹת: <sup>ט</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר אִם־יָבוֹא עֲשׂוֹ אֶל־הַמַּחֲנֶה הָאֶחָת  
וְהִכָּהוּ וְהָיָה הַמַּחֲנֶה הַנִּשְׁאָר לְפָלִיטָה: <sup>י</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב  
אֱלֹהֵי אָבִי אַבְרָהָם וְאֱלֹהֵי אָבִי יִצְחָק יְהוָה הָאֹמֵר אֵלַי  
שׁוּב לְאֶרֶצְךָ וּלְמוֹלַדְתְּךָ וְאִיטִיבָה עִמָּךְ: <sup>יא</sup> קִטְנֹתִי  
מִכָּל הַחֲסָדִים וּמִכָּל־הָאֲמֻת אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתָ אֶת־עַבְדְּךָ  
כִּי בַמַּקְלִי עָבַרְתִּי אֶת־הַיַּרְדֵּן הַזֶּה וְעַתָּה הֵייתִי לְשָׁנִי  
מַחֲנֹת: <sup>יב</sup> הַצִּילֵנִי נָא מִיַּד אָחִי מִיָּד עֲשׂוֹ כִּי־יִירָא אֲנֹכִי  
אִתּוֹ פֶּן־יָבוֹא וְהִכָּהנִי אִם עַל־בָּנִים: <sup>יג</sup> וְאַתָּה אֲמַרְתָּ  
הֵיטֵב אִיטִיב עִמָּךְ וְשָׂמַתִּי אֶת־זֶרְעֶךָ כְּחוֹל הַיָּם אֲשֶׁר  
לֹא־יִסְפָּר מֶרֶב: <sup>יד</sup> וַיֵּלֶן שָׁם בַּלַּיְלָה הַהוּא וַיִּקָּח מִן־  
הַבָּא בִידּוֹ מִנְחָה לַעֲשׂוֹ אָחִיו: <sup>טו</sup> עֲזִים מְאֹתִים וְתִישִׁים  
עֶשְׂרִים רְחִלִּים מְאֹתִים וְאִילִים עֶשְׂרִים: <sup>טז</sup> גְּמָלִים  
מִיְנִיקוֹת וּבָנִיָּהִם שְׁלֹשִׁים פָּרוֹת אַרְבָּעִים וּפָרִים

him.” <sup>8</sup> Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed. He divided the people with him, and the flocks, cattle, and camels, into two camps, <sup>9</sup> saying, “If Esau comes to one camp and attacks it, the other camp will be left to escape.” <sup>10</sup> Jacob said, “O God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac, Yahweh who said to me, “Go back to your land and family and I will treat you well,” <sup>11</sup> I am unworthy of the kindness and goodness you have shown your servant. I had only my staff when I crossed this Jordan and now I can form two camps. <sup>12</sup> Deliver me, please, from my brother Esau’s hand; for, I fear him, lest he come and kill us, the mothers with the sons. <sup>13</sup> Yet you have said, “I will do you good, making your seed like the sand on the seashore, beyond counting.”” <sup>14</sup> So, he spent the night there. From what he had, he chose a gift for his brother Esau: <sup>15</sup> Two hundred she-goats, twenty he-goats, two hundred ewes, twenty rams, <sup>16</sup> thirty nursing camels with their calves, forty cows, ten bulls, twenty she-

<sup>8</sup> The NJB (which here follows the LXX) omits: “and camels.”

<sup>9</sup> The verb אָמַר (‘said’) here represents Jacob’s thought or reasoning, and some translate as ‘thought’.

<sup>10</sup> The idea behind the phrase ‘treat you well’ includes more than prosperity, though that is its essential meaning. Here, the form is subordinated to the preceding imperative and indicates purpose or result: Jacob is reminding God of his promise in the hope that God will honour his word.

<sup>11</sup> However, the river is actually the Jabbok (see v. 23).

<sup>12</sup> The literal translation of ‘from my brother Esau’s hand’ is ‘from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau’.

<sup>13</sup> The literal translation of ‘beyond counting’ is ‘which cannot be counted because of abundance’; the imperfect verbal form indicates potential here.

<sup>14</sup> The noun translated ‘gift’ here can refer to a tribute paid by a subject to his lord, as is likely the case here.

<sup>15</sup> Jacob’s gift is generous indeed – and shows just how prosperous he had become.

<sup>16</sup> Before ‘donkeys’, the NRSV insert the qualifier, ‘male’, which is implied (but not actually present) in the MT.

עֲשֹׂהָ אֶתְנַת עֲשָׂרִים וְעִירָם עֲשָׂרָה: <sup>יז</sup> וַיִּתֵּן בְּיַד־  
עֲבָדָיו עֶדֶר עֶדֶר לְבָדּוֹ וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל־עֲבָדָיו עֲבְרוּ לִפְנֵי  
וְרוּחַ תְּשִׁימוּ בֵּין עֶדֶר וּבֵין עֶדֶר: <sup>יח</sup> וַיֵּצֵא אֶת־הָרֵאשׁוֹן  
לֵאמֹר כִּי יִפְגֹּשׁ עֲשׂוֹ אֶחָי וּשְׂאֵלָה לֵאמֹר לְמִי־אַתָּה  
וְאַנָּה תֵלֵךְ וּלְמִי אַלֶּה לִפְנֶיךָ: <sup>יט</sup> וַאֲמַרְתָּ לְעַבְדְּךָ  
לְיַעֲקֹב מִנְחָה הוּא שְׁלוּחָה לְאֹדְנִי לַעֲשׂוֹ וְהִנֵּה גַם־  
הוּא אַחֲרֵינוּ: <sup>כ</sup> וַיֵּצֵא גַם אֶת־הַשְּׁנִי גַם אֶת־הַשְּׁלִישִׁי גַם  
אֶת־כָּל־הַלֵּכִים אַחֲרֵי הָעֲדָרִים לֵאמֹר כַּדְּבַר הַזֶּה  
תִּדְבְּרוּן אֶל־עֲשׂוֹ בְּמִצְאָכֶם אֹתוֹ: <sup>כא</sup> וַאֲמַרְתֶּם גַּם הִנֵּה  
עַבְדְּךָ יַעֲקֹב אַחֲרֵינוּ כִּי־אָמַר אֲכַפְּרָה פָּנָיו בְּמִנְחָה  
הַהֹלֶכֶת לִפְנֵי וְאַחֲרֵי־כֵן אֶרְאֶה פָּנָיו אוֹלִי יִשָּׂא פָנָי:  
<sup>כב</sup> וַתַּעֲבֹר הַמִּנְחָה עַל־פָּנָיו וְהוּא לֹן בַּלִּילָה־הַהוּא  
בְּמַחֲנֶה: <sup>כג</sup> וַיִּקָּם בַּלִּילָה הוּא וַיִּקָּח אֶת־שְׁתֵּי נָשָׁיו  
וְאֶת־שְׁתֵּי שִׁפְחָתָיו וְאֶת־אֶחָד עֶשֶׂר יְלָדָיו וַיַּעֲבֹר אֶת־  
מַעְבַּר יַבֹּק: <sup>כד</sup> וַיִּקָּחֵם וַיַּעֲבִרֵם אֶת־הַנַּחַל וַיַּעֲבֹר אֶת־  
אֲשֶׁר־לוֹ:

asses and ten donkeys. <sup>17</sup> He put them in the charge of his servants, in separate droves, and told his servants, "Go ahead of me, leaving a space between droves." <sup>18</sup> He gave the first this order: "When my brother Esau meets you and asks, "To whom do you belong? Where are you going? Whose are those animals before you?" <sup>19</sup> you will answer, "To your servant Jacob; they are a gift sent to my lord Esau; and he is following."" <sup>20</sup> He gave the same order to the second and the third, and to all who were following the droves, "That is what you must say to Esau when you find him. <sup>21</sup> You must say, "Yes, your servant Jacob is following."" For, he thought, "I shall appease him by sending a gift in advance; so, when I come face to face with him, he may receive me favourably." <sup>22</sup> The gift went ahead of him, but he himself spent that night in the camp. <sup>23</sup> During the night he rose, took his two wives, his two slave-girls, and his eleven sons, and crossed the ford of the Jabbok. <sup>24</sup> He took them, sent them across the stream, and sent all his possessions across, too.

<sup>17</sup> The literal translation of 'in the charge' is 'into the hands'.

<sup>18</sup> The literal translation of 'to whom do you belong' is 'to whom are you'.

<sup>19</sup> The literal translation of 'and he is following' is 'and look, also he (is) behind us'.

<sup>20</sup> Literally translated, this verse ends, "... saying: 'According to this word you will speak when you find him.'"

<sup>21</sup> In Leviticus, the verb here translated 'appease' has the idea of removing anger due to sin or guilt, a nuance that fits this passage very well.

<sup>22</sup> The literal translation of 'went ahead of him' is 'passed over upon his face'.

<sup>23</sup> From the wrestling with God, Jacob emerges victor; he recognises the supernatural nature of his adversary and extorts a blessing from him. The test, however, avoids using the name of Yahweh and the unknown antagonist will not give his name.

<sup>24</sup> Literally translated, this verse ends with 'and he sent across what he had'.

כה ויותר יעקב לבדו ויאבק איש עמו עד עלות השחר: כו וירא כי לא יכל לו ויגע בכף-ירכו ותקע כף-ירד יעקב בהאבקו עמו: כז ויאמר שלחני כי עלה השחר ויאמר לא אשלחך כי אם-ברכתני: כח ויאמר אליו מה-שמך ויאמר יעקב: כט ויאמר לא יעקב יאמר עוד שמך כי אם-ישראל כי-שרית עם-אלהים ועם-אנשים ותוכל: ל וישאל יעקב ויאמר הגידה-נא שמך ויאמר למה זה תשאל לשמי ויברך אתו שם:

לא ויקרא יעקב שם המקום פניאל כי-ראיתי אלהים פנים אל-פנים ותנצל נפשי: לב ויזרח-לו השמש כאשר עבר את-פנואל והוא צלע על-ירכו: לג על-כן לא-יאכלו בני-ישראל את-גיד הנשה אשר על-כף הירך עד היום הזה כי נגע בכף-ירד יעקב בגיד הנשה:

<sup>25</sup> Jacob was left alone; and a man wrestled with him until sunrise.

<sup>26</sup> When the man saw he could not master him, he hit him in the hip socket and Jacob's hip was dislocated as he wrestled with him. <sup>27</sup> He said, "Let me go, for day is breaking." But Jacob said, "I will not let you go unless you bless me." <sup>28</sup> He said, "What is your name?" He replied, "Jacob." <sup>29</sup> He said, "Your name shall no longer be Jacob but Israel; for, you have fought against God and men and prevailed." <sup>30</sup> Jacob then asked him, "Please, tell me your name." But he replied, "Why do you ask my name?" And he blessed him there.

<sup>31</sup> Jacob called name of the place Peniel, "Because I have seen God face to face," he said, "and I have survived." <sup>32</sup> The sun rose on him as he left Penuel, limping because of his hip. <sup>33</sup> That is the reason why to this day the Israelites do not eat the sinew that is in the socket of the hip: because he had struck Jacob in the socket of the hip on that sinew.

<sup>25</sup> The verb translated 'wrestled' (ויאבק) sounds like the names 'Jacob' (יעקב) and 'Jabbok' (יבֶּק); in this way, the narrator links the setting, the main action, and the main participant together in the mind of the reader or hearer.

<sup>26</sup> Owing to his Herculean strength (29:10, compare 28:18), Jacob was winning the contest until his opponent sprained Jacob's hip.

<sup>27</sup> Here, the 'divine being' had to vanish before sunrise – a mark of the antiquity of the tradition.

<sup>28</sup> In antiquity, it was believed that selfhood was expressed in the name given a person (compare v. 30).

<sup>29</sup> The probable meaning of Israel is, "May God show his strength," but it is here explained with, "The one who strives with God."

<sup>30</sup> The divine being refuses lest Jacob, by possessing the name, gain power over him (compare Ex 3:13–14, Jg 13:17).

<sup>31</sup> 'Peniel' (פְּנִיאל) means 'the face of God'. To see God is death to a human being; to do so and survive is a sign of special favour (see #Ex 33:20).

<sup>32</sup> The place name is 'Penuel' (פְּנוּאל) here, apparently a variant spelling of 'Peniel'.

<sup>33</sup> There is no mention of this ancient food law elsewhere in the Bible.

## בראשית פרק לג

## GENESIS 33

א וַיֵּשָׂא יַעֲקֹב עֵינָיו וַיֵּרָא וְהִנֵּה עֹשׂוֹ בָּא וְעִמּוֹ אַרְבַּע  
מֵאוֹת אִישׁ וַיַּחַץ אֶת־הַיְלָדִים עַל־לֵאָה וְעַל־רָחֵל וְעַל־  
שְׁתֵּי הַשִּׁפּוֹת: ב וַיֵּשֶׂם אֶת־הַשִּׁפּוֹת וְאֶת־יְלִדֵיהֶן  
רִאשֹׁנָה וְאֶת־לֵאָה וַיְלִדֶיהָ אַחֲרָנִים וְאֶת־רָחֵל וְאֶת־  
יֹסֵף אַחֲרָנִים: ג וְהוּא עָבַר לִפְנֵיהֶם וַיִּשְׁתַּחוּ אֶרְצָה  
שִׁבַּע פְּעָמִים עַד־גִּשְׁתּוֹ עַד־אַחֲיוֹ: ד וַיֵּרָץ עֹשׂוֹ  
לִקְרֹאתוֹ וַיַּחְבְּקֵהוּ וַיִּפֹּל עַל־צוּאָרוֹ וַיִּשְׁקֵהוּ וַיִּבְכּוּ:  
ה וַיֵּשָׂא אֶת־עֵינָיו וַיֵּרָא אֶת־הַנָּשִׁים וְאֶת־הַיְלָדִים  
וַיֹּאמֶר מִי־אַלֶּה לָךְ וַיֹּאמֶר הַיְלָדִים אֲשֶׁר־חָנַן אֱלֹהִים  
אֶת־עַבְדְּךָ: ו וַתֵּגֶשֶׁן הַשִּׁפּוֹת הֵנָּה וַיְלִדֵיהֶן  
וַתִּשְׁתַּחוּן: ז וַתֵּגֶשׁ גַּם־לֵאָה וַיְלִדֶיהָ וַיִּשְׁתַּחוּ וְאַחֲרֵיהֶן  
נָגַשׁ יֹסֵף וְרָחֵל וַיִּשְׁתַּחוּ: ח וַיֹּאמֶר מִי לָךְ כָּל־הַמַּחֲנֶה

<sup>1</sup> Looking up Jacob saw Esau arriving with four hundred men. So, he divided the children between Leah, Rachel and the two slave-girls. <sup>2</sup> He put the slave-girls and their children in front, with Leah and her children following, and Rachel and Joseph behind. <sup>3</sup> He himself went ahead of them and bowed to the ground seven times before going up to his brother. <sup>4</sup> But Esau ran to meet him, took him in his arms and held him close and wept. <sup>5</sup> Then looking up he saw the women and children. "Who are these with you?" he asked. Jacob answered, "The children whom God has bestowed on your servant." <sup>6</sup> The slave-girls then came up with their children and they bowed low. <sup>7</sup> Leah also came up along with her children and they bowed low. Then, Joseph and Rachel came up and bowed low. <sup>8</sup> He asked, "What do you mean

### GENESIS 33

- <sup>1</sup> Translated literally, this verse opens, "And Jacob lifted up his eyes, and look, Esau was arriving ..."
- <sup>2</sup> This kind of ranking according to favouritism no doubt fed the jealousy over Joseph that later becomes an important element in the narrative; it must have been painful to the family to see that they were expendable.
- <sup>3</sup> Literally translated, the verse ends, "until his drawing near unto his brother." The construction uses the preposition with the infinitive construct to express a temporal clause.
- <sup>4</sup> In place of 'held him close', here following the NJB, the NRSV has 'fell on his neck'.
- <sup>5</sup> The verb here translated 'bestowed' means 'to be gracious', 'to show favour'; here, it carries the nuance 'to give graciously'.
- <sup>6</sup> The literal translation of this verse is, "and the female servants drew near, they and their children and they bowed down."
- <sup>7</sup> In place of 'bowed low' (twice in this verse), NETB has 'bowed down'.
- <sup>8</sup> In place of the opening 'he', here following the MT, the NJB, NRSV & NETB have 'Esau'. The 'camp' does not refer to the groups of 32:14-22 but the first camp of 32:8; Jacob had despaired of it (32:9) and is now only too glad to offer it as a gift



הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר פָּגַשְׁתִּי וַיֹּאמֶר לְמִצְא־חֵן בְּעֵינַי אֲדֹנָי:  
<sup>ט</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר עֲשׂוּ יִשְׁלִי רֵב אַחִי יְהִי לָךְ אֲשֶׁר-לָךְ: וַיֹּאמֶר  
 יַעֲקֹב אֶל-נָא אִם-נָא מִצְאֹתִי חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ וּלְקַחְתָּ  
 מִנְחָתִי מִיָּדַי כִּי עַל-כֵּן רָאִיתִי פָנֶיךָ כְּרֹאֶת פְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים  
 וַתִּרְצָנִי: <sup>יא</sup> קַח-נָא אֶת-בְּרִכְתִּי אֲשֶׁר הִבָּאת לָךְ כִּי-  
 חֲנִנִי אֱלֹהִים וְכִי יִשְׁלִי-כָּל וַיִּפְצַר-בּוֹ וַיִּקַּח:  
<sup>יב</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר נִסְעָה וְנִלְכָּה וְאִלְכָּה לְנִגְדָּךְ: <sup>יג</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו  
 אֲדֹנָי יִדְעֵ כִּי-הִילָדִים רַבִּים וְהֵצֵאן וְהִבְקֵר עֲלוֹת עָלַי  
 וּדְפָקוּם יוֹם אֶחָד וּמָתוּ כָּל-הֵצֵאן: <sup>יד</sup> יַעֲבֹר-נָא אֲדֹנָי  
 לִפְנֵי עַבְדּוֹ וְאֲנִי אֶתְנַהֲלָה לְאַטִּי לְרֹגֶל הַמְּלָאכָה  
 אֲשֶׁר-לִפְנֵי וּלְרֹגֶל הִילָדִים עַד אֲשֶׁר-אֲבֹא אֶל-אֲדֹנָי  
 שְׁעִירָה: <sup>טו</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר עֲשׂוּ אֲצִיגָה-נָא עִמָּךְ מִן-הָעֵם אֲשֶׁר  
 אִתִּי וַיֹּאמֶר לָמָּה זֶה אֲמַצָּא-חֵן בְּעֵינַי אֲדֹנָי: <sup>טז</sup> וַיָּשָׁב  
 בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא עֲשׂוּ לְדַרְכּוֹ שְׁעִירָה: <sup>יז</sup> וַיַּעֲקֹב נָסַע סֻכּוֹתָה  
 וַיִּבֶן לּוֹ בַּיִת וּלְמִקְנֵהוּ עָשָׂה סֻכּוֹת עַל-כֵּן קָרָא שֵׁם-  
 הַמָּקוֹם סֻכּוֹת: {ס}

by that whole camp I met?" He said, "It is to win my lord's favour."

<sup>9</sup> Esau said, "Brother, I have plenty; keep what is yours." <sup>10</sup> Jacob said, "Please, if I have found favour with you, take the gift I offer. For, it is as if I have seen the face of God, since you have received me kindly. <sup>11</sup> So, accept the gift I have brought you; since God has been generous to me, I have all I need." He urged him, and Esau accepted.

<sup>12</sup> He said, "Let us go our way; I will lead you." <sup>13</sup> Jacob replied, "My lord knows that the children are weak, and that the flock and herds with me are nursing; If they are driven too hard for one day, the whole drove will die. <sup>14</sup> Let my lord go ahead of his servant, and I will lead on slowly, to suit the flock I am driving and the children, until I join my lord in Seir." <sup>15</sup> And Esau said, "Let me leave you some of the men with me." He asked, "Why? All I wish is to win your favour." <sup>16</sup> So, that day, Esau resumed his journey to Seir. <sup>17</sup> But Jacob left for Succoth, built himself a house and made shelters for the livestock; that is why the name of the place is Succoth.

<sup>9</sup> For this verse, here following the NJB, the NRSV reads, "But Esau said, 'I have enough, my brother; keep what you have for yourself'."

<sup>10</sup> This verse contains another allusion to the name 'Peniel' (see #32:31).

<sup>11</sup> Alternative readings for 'gift', here following the NJB & NRSV, are 'present' (NETB) and 'blessing'.

<sup>12</sup> The literal translation of 'let us go our way' is 'let us travel and let us go'. Jacob mistrusts Esau and, letting him go on ahead, takes another direction.

<sup>13</sup> Literally translated, this verse ends, "... and the sheep and the cattle nursing (are) upon me."

<sup>14</sup> The literal translation of the central clause(s) of this verse is, "at the foot of the property which is before me and at the foot of the children."

<sup>15</sup> The NJB has 'Jacob asked' in place of 'he asked', here following the MT.

<sup>16</sup> The literal translation of 'resumed his journey' is 'returned on his way'.

<sup>17</sup> 'Succoth' (סֻכּוֹת) means 'shelter' or 'booths'.



י<sup>יח</sup> וַיָּבֹא יַעֲקֹב שָׁלֵם עִיר שָׁכֶם אֲשֶׁר בְּאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן בְּבֹאוֹ  
מִפַּדָּן אֲרָם וַיַּחֲן אֶת־פָּנָיו הָעִיר: י<sup>ט</sup> וַיִּקֶּן אֶת־חֲלָקֶת  
הַשָּׂדֶה אֲשֶׁר נָטָה־שָׁם אָהֱלֹו מִיַּד בְּנֵי־חָמוֹר אָבִי  
שָׁכֶם בְּמֵאָה קְשִׁיטָה: כ וַיַּצֵּב־שָׁם מִזְבֵּחַ וַיִּקְרָא־לֹו אֵל  
אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: {ס}

<sup>18</sup> Jacob came safely to the city of Shechem in Canaanite territory, on his way from Paddan-Aram. He encamped before the city <sup>19</sup> and for one hundred pieces of silver he bought from the sons of Hamor, the father of Shechem, the plot of land on which he had pitched his tent. <sup>20</sup> There he erected an altar, which he called, “El-Elohe-Israel.”

<sup>18</sup> In place of ‘before’, here following the MT (& NRSV), the NJB has ‘opposite’.

<sup>19</sup> The ‘sons of Hamor’ were the ruling clan of the city (Jg 9:28), of Hivite (perhaps Horite or Hurrian) extraction. The ‘pieces of silver’ are Hebrew *qesitah* (קְשִׁיטָה). The ‘plot of land’ later became the traditional burial place of Joseph (Jos 24:32).

<sup>20</sup> The worship of ‘El-Elohe-Israel’ (‘God, the God of Israel’) apparently preceded the later establishment of an Israelite tribal confederacy, presumably at Shechem (Jos 24), when ‘El’ (the Semitic word for ‘God’) was succeeded by ‘Yahweh’, the God of Israel.

## GENESIS 34

## בראשית פרק לד

א וַתֵּצֵא דִּינָה בִּתְ-לֵאָה אֲשֶׁר יָלְדָה לְיַעֲקֹב לִרְאוֹת  
בבָּנוֹת הָאָרֶץ: ב וַיֵּרָא אֹתָהּ שָׁכֵם בֶּן-חַמּוֹר הַחִוִּי  
נָשִׂיא הָאָרֶץ וַיִּקַּח אֹתָהּ וַיִּשְׁכַּב אִתָּהּ וַיַּעֲבֹד: ג וַתְּדַבֵּק  
נַפְשׁוֹ בְּדִינָה בִּתְ-יַעֲקֹב וַיֵּאָהֵב אֶת-הַנַּעַר וַיְדַבֵּר עַל-  
לֵב הַנַּעַר: ד וַיֹּאמֶר שָׁכֵם אֶל-חַמּוֹר אָבִיו לֵאמֹר קַח-  
לִי אֶת-הַיְלָדָה הַזֹּאת לְאִשָּׁה: ה וַיַּעֲקֹב שָׁמַע כִּי טָמְאָה  
אֶת-דִּינָה בָתּוֹ וּבְנָיו הָיוּ אֶת-מִקְנֵהוּ בַשָּׂדֶה וְהַחֲרֹשׁ  
יַעֲקֹב עַד-בָּאָם:

ו וַיֵּצֵא חַמּוֹר אֲבִי-שָׁכֵם אֶל-יַעֲקֹב לְדַבֵּר אִתּוֹ: ז וּבְנֵי  
יַעֲקֹב בָּאוּ מִן-הַשָּׂדֶה כְּשִׁמְעָם וַיִּתְּעַצְבוּ הָאֲנָשִׁים  
וַיַּחֲרֹ לָהֶם מְאֹד כִּי-נִבְלָה עָשָׂה בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל לְשָׁכַב אֶת-  
בִּתְ-יַעֲקֹב וְכֵן לֹא יַעֲשֶׂה: ח וַיְדַבֵּר חַמּוֹר אִתָּם לֵאמֹר

<sup>1</sup> Dinah, Jacob's daughter by Leah, went out to visit the women of that region. <sup>2</sup> Shechem, the son of Hamor the Hivite, the ruler of that region, saw her, took her off and raped her, and so defiled her. <sup>3</sup> But Dinah, Jacob's daughter, captivated him; he fell in love with the young girl and comforted her. <sup>4</sup> So Shechem said to his father Hamor, "Get me this young girl, I want to marry her." <sup>5</sup> Now, Jacob heard how he had violated his daughter Dinah; but as his sons were in the fields with his livestock, Jacob said nothing until they came in.

<sup>6</sup> Hamor the father of Shechem went out to talk to Jacob. <sup>7</sup> When Jacob's sons returned from the fields and heard the news, they were indignant and very angry that he had committed an outrage in Israel by raping Jacob's daughter – an offence that they could not overlook.

## GENESIS 34

- <sup>1</sup> 'Dinah' is mentioned elsewhere only in 30:21 and 46:15. The literal translation of 'visit' is 'see'; this verb followed by the preposition ב here has the idea of 'look over': the young girl wanted to meet these women and see what they were like.
- <sup>2</sup> The 'Hivites' were one of the ancient races of Canaan (see 10:17).
- <sup>3</sup> The literal translation of 'comforted her' is 'spoke to the heart of the young woman' (cf. Jg 19:3, 2S 19:7); another option is to translate (as NETB) 'spoke romantically to her' (cf. Ho 2:14).
- <sup>4</sup> The literal translation of Shechem's demand is, "Take for me this young woman for a wife."
- <sup>5</sup> Jacob's expected response would be anger or rage; but he remained silent; he appears too indifferent or confused to act decisively. When the leader does not act decisively, the younger zealots will, and often with disastrous results.
- <sup>6</sup> At the end of this verse, NETB adds 'about Dinah'.
- <sup>7</sup> 'Committed an outrage in Israel' (the NJB has 'insulted Israel') is an old expression for a crime affecting the entire tribal community of Israel (Dt 22:21, Jos 7:15, Jg 19:23–24, 20:6, 10).

שָׁכַם בְּנֵי חֲשֵׁקָה נָפְשׁוֹ בְּבַתְּכֶם תָּנוּ נָא אֶתְּהָ לָּו  
 לְאִשָּׁה: <sup>ט</sup> וְהִתְחַתְּנוּ אִתָּנוּ בְּנֵיתֵיכֶם תִּתְּנוּ־לָנוּ וְאֶת־  
 בְּנֵיתֵינוּ תִּקְחוּ לָכֶם: <sup>י</sup> וְאִתָּנוּ תֵּשְׁבוּ וְהָאָרֶץ תִּהְיֶה  
 לְפָנֵיכֶם שְׂבוּ וְסָחְרוּהָ וְהָאֶחָזוּ בָּהּ: <sup>יא</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר שָׁכַם  
 אֶל־אָבִיָּה וְאֶל־אֲחִיָּה אֲמַצְאֲחֵן בְּעֵינֵיכֶם וְאֲשֶׁר  
 תֹּאמְרוּ אֵלַי אֶתֶּן: <sup>יב</sup> הֲרָבוּ עָלַי מְאֹד מְהֵרָ וּמִתֵּן  
 וְאִתָּנָה כְּאֲשֶׁר תֹּאמְרוּ אֵלַי וּתְנוּ־לִי אֶת־הַנֶּעֱר  
 לְאִשָּׁה:

<sup>יג</sup> וַיַּעֲנוּ בְנֵי־יַעֲקֹב אֶת־שָׁכַם וְאֶת־חָמוֹר אָבִיו בְּמִרְמָה  
 וַיִּדְּבְרוּ אֲשֶׁר טָמְא אֶת דִּינָה אֲחֹתָם: <sup>יד</sup> וַיֹּאמְרוּ  
 אֵלֵיהֶם לֹא נִכְלָ לַעֲשׂוֹת הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה לְתֵת אֶת־אֲחֹתֵנוּ  
 לְאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר־לוֹ עֵרְלָה כִּי־חֲרָפָה הוּא לָנוּ: <sup>טו</sup> אֲדָּ־  
 בְּזָאת נָאֻז לָכֶם אִם תִּהְיוּ כָּמֵנוּ לְהַמָּל לָכֶם כָּל־זָכָר:  
<sup>טז</sup> וְנִתְּנוּ אֶת־בְּנֵיתֵינוּ לָכֶם וְאֶת־בְּנֵיתֵיכֶם נִקְחָ־לָנוּ

<sup>8</sup> Hamor said to them, “The heart of my son Shechem is set on your daughter; I beg you, let him marry her. <sup>9</sup> Ally yourselves with us by marriage; give us your daughters and you take our daughters. <sup>10</sup> Stay with us and the land shall be open to you to live in or move through or own.” <sup>11</sup> Shechem said to her father and brothers of the young girl, “If only I can win your favour, I will give you whatever you ask. <sup>12</sup> Demand from me a huge bridal price and gifts; I will give you as much as you ask. Only let me marry the young girl.”

<sup>13</sup> Jacob’s sons answered Shechem and his father Hamor craftily, because he had defiled their sister Dinah, <sup>14</sup> and said to him, “We cannot do this thing. To give our sister to an uncircumcised man would be a disgrace to us. <sup>15</sup> We can agree only on one condition: that you become like us by circumcising all your males. <sup>16</sup> Then we will give you our daughters, taking yours for ourselves; and we will stay

<sup>8</sup> Even though Hamor is speaking to Dinah’s brothers, he refers to her as their daughter (see v. 17).

<sup>9</sup> Becoming allied by marriage foreshadows the temptations Israel would face when they entered the Promised Land (see Dt 7:3, Jos 23:12).

<sup>10</sup> In place of ‘move through’, here following the NJB, the NRSV & NIV have ‘trade in’; the verb seems to carry the basic meaning ‘travel about freely’, although the substantial participial form refers to a trader

<sup>11</sup> The literal translation of ‘give’ is ‘pay’.

<sup>12</sup> The cohortative form of the verb ‘give’ expresses Shechem’s resolve to have Dinah as his wife.

<sup>13</sup> The NJB opens this verse with, “Then came the answer Jacob’s sons gave to Shechem.”

<sup>14</sup> The word here translated ‘disgrace’ usually means ‘ridicule’, ‘taunt’ or ‘reproach’; it can also refer to the reason the condition of shame or disgrace causes ridicule or a reproach.

<sup>15</sup> The verb ‘circumcising’ is here in the infinitive, explaining how they would become like them.

<sup>16</sup> The perfect verbal form with the *vav* ‘then we will give’ consecutive introduces the apodosis of the conditional sentence.

וַיִּשְׁבְּנוּ אֹתְכֶם וְהִיָּינוּ לְעַם אֶחָד: <sup>יז</sup> וְאִם-לֹא תִשְׁמָעוּ אֲלֵינוּ לְהַמּוֹל וּלְקַחְנוּ אֶת-בִּתְּנוּ וְהִלְכְּנוּ: <sup>יח</sup> וַיִּיטְבוּ דְבָרֵיהֶם בְּעֵינֵי חָמוֹר וּבְעֵינֵי שָׁכֵם בֶּן-חָמוֹר: <sup>יט</sup> וְלֹא-אֲחֵר הִנָּעַר לַעֲשׂוֹת הַדָּבָר כִּי חָפֵץ בַּבֵּת-יַעֲקֹב וְהוּא נִכְבָּד מִכָּל בֵּית אָבִיו:

<sup>כ</sup> וַיָּבֹאוּ חָמוֹר וּשְׁכֵם בָּנוּ אֶל-שַׁעַר עִירָם וַיְדַבְּרוּ אֶל-אֲנָשֵׁי עִירָם לֵאמֹר: <sup>כא</sup> הָאֲנָשִׁים הָאֵלֶּה שְׁלָמִים הֵם אִתָּנוּ וַיֵּשְׁבוּ בָאָרֶץ וַיִּסְתָּרוּ אֹתָהּ וְהָאָרֶץ הִנֵּה רַחֲבַת-יָדַיִם לִפְנֵיהֶם אֶת-בָּנֹתָם נִקְחָ-לָנוּ לְנָשִׁים וְאֶת-בָּנֹתֵינוּ נָתַן לָהֶם: <sup>כב</sup> אֲדָ-בָזָאת יָאֲתוּ לָנוּ הָאֲנָשִׁים לְשֹׁבֵת אִתָּנוּ לְהִיּוֹת לְעַם אֶחָד בְּהַמּוֹל לָנוּ כָּל-זָכָר כַּאֲשֶׁר הֵם נִמְלִיִּם: <sup>כג</sup> מִקְנֵהֶם וּקְנִינָם וְכָל-בְּהֶמְתָּם הֲלוֹא לָנוּ הֵם אֲדָ נֹאמְתָה לָהֶם וַיֵּשְׁבוּ אִתָּנוּ: <sup>כד</sup> וַיִּשְׁמָעוּ אֶל-חָמוֹר וְאֶל-שָׁכֵם בָּנוּ כָּל-יֹצְאֵי שַׁעַר עִירוֹ וַיִּמְלֹךְ כָּל-זָכָר כָּל-יֹצְאֵי שַׁעַר עִירוֹ:

with you to make one nation. <sup>17</sup> But if you do not listen to us on this matter of circumcision, we shall take our daughter and go.” <sup>18</sup> Hamor and Shechem, Hamor’s son, were pleased with what they heard. <sup>19</sup> The young man did not wait to do this; for, he loved Jacob’s daughter; and he was honoured above all in his father’s house.

<sup>20</sup> Hamor and his son Shechem went to their city gate and spoke to the men of the city, saying, <sup>21</sup> “These men are friendly; let them stay with us in the land, and move about as freely as they like. Let us marry their daughters and give our daughters to them. <sup>22</sup> However, these men will agree to stay with us and become a single nation only on this condition: all males must be circumcised as they are. <sup>23</sup> Will not their livestock, their goods and all their cattle belong to us, if only we agree to let them stay with us?” <sup>24</sup> All the citizens of the town agreed to the proposal made by Hamor and his son Shechem, and so all the males were circumcised, all the citizens.

<sup>17</sup> Jacob’s sons call Dinah their daughter, even though she was their sister (see v. 8) – the WEBBE has ‘sister’ here.

<sup>18</sup> The literal translation of this verse is, “and their words were good in the eyes of Hamor and in the eyes of Shechem son of Hamor.”

<sup>19</sup> The fact that Shechem was the most important person of his family and the prince of the region (v. 2) shows the ascendancy of this Canaanite city in the pre-Israelite period.

<sup>20</sup> In an ancient Middle-Eastern city, the ‘gate’ complex was the location for conducting important public business.

<sup>21</sup> At the end of the first sentence, here following the NJB, NETB adds, ‘for the land is wide enough for them’.

<sup>22</sup> The ‘single nation’ would be a kindred group in which the Shechemites would have the leadership.

<sup>23</sup> At the beginning of this verse, NETB adds ‘if we do so’, for clarity.

<sup>24</sup> The NJB, following the LXX, omits the final ‘all the citizens’.

כה ויהי ביום השלישי בהיותם כאבים ויקחו שני-בני-  
יעקב שמעון ולוי אחי דינה איש חרב ויבאו על-  
העיר בטח ויהרגו כל-זכר: כו ואת-חמור ואת-שכם  
בנו הרגו לפי-חרב ויקחו את-דינה מבית שכם  
ויצאו: כז בני יעקב באו על-החללים ויבזו העיר אשר  
טמאו אחותם: כח את-צאנם ואת-בקרם ואת-  
חמריהם ואת אשר-בעיר ואת-אשר בשדה לקחו:  
כט ואת-כל-חילם ואת-כל-טפם ואת-נשיהם שבו  
ויבזו ואת כל-אשר בבית:

ל ויאמר יעקב אל-שמעון ואל-לוי עכרתם אתי  
להבאישני בישב הארץ בפנעני ובפרזי ואני מתי  
מספר ונאספו עלי והכוני ונשמדתי אני וביתי:  
לא ויאמרו הכזנה יעשה את-אחותנו:  
{פ}

<sup>25</sup> Now on the third day, when they were still in pain, Jacob's two sons Simeon and Levi, brothers of Dinah, took their swords, marched into the town unsuspected and killed all the males. <sup>26</sup> They put Hamor and his son Shechem to the sword, took Dinah from Shechem's house and left. <sup>27</sup> Jacob's sons attacked the wounded and pillaged the town because their sister had been defiled. <sup>28</sup> They took their flocks, cattle, donkeys and whatever was in the town and in the fields. <sup>29</sup> They carried off all their riches, all their little children and their wives, and looted everything to be found in their houses.

<sup>30</sup> Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, "You have ruined me, making me odious to the people of this land, the Canaanites and the Perizzites. I have few men; they will unite against me to defeat me and destroy me and my house." <sup>31</sup> They said, "Should he treat our sister like a whore?"

<sup>25</sup> Simeon and Levi took the initiative because they were full brothers of Dinah.

<sup>26</sup> In place of 'left', here following NETB, the NJB has 'came away'.

<sup>27</sup> The opening phrase 'Jacob's sons' is frequently taken to mean the other sons of Jacob besides Simeon and Levi, but the text does not clearly affirm this.

<sup>28</sup> At the end of this verse, the MT repeats 'they took'.

<sup>29</sup> The literal translation of 'carried off' is 'they took captive and they plundered'.

<sup>30</sup> The traditional translation of 'ruined me' is 'troubled me' (KJV, ASV), but the verb refers to personal or national disaster and suggests complete ruin (see Jos 7:25, Jg 11:35, Pr 11:17). The remainder of the verse describes the 'trouble' Simeon and Levi had caused.

<sup>31</sup> The pronoun 'they' here refers to Simeon and Levi.

## בראשית פרק לה

א וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים אֶל-יַעֲקֹב קוּם עֲלֵה בֵּית-אֵל וְשֶׁב-  
שָׁם וַעֲשֵׂה-שָׁם מִזְבֵּחַ לְאֵל הַנִּרְאָה אֵלֶיךָ בְּבִרְחֶיךָ  
מִפָּנַי עֲשׂוּ אַחִיד: ב וַיֹּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב אֶל-בֵּיתוֹ וְאֵל כָּל-  
אֲשֶׁר עִמּוֹ הָסְרוּ אֶת-אֱלֹהֵי הַנֹּכַר אֲשֶׁר בְּתִכְכֶּם  
וְהִטְהָרוּ וְהַחֲלִיפוּ שְׂמֹלֵתֵיכֶם: ג וְנָקוּמָה וְנַעֲלֵה בֵּית-  
אֵל וְאֶעֱשֵׂה-שָׁם מִזְבֵּחַ לְאֵל הָעֲנָה אֲתִי בַּיּוֹם צָרְתִּי  
וַיְהִי עֲמָדִי בַּדֶּרֶךְ אֲשֶׁר הִלְכְּתִי: ד וַיִּתְּנוּ אֶל-יַעֲקֹב אֶת  
כָּל-אֱלֹהֵי הַנֹּכַר אֲשֶׁר בְּיָדָם וְאֶת-הַנִּזְמִים אֲשֶׁר  
בְּאֲזִנֵּיהֶם וַיִּטְמֵן אֹתָם יַעֲקֹב תַּחַת הָאֵלֶּה אֲשֶׁר עִם-  
שָׁכָם: ה וַיִּסְעוּ וַיְהִי חֲתַת אֱלֹהִים עַל-הָעָרִים אֲשֶׁר  
סְבִיבוֹתֶיהֶם וְלֹא רָדְפוּ אַחֲרֵי בְנֵי יַעֲקֹב: ו וַיָּבֹא יַעֲקֹב  
לִזְזָה אֲשֶׁר בְּאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן הוּא בֵּית-אֵל הוּא וְכָל-הָעָם  
אֲשֶׁר-עִמּוֹ: ז וַיִּבֶן שָׁם מִזְבֵּחַ וַיִּקְרָא לַמָּקוֹם אֵל בֵּית-

## GENESIS 35

<sup>1</sup> God said to Jacob, "Arise, go up to Bethel and settle there. Make an altar there for the God who appeared to you when you fled from your brother Esau." <sup>2</sup> Jacob said to his house and to all who were with him, "Get rid of the foreign gods you have with you; wash and change your clothes. <sup>3</sup> We must arise and go to Bethel. There I will make an altar for the God who heard me in my day of distress and was with me on the journey I made." <sup>4</sup> They gave Jacob all the foreign gods in their hands and the earrings in their ears. Jacob buried them under the oak tree near Shechem. <sup>5</sup> They broke camp; a divine terror struck the towns round about and no one pursued the sons of Jacob. <sup>6</sup> When Jacob arrived at Luz in the land of Canaan – Bethel, in other words – and all the people with him, <sup>7</sup> he built an altar there, giving the place the name El-bethel, because it was there that God had

### GENESIS 35

- <sup>1</sup> God is calling on Jacob to fulfil his vow he made when he was 'fleeing from his brother Esau' (28:20–22).
- <sup>2</sup> Jacob's instruction means more than discarding the domestic idols Rachel had carried off (31:19 & 34): as in Jos 24 (also at Shechem), it is an act of faith in the one God of Israel. The last clause constitutes purification preparatory to the Bethel pilgrimage (see Ex 19:10).
- <sup>3</sup> Jacob alludes here to God's promise to be with him (see 28:20). On Jacob's 'day of distress', cf. Ps 20:1.
- <sup>4</sup> On the basis of a comparison with Gn 34 and Nb 31, some argue that the 'foreign gods' and the 'earrings' could have been part of the plunder that came from the destruction of Shechem.
- <sup>5</sup> 'Divine terror', an expression derived from ancient holy war (Ex 23:27, Jos 10:10), was a mysterious panic that paralysed the enemy,
- <sup>6</sup> Literally translated, this verse reads, "And Jacob came to Luz which is in the land of Canaan – it is Bethel – he and all the people who were with him."
- <sup>7</sup> 'El-bethel' means 'God of Bethel' (see #28:12). In the MT, the verb, 'had appeared', is in the plural form, possibly referring to the celestial beings of 28:12.



אֵל כִּי שָׁם נִגְלוּ אֵלָיו הָאֱלֹהִים בְּבָרְחוֹ מִפְּנֵי אָחִיו:  
ח וַתָּמָת דְּבָרָה מִיִּנְקַת רִבְקָה וַתִּקְבֹּר מִתַּחַת לְבֵית־  
אֵל תַּחַת הָאֵלֹון וַיִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ אֵלֹון בְּכוֹת: {פ}

ט וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶל־יַעֲקֹב עוֹד בְּבָאוֹ מִפָּדָן אָרָם וַיְבָרֶךְ  
אֹתוֹ: י וַיֹּאמֶר־לּוֹ אֱלֹהִים שְׁמֹךְ יַעֲקֹב לֹא־יִקְרָא שְׁמֹךְ  
עוֹד יַעֲקֹב כִּי אִם־יִשְׂרָאֵל יִהְיֶה שְׁמֹךְ וַיִּקְרָא אֶת־שְׁמוֹ  
יִשְׂרָאֵל: יא וַיֹּאמֶר לּוֹ אֱלֹהִים אֲנִי אֵל שְׂדֵי פְרָה וּרְבֵה  
גוֹי וְקָהָל גּוֹיִם יִהְיֶה מִמֶּךָ וּמַלְכִּים מִחֲלָצֶיךָ יֵצְאוּ:  
יב וְאֶת־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נָתַתִּי לְאַבְרָהָם וְלִיִּצְחָק לְךָ  
אֶתְנַנֶּה וְלִזְרַעְךָ אַחֲרַיִךְ אֶתֶּן אֶת־הָאָרֶץ: יג וַיַּעַל מֵעֵלָיו  
אֱלֹהִים בַּמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר־דִּבֶּר אֹתוֹ: יד וַיַּצֵּב יַעֲקֹב מִצֵּבָה  
בַּמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר־דִּבֶּר אֹתוֹ מִצֵּבַת אָבִן וַיִּסֹּךְ עָלֶיהָ נֹסֶךְ  
וַיִּצֶק עָלֶיהָ שֵׁמֶן: טו וַיִּקְרָא יַעֲקֹב אֶת־שֵׁם הַמָּקוֹם

appeared to him when he was fleeing from his brother.<sup>8</sup> Deborah, who had been Rebekah's nurse, died and was buried below Bethel, under the oak tree; so, they named it the Oak of Tears.

<sup>9</sup> Again, God appeared to Jacob on his return from Paddan-Aram and blessed him.<sup>10</sup> God said to him, "Your name is Jacob, but from now on you shall be named not Jacob but Israel;" so he named him Israel.<sup>11</sup> God said to him, "I am El Shaddai. Be fruitful and multiply. A nation, indeed a group of nations, shall descend from you; and kings shall spring from you."<sup>12</sup> I give you this land, the land I gave to Abraham and to Isaac; and I will give this land to your descendants after you."<sup>13</sup> Then God went up from him.<sup>14</sup> Jacob set up a monument in the place where he had spoken with him, a stone pillar, on which he made a libation and poured oil.<sup>15</sup> Jacob named the place

<sup>8</sup> The NRSV does not translate 'the Oak of Tears' (אֵלֹון בְּכוֹת), simply transliterating as 'Allon-Bacuth'.

<sup>9</sup> In place of 'he', the NJB has 'they' and NETB has 'God'.

<sup>10</sup> On the divine name 'El Shaddai', see #17:1.

<sup>11</sup> This promise is rooted in the Abrahamic promise (see Gn 17): God confirms what Isaac told Jacob (28:3–4); here, though, for the first time Jacob is promised 'kings' as descendants.

<sup>12</sup> The verb translated 'gave' refers to the Abrahamic promise of the land; however, the actual possession of that land lay in the future. The decree of Yahweh made it certain; but it has the sense 'promised to give'.

<sup>13</sup> At the end of this verse, the MT adds 'in the place where he had spoken with him', a dittography of the following verse.

<sup>14</sup> This passage stands parallel to 28:18–19, where Jacob set up a sacred stone, poured oil on it, and called the place Bethel. Some see these as two traditions referring to the same event but it is more likely that Jacob reconsecrated the place in fulfilment of the vow he had made here earlier.

<sup>15</sup> In view of the previous naming of Bethel in 28:19, here Jacob was confirming or affirming the name through an official ritual marking the fulfilment of the vow. This place now did become Bethel (בֵּית־אֵל), the 'house of God'.

אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר אֱתֹו שֵׁם אֱלֹהִים בֵּית-אֵל: <sup>טז</sup> וַיִּסְעוּ מִבֵּית  
אֵל וַיְהִי-עוֹד כְּבֶרֶת-הָאָרֶץ לָבוֹא אֶפְרָתָה וּתְלַד רָחֵל  
וּתְקַשׁ בְּלִדְתָּהּ: <sup>יז</sup> וַיְהִי בְּהַקְשָׁתָהּ בְּלִדְתָּהּ וּתְאֹמַר לָהּ  
הַמִּלְדָּת אֶל-תִּירְאִי כִּי-גִסְזָה לָךְ בֶּן: <sup>יח</sup> וַיְהִי בְּצֵאת  
נַפְשָׁהּ כִּי מָתָה וּתְקָרָא שְׁמוֹ בֶּן-אֹנִי וְאָבִיו קָרָא-לּוֹ  
בְּנִימִין:

<sup>יט</sup> וַתָּמָת רָחֵל וּתְקַבֵּר בְּדֶרֶךְ אֶפְרָתָה הוּא בֵּית לָחֶם:  
<sup>כ</sup> וַיֵּצֵב יַעֲקֹב מַצֵּבָה עַל-קִבְרָתָהּ הוּא מַצֵּבַת קִבְרַת-  
רָחֵל עַד-הַיּוֹם: <sup>כא</sup> וַיִּסַּע יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיֵּט אֶהֱלֶה מִהֶלְאָה  
לְמִגְדַּל-עֵדֶר: <sup>כב</sup> וַיְהִי בְּשֹׁכֵן יִשְׂרָאֵל בָּאָרֶץ הַהוּא וַיִּלְדוּ  
רְאוּבֵן וַיִּשְׁכַּב אֶת-בִּלְהָה פִּילְגֶּשׁ אָבִיו וַיִּשְׁמַע  
יִשְׂרָאֵל {פ}

Bethel where God had spoken with him. <sup>16</sup> They left Bethel and, while they were still some distance from Ephrath, Rachel began labour, and her pains were severe. <sup>17</sup> But, in her difficult delivery, the midwife said to her, "Do not be afraid, you have another son here." <sup>18</sup> With her last breath, for she was dying, she named him Ben-Oni; but his father called him Benjamin.

<sup>19</sup> Thus, Rachel died and was buried on the road to Ephrath, which is Bethlehem. <sup>20</sup> Jacob raised a cairn on her grave and this is the marker of the tomb of Rachel to this day. <sup>21</sup> Israel left and pitched his tent beyond Migdal-Eder. <sup>22</sup> While Israel was living in that district, Reuben went and slept with Bilhah his father's concubine, and Israel learned of it.

<sup>16</sup> Normally the verb here rendered 'began labour' would be translated 'gave birth', but because that obviously had not happened yet, it is better to translate the verb as ingressive, 'began to give birth' (as NIV) or 'went into labour' (as NETB).

<sup>17</sup> This episode recalls and fulfils the prayer of Rachel at the birth of Joseph (30:24): 'may he add' another son.

<sup>18</sup> Dying in childbirth, Rachel gave an ominous name to the child - 'Ben-Oni' (בֶּן-אֹנִי) means 'son of my sorrow', though Jacob changes the name to a propitious one, 'Benjamin' ('son of the right hand' = 'son of happy omen').

<sup>19</sup> Here, and in 48:7 (Rt 4:11, Mi 5:2), 'Ephrath' is identified with Bethlehem; another tradition located Rachel's grave in Benjaminite territory north of Jerusalem (1S 10:2, Jr 31:15).

<sup>20</sup> A more literal translation of 'cairn' is 'standing stone'; the NJB has 'monument'.

<sup>21</sup> The location of 'Migdal-Eder' (WEB translates the name as 'the Tower of Eder') is not given; it appears to be somewhere between Bethlehem and Hebron. Various traditions have identified it as at the shepherds' fields near Bethlehem (the name means 'tower of the flock', see Mi 4:8) or located it near Solomon's pools.

<sup>22</sup> Reuben's act of sleeping with Bilhah probably had other purposes than merely satisfying his sexual desire: By having sex with Bilhah, Reuben (Leah's oldest son) would have prevented Bilhah from succeeding Rachel as the favourite wife, and by sleeping with his father's concubine he would also be trying to take over leadership of the clan - something Absalom foolishly attempted later on in Israel's history (2S 16:21-22).

וַיְהִיו בְּנֵי יַעֲקֹב שְׁנַיִם עָשָׂר: כֹּג בְּנֵי לֵאָה בְּכוֹר יַעֲקֹב  
 רְאוּבֵן וְשִׁמְעוֹן וְלֵוִי וַיהוּדָה וִישָׁשכָר וְזִבְלוֹן: כֹּד בְּנֵי  
 רָחֵל יוֹסֵף וּבִנְיָמִן: כֹּה וּבְנֵי בִלְהָה שְׁפַחַת רָחֵל דָּן  
 וְנַפְתָּלִי: כֹּו וּבְנֵי זִלְפָּה שְׁפַחַת לֵאָה גָד וְאַשֶׁר אֵלֶּה בְּנֵי  
 יַעֲקֹב אֲשֶׁר יָלְדָּלוּ בְּפָדָן אֲרָם: כֹּז וַיָּבֹא יַעֲקֹב אֶל־  
 יִצְחָק אָבִיו מִמַּמְרֵה קִרְיַת הָאַרְבַּע הוּא חֶבְרוֹן אֲשֶׁר־  
 גֵּר־שָׁם אַבְרָהָם וַיִּצְחָק: כֹּח וַיְהִיו יָמֵי יִצְחָק מֵאָת שָׁנָה  
 וְשִׁמְנָיִם שָׁנָה: כֹּט וַיָּגָע יִצְחָק וַיָּמָת וַיֵּאָסֶף אֶל־עַמּוּי  
 זָקֵן וְשִׁבְעַת יָמִים וַיִּקְבְּרוּ אוֹתוֹ עֲשׂוֹ וַיַּעֲקֹב בָּנָיו:  
 {פ}

Now Jacob's sons were twelve.<sup>23</sup> The sons of Leah: Jacob's eldest son Reuben, then Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun.<sup>24</sup> The sons of Rachel: Joseph and Benjamin.<sup>25</sup> The sons of Bilhah, Rachel's maid: Dan and Naphtali.<sup>26</sup> The sons of Zilpah, Leah's maid: Gad and Asher. These are the sons born to Jacob in Paddan-Aram.<sup>27</sup> Jacob reached his father Isaac at Mamre, at Kiriath-Arba (now Hebron), where Abraham and Isaac had stayed.<sup>28</sup> Isaac lived a hundred and eighty years;<sup>29</sup> then he breathed his last and died, and was gathered to his people, old and full of days. His sons Esau and Jacob buried him.

<sup>23</sup> For 'Reuben' (רְאוּבֵן), 'Simeon' (שִׁמְעוֹן), 'Levi' (לֵוִי), 'Judah' (יְהוּדָה), 'Issachar' (יִשָּׁשכָר) and 'Zebulun' (זִבְלוֹן), the LXX has, respectively, *Ρουβην, Συμεων, Λευι, Ιουδα, Ισσαχαρ, & Ζαβουλων*.

<sup>24</sup> For 'Joseph' (יוֹסֵף) and 'Benjamin' (בִּנְיָמִן), the LXX has *Ιωσηφ & Βενιαμιν*.

<sup>25</sup> For 'Dan' (דָּן) and 'Naphtali' (נַפְתָּלִי), the LXX has *Δαν & Νεφθαλι*.

<sup>26</sup> For 'Gad' (גָּד) and 'Asher' (אַשֶׁר), the LXX has *Γαδ & Ασηρ*.

<sup>27</sup> Vv. 27–29 close this story of Isaac, which defers his death until now (see 27:1–2), identifies Mamre with Hebron, and does not mention the dispute with Esau (see 36:6ff and 27:46–28:2).

<sup>28</sup> The literal translation of this verse is, "And the days of Isaac were one hundred and eighty years."

<sup>29</sup> In the ancient Israelite view, Isaac joined his deceased ancestors in Sheol, the land of the dead.

## GENESIS 36

## בראשית פרק לו

א וְאֵלֶּה תְּלֻדֹת עֵשָׂו הוּא אֱדוֹם: ב עֵשָׂו לָקַח אֶת־נָשָׁיו מִבְּנוֹת כְּנָעַן אֶת־עֵדָה בַּת־אֵילֹון הַחִתִּי וְאֶת־אֶהֱלִיבָמָה בַּת־עֵנָה בַּת־צִבְעוֹן הַחִוִּי: ג וְאֶת־בְּשֶׁמֶת בַּת־יִשְׁמָעֵאל אַחֹת גְּבִיּוֹת: ד וּתְלִד עֵדָה לָעֵשָׂו אֶת־אֵלִיפֹז וּבְשֶׁמֶת יִלְדָה אֶת־רְעוּאֵל: ה וְאֶהֱלִיבָמָה יִלְדָה אֶת־יְעוֹשׁ יַעִישׁ וְאֶת־יֶעֱלָם וְאֶת־קָרַח אֵלֶּה בְנֵי עֵשָׂו אֲשֶׁר יִלְדוּ־לּוֹ בְּאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן: ו וַיִּקַּח עֵשָׂו אֶת־נָשָׁיו וְאֶת־בָּנָיו וְאֶת־בָּנָתָיו וְאֶת־כָּל־נַפְשֹׁת בֵּיתוֹ וְאֶת־מִקְנֵהוּ וְאֶת־כָּל־בְּהֶמְתּוֹ וְאֶת־כָּל־קִנְיָנוֹ אֲשֶׁר רָכַשׁ בְּאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן וַיֵּלֶךְ אֶל־אֶרֶץ מִפְּנֵי יַעֲקֹב אָחִיו: ז כִּי־הָיָה רְכוּשָׁם רַב מִשְׁבֶּת יַחֲדוֹ וְלֹא יָכְלָה אֶרֶץ מְגוּרֵיהֶם לִשְׁאֵת אֹתָם מִפְּנֵי מְקִנֵּיהֶם: ח וַיָּשָׁב עֵשָׂו בְּהָר שֵׁעִיר עֵשָׂו הוּא אֱדוֹם: ט וְאֵלֶּה תְּלֻדֹת עֵשָׂו אָבִי אֱדוֹם בְּהָר

<sup>1</sup> This is the account of Esau, who is Edom. <sup>2</sup> Esau married women of Canaan; Adah, the daughter of Elon the Hittite, Oholibamah, the daughter of Anah, who was the daughter of Zibeon the Horite, <sup>3</sup> in addition to Basemath, the daughter of Ishmael and sister of Nebaioth. <sup>4</sup> Adah bore Eliphaz to Esau, Basemath bore Reuel, <sup>5</sup> and Oholibamah bore Jeush, Jalam and Korah. These are the sons of Esau born to him in the land of Canaan. <sup>6</sup> Esau took his wives, his sons, daughters, all the people of his house, his livestock, all his cattle, and all the goods he had acquired in the land of Canaan, and left for a land away from his brother Jacob. <sup>7</sup> For, they had acquired too much to live together: the land in which they lived could not support them both because of their livestock. <sup>8</sup> That is why Edom settled in the hill country of Seir. Esau is Edom. <sup>9</sup> This is the account of Esau, the father

## GENESIS 36

- <sup>1</sup> In place of 'who is Edom', here following the NJB, NETB has (in parentheses) 'also known as Edom'.
- <sup>2</sup> The NJB emends, 'daughter of Zibeon', here following the MT, to 'son of Zibeon'; 'Anah' was actually Zibeon's granddaughter (cf. vv. 24–25).
- <sup>3</sup> The NJB lacks 'in addition to', here following NETB.
- <sup>4</sup> For 'Basemath' (בְּשֶׁמֶת), the LXX has Βασεμμαθ, as also in v. 3.
- <sup>5</sup> For 'Oholibamah' (אֶהֱלִיבָמָה), the LXX has Ελιβεμα, as also in v. 2. The Kethib/Qere difference here warrants an explanation.
- <sup>6</sup> In place of 'a land', here following JPS, the NJB has 'the land of Seir'.
- <sup>7</sup> The literal translation of 'land in which they lived' is 'land of their settlements'.
- <sup>8</sup> Traditionally, 'hill country of Seir' (בְּהָר שֵׁעִיר) is translated 'Mount Seir' but, in this case, the expression refers to the highlands of Seir.
- <sup>9</sup> The term 'father' in biblical genealogies such as this needs to be carefully defined; it can refer to a literal father, a grandfather, a political overlord, or a founder.

שְׁעִיר: 'אֵלֶּה שְׁמוֹת בְּנֵי-עֵשָׂו אֲלִיפֹז בֶּן-עֵדָה אִשְׁתּוֹ  
עֵשָׂו רְעוּאֵל בֶּן-בְּשֶׁמֶת אִשְׁתּוֹ עֵשָׂו: י<sup>א</sup> וְהָיוּ בְנֵי אֲלִיפֹז  
תִּימָן אוֹמֵר צָפוֹ וְגַעְתָּם וְקִנְזוֹ: יב וְתַמְנֵעַ הִיְתָה פִּלְגֶּשׁ  
לְאֲלִיפֹז בֶּן-עֵשָׂו וַתֵּלֶד לְאֲלִיפֹז אֶת-עַמְלֶק אֵלֶּה בְנֵי  
עֵדָה אִשְׁתּוֹ: יג וְאֵלֶּה בְנֵי רְעוּאֵל נַחַת וְזֶרַח שְׁמָה  
וּמִזָּה אֵלֶּה הָיוּ בְנֵי בְּשֶׁמֶת אִשְׁתּוֹ עֵשָׂו: יד וְאֵלֶּה הָיוּ  
בְנֵי אֶהְלִיבָמָה בַת-עֵנָה בַת-צִבְעוֹן אִשְׁתּוֹ עֵשָׂו וַתֵּלֶד  
לְעֵשָׂו אֶת-יְעוּשׁ יַעִישׁ וְאֶת-יַעֲלָם וְאֶת-קֶרַח: טו אֵלֶּה  
אֲלוּפֵי בְנֵי-עֵשָׂו בְנֵי אֲלִיפֹז בְּכוֹר עֵשָׂו אֲלוּף תִּימָן  
אֲלוּף אוֹמֵר אֲלוּף צָפוֹ אֲלוּף קִנְזוֹ: טז אֲלוּף-קֶרַח אֲלוּף  
גַּעְתָּם אֲלוּף עַמְלֶק אֵלֶּה אֲלוּפֵי אֲלִיפֹז בְּאֶרֶץ אֲדוֹם  
אֵלֶּה בְנֵי עֵדָה: יז וְאֵלֶּה בְנֵי רְעוּאֵל בֶּן-עֵשָׂו אֲלוּף נַחַת  
אֲלוּף זֶרַח אֲלוּף שְׁמָה אֲלוּף מִזָּה אֵלֶּה אֲלוּפֵי רְעוּאֵל  
בְּאֶרֶץ אֲדוֹם אֵלֶּה בְנֵי בְּשֶׁמֶת אִשְׁתּוֹ עֵשָׂו: יח וְאֵלֶּה בְנֵי  
אֶהְלִיבָמָה אִשְׁתּוֹ עֵשָׂו אֲלוּף יְעוּשׁ אֲלוּף יַעֲלָם אֲלוּף

of Edom, in the hill country of Seir. <sup>10</sup> The names of Esau's sons: Eliphaz the son of Adah, Esau's wife, Reuel the son of Basemath, Esau's wife. <sup>11</sup> The sons of Eliphaz: Teman, Omar, Zepho, Gatam, and Kenaz. <sup>12</sup> Timna, a concubine of Esau's son Eliphaz, bore Amalek to Eliphaz. The sons of Adah, Esau's wife. <sup>13</sup> The sons of Reuel: Nahath, Zerah, Shammah, and Mizzah. The sons of Basemath, Esau's wife. <sup>14</sup> The sons of Esau's wife Oholibamah, daughter of Anah, daughter of Zibeon: she bore him Jeush, Jalam, and Korah. <sup>15</sup> The chiefs of the sons of Esau; the sons of Eliphaz, firstborn of Esau: the chiefs of Teman, Omar, Zepho, Kenaz, and the chiefs of Korah, <sup>16</sup> Gatam, and Amalek. The chiefs of Eliphaz in the land of Edom; these are the sons of Adah. <sup>17</sup> The sons of Reuel son of Esau: the chiefs of Nahath, Zerah, Shammah, and Mizzah. Here are the chiefs of Reuel in the land of Edom; these are the sons of Basemath, Esau's wife. <sup>18</sup> The sons of Oholibamah, Esau's wife: the chiefs of Jeush, Jalam and Korah. These

<sup>10</sup> For 'Eliphaz' (אֲלִיפֹז) and 'Reuel' (רְעוּאֵל), the LXX reads *Ελιφας & Παρουηλ*.

<sup>11</sup> For 'Teman' (תִּימָן), 'Omar' (אוֹמֵר), 'Zepho' (צָפוֹ), 'Gatam' (גַּעְתָּם) and 'Kenaz' (קִנְזוֹ), the LXX has, respectively, *Θαιμαν, Ωμαρ, Σωφαρ, Γοδομ & Κενεζ*.

<sup>12</sup> In place of 'sons', here following the MT, NJB & NRSV, the NIV has 'grandsons' and NEB has 'descendants', as also in v. 13.

<sup>13</sup> In place of 'Nahath' (נַחַת), 'Zerah' (זֶרַח), 'Shammah' (שְׁמָה) and 'Mizzah' (מִזָּה), the LXX has, respectively, *Ναχοθ, Ζαρε, Σομε & Μοζε*.

<sup>14</sup> The Kethib/Qere difference here warrants an explanation. The NJB emends 'daughter of Zibeon' to 'son of Zibeon' (cf. #2).

<sup>15</sup> The NJB, following the Samaritan Pentateuch, omits 'and Korah'. The NRSV has 'clans' in place of 'chieftains', here following the NJB.

<sup>16</sup> In place of 'sons', here following the MT, NJB & NRSV, the NIV has 'grandsons' and NEB has 'descendants', as also in v. 17.

<sup>17</sup> NETB has 'descended from Reuel' in place of 'of Reuel', here following the NJB.

<sup>18</sup> In place of 'Jeush' (יְעוּשׁ), 'Jalam' (יַעֲלָם) and 'Korah' (קֶרַח), the LXX has *Ιεους, Ιεγλομ & Κορε*.



קָרַח אֵלֶּה אֱלוֹפֵי אֱהֹלִיבָמָה בַּת־עֵנָה אִשְׁתּוֹ עֲשׂוֹ:  
 יִטְ אֵלֶּה בְנֵי־עֲשׂוֹ וְאֵלֶּה אֱלוֹפֵיהֶם הוּא אֱדוֹם: {ס}  
 כ אֵלֶּה בְנֵי־שְׂעִיר הַחֹרִי יֹשְׁבֵי הָאָרֶץ לוֹטָן וְשׁוֹבָל  
 וְצִבְעוֹן וְעֵנָה: כא וְדִשׁוֹן וְאֶצֶר וְדִישָׁן אֵלֶּה אֱלוֹפֵי הַחֹרִי  
 בְּנֵי שְׂעִיר בָּאָרֶץ אֱדוֹם: כב וַיְהִיו בְּנֵי־לוֹטָן חֹרִי וְהִימָם  
 וְאַחֹת לוֹטָן תִּמְנָה: כג וְאֵלֶּה בְּנֵי שׁוֹבָל עֲלוֹן וּמִנַּחַת  
 וְעִיבָל שָׁפּוֹ וְאוֹנָם: כד וְאֵלֶּה בְנֵי־צִבְעוֹן וְאִיהָ וְעֵנָה  
 הוּא עֵנָה אֲשֶׁר מָצָא אֶת־הִימָם בַּמִּדְבָּר בְּרַעְתּוֹ אֶת־  
 הַחֲמָרִים לְצִבְעוֹן אָבִיו: כה וְאֵלֶּה בְנֵי־עֵנָה דִּישָׁן  
 וְאֱהֹלִיבָמָה בַּת־עֵנָה: כו וְאֵלֶּה בְּנֵי דִישָׁן חֲמַדָּן וְאַשְׁבֹּן  
 וַיִּתְּרָן וַיִּכְרֹן: כז אֵלֶּה בְנֵי־אֶצֶר בִּלְהָן וְזַעֲוֹן וְעֶקֶן:  
 כח אֵלֶּה בְנֵי־דִישָׁן עֹזָן וְאַרָן: כט אֵלֶּה אֱלוֹפֵי הַחֹרִי

are the chiefs of Esau's wife Oholibamah, daughter of Anah.<sup>19</sup> These are the sons of Esau – that is Edom – and these are their chiefs.

<sup>20</sup> The sons of Seir the Horite, natives of the land: Lotan, Shobal, Zibeon, Anah,<sup>21</sup> Dishon, Ezer, Dishan, these are the Horite chiefs, the sons of Seir in the land of Edom. <sup>22</sup> The sons of Lotan were Hori and Hemam; Lotan's sister was Timna. <sup>23</sup> The sons of Shobal: Alvan, Manahath, Ebal, Shepho and Onam. <sup>24</sup> The sons of Zibeon: Aiah, Anah, the Anah who found the hot springs in the desert as he pastured the donkeys of his father Zibeon. <sup>25</sup> Here are the children of Anah: Dishon, Oholibamah daughter of Anah. <sup>26</sup> The sons of Dishon: Hemdan, Eshban, Ithran and Cheran. <sup>27</sup> The sons of Ezer: Bilhan, Zaavan and Akan. <sup>28</sup> The sons of Dishan: Uz and Aran. <sup>29</sup> Here are

<sup>19</sup> In place of 'that is Edom', NETB has 'also known as Edom'.

<sup>20</sup> The Horites (Dt 12:2) – the ancient inhabitants of Seir –were Hurrians, a non-Semitic people who migrated into Mesopotamia about 2000 BC and later formed an important element of the Canaanite population; Seir is here personified as their ancestor. For 'Lotan' (לוֹטָן), 'Shobal' (שׁוֹבָל), 'Zibeon' (צִבְעוֹן) and 'Anah' (עֵנָה), the LXX has, respectively, Λωταν, Σωβαλ, Σεβεγων & Ανα.

<sup>21</sup> For 'Dishon' (דִּישָׁן), 'Ezer' (אֶצֶר) and 'Dishan' (דִּישָׁן), the LXX has, respectively, Δησων, Ασαρ & Πισων (the last, no doubt, due to orthographic confusion between ד and ר).

<sup>22</sup> For 'Hori and Hemam' (חֹרִי וְהִימָם) the LXX has Χορρι και Αιμαμ.

<sup>23</sup> For 'Shepho' (שָׁפּוֹ), the LXX has Σωφ; this name is given as 'Shephi' (שְׁפִי) in 1Ch 1:40. For 'Onam' (אוֹנָם), the LXX has Ωμαν.

<sup>24</sup> The meaning of Hebrew term here translated as 'hot springs' is uncertain; the Peshitta reads 'water' and the Vg reads 'hot water' (aquas calidas).

<sup>25</sup> The literal translation of 'children' is 'sons', but a daughter (Oholibamah) is included in the list.

<sup>26</sup> In place of 'Dishon', the MT has 'Dishan' (דִּישָׁן), but this is either a scribal error or variant spelling, as 'Dishan' is mentioned in v. 28 (cf. v. 21).

<sup>27</sup> For 'Bilhan' (בִּלְהָן), 'Zaavan' (זַעֲוֹן) and 'Akan' (עֶקֶן), the LXX has Βαλααν, Ζουκαμ & Ουκαν respectively, and inserts Ιωυκαμ in the list.

<sup>28</sup> For 'Uz and Aran' (עֹזָן וְאַרָן), the LXX reads, Ως και Αραμ.

<sup>29</sup> For 'Zibeon' (צִבְעוֹן), the LXX reads Σεβεγων.



אֱלֹוף לֹטָן אֱלֹוף שׁוֹבָל אֱלֹוף צִבְעוֹן אֱלֹוף עֲנָה:  
 לֵאֲלֹוף דִּשָּׁן אֱלֹוף אֶזֶר אֱלֹוף דִּישָׁן אֵלֶּה אֱלֹופֵי הַחֲרִי  
 לְאֶלְפֵיהֶם בְּאֶרֶץ שֵׁעִיר: {פ}

לֹא וְאֵלֶּה הַמְּלָכִים אֲשֶׁר מָלְכוּ בְּאֶרֶץ אֲדוֹם לִפְנֵי מֶלֶךְ־  
 מִלְכָּה לְבָנִי יִשְׂרָאֵל: לֵב וַיִּמְלֹךְ בְּאֲדוֹם בֶּלַע בֶּן־בְּעוֹר  
 וְשֵׁם עִירוֹ דִּנְהָבָה: לֵג וַיָּמָת בֶּלַע וַיִּמְלֹךְ תַּחְתָּיו יוֹבָב  
 בֶּן־זֶרַח מִבְּצָרָה: לִד וַיָּמָת יוֹבָב וַיִּמְלֹךְ תַּחְתָּיו חֲשָׁם  
 מֵאֶרֶץ הַתִּימָנִי: לִה וַיָּמָת חֲשָׁם וַיִּמְלֹךְ תַּחְתָּיו הֲדָד בֶּן־  
 בְּדָד הַמִּכָּה אֶת־מִדְיָן בְּשָׂדֵה מוֹאָב וְשֵׁם עִירוֹ עֻיִּית:  
 לוֹ וַיָּמָת הֲדָד וַיִּמְלֹךְ תַּחְתָּיו שְׁמֵלָה מִמִּשְׁרָקָה: לז וַיָּמָת  
 שְׁמֵלָה וַיִּמְלֹךְ תַּחְתָּיו שָׁאוּל מִרְחֻבוֹת הַנָּהָר: לח וַיָּמָת  
 שָׁאוּל וַיִּמְלֹךְ תַּחְתָּיו בְּעַל חֲנָן בֶּן־עֲכָבוֹר: לט וַיָּמָת  
 בְּעַל חֲנָן בֶּן־עֲכָבוֹר וַיִּמְלֹךְ תַּחְתָּיו הָדָר וְשֵׁם עִירוֹ פָּעוּ  
 וְשֵׁם אִשְׁתּוֹ מֵהֵיטְבָאֵל בַּת־מַטְרֵד בַּת מִי זָהָב:

the Horite chiefs: the chiefs of Lotan, Shobal, Zibeon, Anah,  
<sup>30</sup> Dishon, Ezer, and Dishan. These are the chiefs of the Horites  
 according to their clans in the land of Seir.

<sup>31</sup> Here are the kings who ruled in the land of Edom before any king  
 ruled over the Israelites. <sup>32</sup> Bela son of Beor reigned in Edom; the  
 name of his city was Dinhabah. <sup>33</sup> Bela died and Jobab son of Zerah,  
 from Bozrah, reigned. <sup>34</sup> Jobab died and Husham of the land of the  
 Temanites reigned. <sup>35</sup> Husham died and Hadad son of Bedad  
 reigned; he defeated the Midianites in the country of Moab, the name  
 of his city was Avith. <sup>36</sup> Hadad died and Samlah of Masrekah  
 reigned. <sup>37</sup> Samlah died and Shaul of Rehoboth-ha-Nahar reigned.  
<sup>38</sup> Shaul died and Baal-Hanan son of Achbor reigned. <sup>39</sup> Baal-Hanan  
 died and Hadar reigned; the name of his city was Pau. His wife's  
 name was Mehetabel daughter of Matred, daughter of Me-Zahab.

<sup>30</sup> 'Clans' (ἡγεμονίαις) follows the LXX; the MT repeats 'chieftains'.

<sup>31</sup> The NJB ends this verse with 'before any Israelite king' i.e., before an Israelite king ruled over the Edomites; here, we follow the NRSV.

<sup>32</sup> For 'Dinhabah' (דִּנְהָבָה), the LXX reads Δευναβα.

<sup>33</sup> In place of 'from Bozrah' (מִבְּצָרָה), the LXX has ἐκ Βοσορρας.

<sup>34</sup> For 'Husham' (חֲשָׁם), the LXX reads Ασομ.

<sup>35</sup> In place of 'Avith' (עֻיִּית), the LXX has Γεθθαιμ.

<sup>36</sup> For 'Masrekah' (מִשְׁרָקָה), the LXX reads Μασεκακας.

<sup>37</sup> The name 'Rehoboth-ha-Nahar' (רְחֻבוֹת הַנָּהָר) means 'Rehoboth by the River'; typically, the Hebrew expression, 'the River', refers to the Euphrates (as explicitly stated in the NRSV) but it is not certain whether that is the case here.

<sup>38</sup> For 'Baal-Hanan' (בְּעַל חֲנָן) and 'Achbor' (עֲכָבוֹר), the LXX reads Βαλαεννων & Αχοβωρ respectively.

<sup>39</sup> The NJB, following the Samaritan Pentateuch & Peshitta, uses 'Hadad' (הֲדָד) in place of 'Hadar' (הָדָר) – see 1Ch 1:50 – and has simply 'from' in place of the 2<sup>nd</sup> 'daughter of'. The name of the city here referred to as 'Pau' (פָּעוּ) is given as 'Pai' (פָּעִי) in 1Ch 1:50.

מִן־אֵלֶּה שְׁמוֹת אֲלוּפֵי עָשׂוּ לְמִשְׁפַּחְתָּם לְמִקְמַתָּם  
בְּשִׁמְתָם אֲלוּף תִּמְנָע אֲלוּף עֵלֹה אֲלוּף יֶתֶת: <sup>מא</sup> אֲלוּף  
אֶהְלִיבָמָה אֲלוּף אֵלָה אֲלוּף פִּינֹן: <sup>מב</sup> אֲלוּף קִנָּז אֲלוּף  
תִּימָן אֲלוּף מִבְצָר: <sup>מג</sup> אֲלוּף מַגְדִּיאֵל אֲלוּף עִירָם אֵלָה |  
אֲלוּפֵי אֲדֹם לְמִשְׁבַּתָּם בְּאֶרֶץ אֲחֻזָּתָם הוּא עָשׂוּ אָבִי  
אֲדֹם: {פ}

<sup>40</sup> These are the names of the chiefs that came of Esau – according to their clans and localities, by their names: the chiefs of Timna, Alvah and Jetheth; <sup>41</sup> the chiefs of Oholibamah, chiefs of Elah, chiefs of Pinon, <sup>42</sup> the chief of Kenaz, the chief of Teman, the chief of Mibzar; <sup>43</sup> the chiefs of Magdiel and Iram. These are the chiefs of Edom, as settled in the territory they own. Esau was Edom's ancestor.

<sup>40</sup> For 'Timna' (תִּמְנָע), 'Alvah' (עֵלֹה) and 'Jetheth' (יֶתֶת), the LXX reads, respectively, *Θαμνα*, *Γωλα* & *Ιεζεθ*.

<sup>41</sup> For 'chiefs of Elah' (אֲלוּף אֵלָה) and 'chiefs of Pinon' (אֲלוּף פִּינֹן), the LXX reads *ἡγεμὼν Ηλας* (literally, 'prince Elah') & *ἡγεμὼν Φινων* respectively.

<sup>42</sup> For 'the chief of Mibzar' (אֲלוּף מִבְצָר), the LXX reads *ἡγεμὼν Μαζαρ* (literally, 'the prince Mazar').

<sup>43</sup> The literal translation of 'as settled in the territory they own' is 'according to the dwelling-places they possessed'.

## בראשית פרק לו

א ויֵשֶׁב יַעֲקֹב בְּאֶרֶץ מִגֹּרֵי אָבִיו בְּאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן: ב אֵלֶּה  
תְּלֻזֹּת יַעֲקֹב יוֹסֵף בֶּן־שִׁבְע־עֶשְׂרֵה שָׁנָה הָיָה רָעָה  
אֶת־אֶחָיו בְּצֹאן וְהוּא נָעַר אֶת־בְּנֵי בִלְהָה וְאֶת־בְּנֵי  
זִלְפָּה נְשֵׁי אָבִיו וַיָּבֵא יוֹסֵף אֶת־דְּבָרָם רָעָה אֶל־  
אֲבִיהֶם:

ג וַיִּשְׂרָאֵל אֶהָב אֶת־יוֹסֵף מִכָּל־בָּנָיו כִּי־בֶן־זִקְנִים הוּא  
לוֹ וַעֲשָׂה לוֹ כְּתֹנֶת פָּסִים: ד וַיִּרְאוּ אֶחָיו כִּי־אֹתוֹ אֶהָב  
אֲבִיהֶם מִכָּל־אֶחָיו וַיִּשְׁנְאוּ אֹתוֹ וְלֹא יָכְלוּ דַּבֵּר  
לְשָׁלָם:

ה וַיַּחְלֵם יוֹסֵף חֲלוֹם וַיַּגֵּד לְאֶחָיו וַיֹּסְפוּ עוֹד שְׁנֹא אֹתוֹ:  
ו וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵיהֶם שְׁמְעוּ־נָא הַחֲלוֹם הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר חָלַמְתִּי:  
ז וְהִנֵּה אֲנִי חֹנֵן מְאֹלָמִים אֲלֵמִים בְּתוֹךְ הַשָּׂדֶה וְהִנֵּה

## GENESIS 37

<sup>1</sup> But Jacob lived in the land where his father had stayed, the land of Canaan. <sup>2</sup> This is the story of Joseph. Joseph was seventeen years old. As he was a youngster, he was tending the flock with his brothers, the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah his father's wives. Joseph brought a bad report of them to their father.

<sup>3</sup> Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, for he was the son of his old age, and he had a special tunic made for him. <sup>4</sup> But his brothers saw how his father loved him more than them and hated him so much that they could not say a civil word to him.

<sup>5</sup> Now Joseph had a dream, and he told it to his brothers. <sup>6</sup> "Listen," he said, "to this dream I have had. <sup>7</sup> We were binding sheaves in the countryside; and my sheaf, it seemed, rose up and stood upright;

### GENESIS 37

<sup>1</sup> In place of 'where his father had stayed', here following NETB, the NJB has simply 'of his father'; WEBBE has 'of his father's travels'.

<sup>2</sup> Another translation for 'youngster' may be 'helper'. The significance of this statement is unclear; it may suggest Joseph was like a servant.

<sup>3</sup> A 'special tunic' (following NETB) was probably a luxurious robe (2S 13:18–19), different from the ordinary sleeveless tunic that reached to the knees; it would have been impossible to undertake any manual labour wearing it. The garment may also symbolise a royal claim. A more traditional rendering of the garment's description is 'a coat of many colours'. The meaning of the Hebrew is uncertain.

<sup>4</sup> In place of the pronoun 'them', the MT repeats 'all his brothers'.

<sup>5</sup> Dreams play a large part in Joseph's story (Chs. 40–41); they are not divine apparitions as in 20:3, 28:12ff, 31:11, 24 and 1K 3:5 (see Nb 12:6, Si. 34:1), but premonitions.

<sup>6</sup> The literal translation of 'this dream that I had' is 'hear this dream that I dreamed'.

<sup>7</sup> All three clauses in this dream report begin with וְהִנֵּה, which lends vividness to the report; this is represented in the translation by the expression 'we were'. The verb here translated as 'bow' is used to describe worship and obeisance to masters.

קָמָה אֲלֵמָתִי וְגַם־נִצְבָּה וְהָנָה תִּסְבִּינָה אֲלֵמָתֶיכֶם  
וּתְשַׁתְּחוּן לְאֵלֵמָתִי: <sup>ח</sup> וַיֹּאמְרוּ לוֹ אָחִיו הַמֶּלֶךְ תִּמְלֹךְ  
עָלֵינוּ אִם־מָשׁוּל תִּמְשָׁל בָּנוּ וַיֹּסְפוּ עוֹד שָׁנָא אֹתוֹ  
עַל־חֲלֹמָתוֹ וְעַל־דְּבָרָיו: <sup>ט</sup> וַיַּחֲלֵם עוֹד חֲלוֹם אַחֵר  
וַיְסַפֵּר אֹתוֹ לְאָחִיו וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֵּה חֲלֹמָתִי חֲלוֹם עוֹד  
וְהִנֵּה הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ וְהַיָּרֵחַ וְאַחַד עָשָׂר כּוֹכָבִים מִשְׁתַּחֲוִים  
לִי: <sup>י</sup> וַיְסַפֵּר אֶל־אָבִיו וְאֶל־אָחִיו וַיִּגְעַר־בּוֹ אָבִיו וַיֹּאמֶר  
לֹא מָה הַחֲלוֹם הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר חֲלַמְתָּ הַבּוֹא נִבּוֹא אֲנִי  
וְאַמְךָ וְאַחֶיךָ לְהִשְׁתַּחֲוֹת לְךָ אֶרְצָה: <sup>יא</sup> וַיִּקְנְאוּ־בּוֹ  
אָחִיו וְאָבִיו שָׁמַר אֶת־הַדָּבָר:

<sup>יב</sup> וַיֵּלְכוּ אָחִיו לְרֹעוֹת אֶת־צֹאן אֲבֵיהֶם בְּשָׂכֶם:  
<sup>יג</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל־יוֹסֵף הֲלוֹא אַחֶיךָ רֹעִים בְּשָׂכֶם  
לָכָה וְאַשְׁלַחְךָ אֲלֵיהֶם וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ הִנְנִי: <sup>יד</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ לֵךְ־  
נָא רֹאֵה אֶת־שָׁלוֹם אַחֶיךָ וְאֶת־שָׁלוֹם הָצֹאן וְהַשְׁבִּנִי  
דָּבָר וַיִּשְׁלַחְהוּ מֵעֵמֶק חֶבְרוֹן וַיָּבֹא שָׂכְמָה:

then I saw your sheaves gather round and bow to my sheaf.” <sup>8</sup> “So, you want to be king over us” his brothers retorted “or to lord it over us?” And they hated him still more, because of his dreams and what he said. <sup>9</sup> He had another dream which he told to his brothers, saying, “Look, I have had another dream. I thought I saw the sun, the moon, and eleven stars, bowing to me.” <sup>10</sup> He told his father and brothers, and his father scolded him. “A fine dream to have!” he said to him. “Are all of us then, myself, your mother and your brothers, to come and bow to the ground before you?” <sup>11</sup> His brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the thing in mind.

<sup>12</sup> His brothers went to tend their father’s flock in Shechem. <sup>13</sup> Israel said to Joseph, “Aren’t your brothers tending the flock in Shechem? Come, I will send you to them.” “I am here,” he said. <sup>14</sup> He said to him, “Go and see if it is well with your brothers and the flock, and bring me word.” He sent him from the valley of Hebron and he came to Shechem.

<sup>8</sup> The literal translation of the brothers’ retort is, “Ruling, will you rule over us, or reigning, will you reign over us?”

<sup>9</sup> The ‘eleven stars’ may refer to the eleven constellations that ancients pictured in animal form.

<sup>10</sup> According to 35:19, Rachel was already dead. The narrative here seems to be following another tradition, which put Rachel’s death and Benjamin’s birth later (v. 3 & 43:29). Jacob’s question expresses his dismay at what he perceives to be Joseph’s audacity.

<sup>11</sup> Joseph’s brothers were already ‘jealous of him’, but this made it even worse; such jealousy easily leads to action, as the next episode in the story shows. Yet, dreams were considered a form of revelation, and their jealousy was not only of the favouritism of their father but of the dreams.

<sup>12</sup> The NJB has ‘feed’ in place of ‘tend’. On ‘Jacob/Israel’, see #32:29.

<sup>13</sup> With these words, ‘I am here’, Joseph is depicted here as an obedient son who is ready to do what his father commands.

<sup>14</sup> The literal translation of ‘see if it is well with’ is ‘check on the peace of’.

טו וַיִּמְצָאֵהוּ אִישׁ וְהָנָה תַּעֲה בַשָּׂדֶה וַיִּשְׁאַלְהוּ הָאִישׁ  
לֵאמֹר מַה־תִּבְקֶשׁ: טז וַיֹּאמֶר אֶת־אֲחֵי אֲנֹכִי מִבֶּקֶשׁ  
הַגִּידֶה־נָּא לִי אֵיפֹה הֵם רֹעִים: יז וַיֹּאמֶר הָאִישׁ נָסְעוּ  
מִזֶּה כִּי שָׁמַעְתִּי אֲמָרִים נִלְכָּה דַּתִּינָה וַיֵּלֶךְ יוֹסֵף אַחֵר  
אָחָיו וַיִּמְצָאֵם בְּדוֹתָן:

יח וַיֵּרְאוּ אֹתוֹ מֵרָחֵק וּבִטְרֵם יִקְרַב אֲלֵיהֶם וַיִּתְנַבְּלוּ  
אֹתוֹ לְהַמִּיתוֹ: יט וַיֹּאמְרוּ אִישׁ אֶל־אָחָיו הִנֵּה בָּעַל  
הַחֲלֻמֹּת הַלְזָה בָּא: כ וַעֲתָה לָכוּ וְנַהַרְגֵהוּ וְנִשְׁלַכְהוּ  
בְּאֶחָד הַבְּרוֹת וְאִמָּרְנוּ חַיָּה רָעָה אֲכָלָתָהוּ וְנִרְאָה  
מִה־יֵּהִיו חֲלֻמָּתָיו:

כא וַיִּשְׁמַע רְאוּבֵן וַיִּצְלָהוּ מִיָּדָם וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא נִכְנֹו נַפְשׁ:  
כב וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵיהֶם | רְאוּבֵן אֶל־תִּשְׁפְּכוּ־דָם הַשְּׁלִיכוּ  
אֹתוֹ אֶל־הַבּוֹר הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר בְּמִדְבָּר וַיֵּד אֶל־תִּשְׁלַחוּ־בּוֹ  
לְמַעַן הַצִּיל אֹתוֹ מִיָּדָם לְהַשִּׁיבּוֹ אֶל־אָבִיו: כג וַיְהִי  
כַּאֲשֶׁר־בָּא יוֹסֵף אֶל־אָחָיו וַיִּפְשִׁטוּ אֶת־יוֹסֵף אֶת־

15 A man found him wandering in the field and he asked him, "What are you looking for?" 16 "I seek my brothers," he replied. "Please tell me where they are feeding their flock." 17 The man said, "They have moved on from here; for I heard them say, "Let us go to Dothan."" So, Joseph went after his brothers and found them at Dothan.

18 They saw him in the distance, and before he reached them, they made a plot among themselves to put him to death. 19 "Here comes the man of dreams," they said to one another. 20 "Come on, let us kill him and throw him into some well; we can say that a wild beast devoured him. Then we shall see what becomes of his dreams."

21 But Reuben heard, and he saved him from their violence. "We must not take his life," he said. 22 "Shed no blood," said Reuben to them, "throw him down that well in the desert, but do not lay hands on him," intending to save him from them and to restore him to his father. 23 So, when Joseph reached his brothers, they tore off his coat,

15 Literally translated, this verse opens, "and a man found him and look, he was wandering in the field." By the use of וְהָנָה ('and look'), the narrator invites the reader to see the action through this unnamed man's eyes.

16 The imperative in this sentence ('please tell me') has more of the nuance of a request than a command.

17 The literal translation of 'they have moved on from here' is 'they have travelled from this place'.

18 In place of the first instance of the pronoun 'they' (here following the MT & NJB), NETB explicitly states 'his brothers'.

19 The brothers' words have a sarcastic note and indicate that they resent his dreams.

20 The word here translated as 'wild' can sometimes carry the nuance 'evil', but when used of an animal it refers to a dangerous wild animal.

21 The instigators of this plot may have been the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah (see v. 2).

22 The verbs translated 'shed', 'throw', and 'lay' sound alike in Hebrew; the repetition of similar sounds draws attention to Reuben's words.

23 In place of 'his coat', the MT has 'Joseph's coat'. See #3.

כְּתָנָתוֹ אֶת־כְּתָנֶת הַפָּסִים אֲשֶׁר עָלָיו: כד וַיִּקְחֵהוּ  
וַיִּשְׁלְכוּ אֹתוֹ הַבְּרָה וְהַבּוֹר רֶק אֵין בּוֹ מַיִם: כה וַיֵּשְׁבוּ  
לֵאכֹל־לֶחֶם וַיִּשְׂאוּ עֵינֵיהֶם וַיֵּרְאוּ וְהִנֵּה אַרְחַת  
יִשְׁמַעֲאֵלִים בָּאָה מִגִּלְעָד וּגְמָלֵיהֶם נִשְׂאִים נִכְאֹת וְצָרִי  
וְלֹט הוֹלְכִים לְהוֹרִיד מִצְרַיִמָּה: כו וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוּדָה אֶל־  
אָחָיו מִה־פֶּצַע כִּי נִהְרַג אֶת־אָחִינוּ וְכִסִּינוּ אֶת־דָּמּוֹ:  
כז לָכוּ וְנִמְכְּרֵנוּ לְיִשְׁמַעֲאֵלִים וַיִּדְּנוּ אֶל־תְּהִיבוֹ כִּי־  
אָחִינוּ בְּשָׂרֵנוּ הוּא וַיִּשְׁמְעוּ אָחָיו: כח וַיַּעֲבְרוּ אַנְשֵׁים  
מִדִּינֵי סַחְרִים וַיִּמְשְׁכוּ וַיַּעֲלוּ אֶת־יוֹסֵף מִן־הַבּוֹר  
וַיִּמְכְּרוּ אֶת־יוֹסֵף לְיִשְׁמַעֲאֵלִים בְּעֶשְׂרִים כֶּסֶף וַיָּבִיאוּ  
אֶת־יוֹסֵף מִצְרַיִמָּה: כט וַיָּשֶׁב רְאוּבֵן אֶל־הַבּוֹר וְהִנֵּה  
אֵין־יוֹסֵף בַּבּוֹר וַיִּקְרַע אֶת־בְּגָדָיו: ל וַיָּשֶׁב אֶל־אָחָיו  
וַיֹּאמֶר הִילֵד אֵינָנו וְאֲנִי אָנָּה אֲנִי־בָא:  
לא וַיִּקְחוּ אֶת־כְּתָנֶת יוֹסֵף וַיִּשְׁחֲטוּ שְׂעִיר עִזִּים וַיִּטְבְּלוּ  
אֶת־הַכְּתָנֶת בַּדָּם: לב וַיִּשְׁלְחוּ אֶת־כְּתָנֶת הַפָּסִים

the decorated tunic that he was wearing <sup>24</sup> and, taking hold of him, they threw him into the pit, an empty pit with no water in it. <sup>25</sup> They sat down to eat, looked up, and saw a group of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead, their camels laden with gum, balsam and resin, which they were taking down into Egypt. <sup>26</sup> And Judah said to his brothers, "What profit is it if we kill our brother and conceal his blood? <sup>27</sup> Come, let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, but let us not harm him, for he is our brother, our own flesh." His brothers agreed. <sup>28</sup> When some Midianite merchants were passing by, they drew Joseph out of the pit. They sold Joseph to the Ishmaelites for twenty silver pieces and they took Joseph to Egypt. <sup>29</sup> When Reuben went back to the pit, there was no sign of Joseph. Tearing his clothes, <sup>30</sup> he went back to his brothers. "The boy has gone," he said. "What am I going to do?" <sup>31</sup> They took Joseph's coat, killed a kid, and dipped the coat in the blood. <sup>32</sup> Then they sent back the coat with long sleeves and had it

<sup>24</sup> The disjunctive clause ('an empty pit with no water in it') gives supplemental information that helps the reader picture what happened.

<sup>25</sup> After 'gum', the NJB adds 'tragacanth' (?), not present in the NRSV.

<sup>26</sup> A murderer would cover the victim's blood so that it would not cry to heaven (Job 16:18, Ezk 24:7).

<sup>27</sup> The literal translation of 'agreed' is 'listened'.

<sup>28</sup> On the close relationship between 'Ishmaelites' (v. 25) and 'Midianites', see Jg 8:24.

<sup>29</sup> The literal translation of 'there was no sign of Joseph' is 'and look, Joseph was not in the cistern'.

<sup>30</sup> A more literal translation of 'what am I going to do' (here following the NJB) is 'where can I go' (as NETB).

<sup>31</sup> It was with two young goats that Jacob deceived his father (27:9); now, his sons continue the deception that dominates this family.

<sup>32</sup> The text as it stands is problematic: it sounds as if they sent the coat on ahead and then came and brought it to their father. Some emend the second verb to a *Qal* form and read 'and they came'; in this case, they sent the tunic on ahead.



וַיָּבִיאוּ אֶל־אֲבִיהֶם וַיֹּאמְרוּ זֹאת מָצָאנוּ הַכֶּרֶם־נָא  
הַכְתַּנְתָּ בְנֶךָ הוּא אִם־לֹא: <sup>לג</sup> וַיִּכְרֶה וַיֹּאמֶר כְּתַנְתָּ בְנִי  
חַיָּה רָעָה אֲכָלְתָּהוּ טָרֵף טָרֵף יוֹסֵף: <sup>לד</sup> וַיִּקְרַע יַעֲקֹב  
שָׁמַלְתָיו וַיֵּשֶׁם שָׂק בְּמַתְּנָיו וַיִּתְאַבֵּל עַל־בָּנוּ יָמִים  
רַבִּים: <sup>לה</sup> וַיִּקְמֹו כָל־בָּנָיו וְכָל־בָּנֹתָיו לִנְחָמוֹ וַיִּמָּאֵן  
לְהַתְנַחֵם וַיֹּאמֶר כִּי־אֶרְדָּ אֶל־בְּנֵי אָבִי שְׁאֵלָה וַיִּבְדֹּךְ  
אֹתוֹ אָבִיו:

לוֹ וְהַמְדָּנִים מָכְרוּ אֹתוֹ אֶל־מִצְרַיִם לְפֹטִיפָר סָרִיס  
פְּרָעָה שֶׁר הַטִּבְחִים: {פ}

taken to their father, with the message, “This is what we found; see if it is your son’s coat.” <sup>33</sup> He examined it and exclaimed, “It is my son’s coat! A wild beast has eaten him; Joseph has surely been torn to pieces.” <sup>34</sup> Jacob tore his clothes, put on sackcloth on his loins and mourned his son many days. <sup>35</sup> All his sons and daughters stood by him, but he refused to be consoled. He said, “No, I will go down in mourning to Sheol, beside my son;” and his father wept for him.

<sup>36</sup> Meanwhile the Midianites had sold him in Egypt to Potiphar, one of Pharaoh’s officials and commander of the guard.

<sup>33</sup> Jacob draws his conclusion without his sons having to lie with their words (see v. 20); dipping the tunic in the goat’s blood was enough.

<sup>34</sup> In place of ‘many days’, here following the MT (& NETB), the NJB has ‘for a long time’.

<sup>35</sup> ‘Sheol’ was the underworld to which it was believed a person’s shade went at death (2S 12:23, Ps 115:17). Since this after-life was a shadowy existence, Jacob’s going to his son there was not a comforting expectation.

<sup>36</sup> The MT spells the name of the merchants as מְדָנִים (‘Medanites’) rather than מִדְיָנִים (‘Midianites’) as in v. 28; it is likely that the MT is corrupt at this point, with the letter *yod* being accidentally omitted. The LXX (Μαδιανῶν), Vg (Madianitæ), Samaritan Pentateuch, and Peshitta read ‘Midianites’ here. Some prefer to read ‘Medanites’ both here and in v. 28, but Jg 8:24, which identifies the Midianites and Ishmaelites, favours the reading ‘Midianites’. ‘Potiphar’ is a form of ‘Potiphera’, the name of the Egyptian priest of 41:45 (see footnote thereto) and 46:20; it has been thought they may be the same person, one tradition designating him as captain of the guard, and another as a priest.

## בראשית פרק לח

א וַיְהִי בַּעַת הַהוּא וַיֵּרֶד יְהוּדָה מֵאֵת אָחִיו וַיֵּט עַד-  
אִישׁ עַדְלָמִי וּשְׁמוֹ חִירָה: ב וַיֵּרָא שָׁם יְהוּדָה בַּת-אִישׁ  
כְּנַעֲנִי וּשְׁמוֹ שׁוּעַ וַיִּקְחָהּ וַיָּבֵא אֵלֶיהָ: ג וַתֵּהָר וַתֵּלֶד בֶּן  
וַיִּקְרָא אֶת-שְׁמוֹ עֵר: ד וַתֵּהָר עוֹד וַתֵּלֶד בֶּן וַתִּקְרָא  
אֶת-שְׁמוֹ אוֹנָן: ה וַתִּסֹּף עוֹל וַתֵּלֶד בֶּן וַתִּקְרָא אֶת-שְׁמוֹ  
שֵׁלָה וְהָיָה בְּכִזִּיב בְּלִדְתָּהּ אֹתוֹ:

ו וַיִּקַּח יְהוּדָה אִשָּׁה לְעֵר בְּכוֹרוֹ וּשְׁמָהּ תָמָר: ז וַיְהִי עֵר  
בְּכוֹר יְהוּדָה רָע בְּעֵינֵי יְהוָה וַיִּמָּתֶהוּ יְהוָה: ח וַיֹּאמֶר  
יְהוּדָה לְאוֹנָן בָּא אֶל-אִשְׁתִּי אַחִיד וַיְבִס אֹתָהּ וְהָקָם  
זָרַע לְאַחִיד: ט וַיֵּדַע אוֹנָן כִּי לֹא לוֹ יִהְיֶה הַזָּרַע וְהָיָה  
אִם-בָּא אֶל-אִשְׁתִּי אָחִיו וְשָׁחַת אֶרְצָה לְבִלְתִּי נָתֹן  
זָרַע לְאָחִיו: י וַיֵּרַע בְּעֵינֵי יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה וַיָּמָת גַּם-

## GENESIS 38

<sup>1</sup> At that time that, Judah left his brothers to go and stay with an Adu-  
llamite called Hirah. <sup>2</sup> There, Judah saw the daughter of a Canaanite  
called Shua; he made her his wife and went into her. <sup>3</sup> She conceived  
and bore a son whom he named Er. <sup>4</sup> She conceived again and bore  
a son whom she named Onan. <sup>5</sup> Yet again, she bore a son whom she  
named Shelah; he was at Chezib when she bore him.

<sup>6</sup> Judah took a wife for his firstborn Er; her name was Tamar. <sup>7</sup> Er,  
Judah's firstborn, was evil in Yahweh's eyes, so Yahweh killed him.

<sup>8</sup> Judah said to Onan, "Take your brother's wife and do the duty of a  
brother-in-law, to raise offspring for your brother." <sup>9</sup> But Onan, knew  
the child would not be his and spilt his seed on the ground when he  
slept with his brother's wife, lest he gave his brother a child. <sup>10</sup> What

## GENESIS 38

<sup>1</sup> The literal translation of 'left' is 'went down from'.

<sup>2</sup> The marriage with Shua's daughter reflects territorial expansion of the tribe of Judah and the consequent intermarriages with Canaanites.

<sup>3</sup> In place of 'he named', here following the MT, some MSS (and the NJB) have 'she named', to match the pattern of the next two verses. For 'Er' (עֵר), the LXX reads *Hē*.

<sup>4</sup> For 'Onan' (אוֹנָן), the LXX reads *Αωναν*.

<sup>5</sup> For 'Shelah' (שֵׁלָה), the LXX reads *Σηλωμ*.

<sup>6</sup> For 'Tamar' (תָּמָר), the LXX reads *Θαμαρ*.

<sup>7</sup> The early and childless death of Er is attributed to a divine act, almost demonic in character.

<sup>8</sup> According to 'levirate' law (Dt 25:5-10, Rt 4:1-12), a childless widow's brother-in-law took her as his wife.

<sup>9</sup> The text makes it clear that the purpose of the custom was to produce an heir for the deceased brother. Onan had no intention of doing that but he would have sex with the girl as much as he wished.

<sup>10</sup> Yahweh condemns Onan for failing to put his duty to the family before his own self-interest.

אָתּוֹ: <sup>יא</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוּדָה לְתָמָר כָּלְתִי שְׂבִי אִלְמָנָה בֵּית־  
אָבִיךָ עַד־יִגְדֹּל שְׁלָה בְנִי כִּי אָמַר פְּנִימוֹת גַּם־הוּא  
כְּאָחִיו וַתֵּלֶךְ תָּמָר וַתֵּשֶׁב בֵּית אָבִיהָ:

<sup>יב</sup> וַיְרֻבוּ הַיָּמִים וַתָּמָת בַּת־שׁוּעַ אֵשֶׁת־יְהוּדָה וַיִּנָּחֵם  
יְהוּדָה וַיֵּעַל עַל־גִּזְזֵי צֹאנוֹ הוּא וְחִירָה רַעְהוּ הָעֶדְלָמִי  
תַּמְנָתָה: <sup>יג</sup> וַיֵּגֶד לְתָמָר לֵאמֹר הִנֵּה חֲמִידָךְ עֹלָה תַּמְנָתָה  
לְגֹז צֹאנוֹ: <sup>יד</sup> וַתִּסָּר בְּגָדֶיהָ אִלְמָנוּתָהּ מֵעַלֶּיהָ וַתִּכְסֶּם  
בְּצַעְרֶיהָ וַתַּתְעַלֶּף וַתֵּשֶׁב בַּפֶּתַח עֵינִים אֲשֶׁר עַל־דֶּרֶךְ  
תַּמְנָתָה כִּי רָאָתָה כִּי־גָדֹל שְׁלָה וְהוּא לֹא־נָתַןָהּ לוֹ  
לְאִשָּׁה:

<sup>טו</sup> וַיִּרְאֶה יְהוּדָה וַיַּחְשְׁבֶהָ לְזוֹנָה כִּי כִסְתָה פָּנֶיהָ: <sup>טז</sup> וַיֵּט  
אֵלֶיהָ אֶל־הַדֶּרֶךְ וַיֹּאמֶר הֲבֵה־נָא אָבּוֹא אֵלֶיךָ כִּי לֹא  
יָדַע כִּי כָלְתִי הוּא וַתֹּאמֶר מַה־תִּתֶּן־לִי כִּי תָבוֹא אֵלַי:  
<sup>יז</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר אֲנֹכִי אֲשַׁלַּח גְּדִיעִים מִן־הָצֹאן וַתֹּאמֶר אִם־

he did was evil in Yahweh's eyes, so he killed him too. <sup>11</sup> Then Judah said to his daughter-in-law Tamar, "Remain a widow in your father's house until my son Shelah grows up," for he thought, "He must not die like his brothers." So, Tamar went home to her father.

<sup>12</sup> In time, Shua's daughter, the wife of Judah, died; when Judah was comforted, he went to Timnah to the sheep shearers, he and Hirah, his Adullamite friend. <sup>13</sup> Tamar was told, "Look, your father-in-law is going up to Timnah to shear his sheep." <sup>14</sup> She changed her widow's clothes, veiled herself, wrapped herself and sat down by the gate of Enaim, which is on the road to Timnah. She saw that Shelah had grown up but had not been given to him as his wife.

<sup>15</sup> When Judah saw her, he thought she was a prostitute, as she had covered her face. <sup>16</sup> Going to her on the way, he said, "Come, I will go to you." He did not know she was his daughter-in-law. "What will you give me to go to me?" she asked. <sup>17</sup> He said, "I will send you

<sup>11</sup> Judah apparently feared that the death of his two sons resulted from Tamar's sinister power. A widow was supposed to return to her father's house (Rt 1:8–9, Lv 22:13).

<sup>12</sup> 'When Judah was comforted' would have been when he had observed all the mourning rites (see Jr 16:7).

<sup>13</sup> The active participle ('is going up') indicates the action was in progress or about to begin.

<sup>14</sup> Disguised as a harlot, Tamar awaits Judah by the roadside. She is prompted not by wantonness but by the desire to bear a child of her dead husband's blood. Later (v. 26), Judah will approve her conduct and future generations will praise her (Rt 4:12).

<sup>15</sup> Judah takes Tamar for a cult prostitute, a devotee of the mother-goddess Ishtar. Prostitution was connected with the worship of the gods of fertility (Dt 23:18, 1K 14:24, 2K 23:7, Ho 4:13, Am 2:7).

<sup>16</sup> The expression 'go to you' is a euphemism for sexual intercourse; the imperfect verbal form probably indicates his desire here.

<sup>17</sup> The MT lacks the pronoun ('it') at the end of Tamar's question.

תָּתֵן עֶרְבוֹן עַד שְׁלַחָךְ: י"ח וַיֹּאמֶר מָה הָעֶרְבוֹן אֲשֶׁר אֶתֶּן-לָךְ וְתֹאמַר חֲתָמְךָ וּפְתִילְךָ וּמִטֶּה אֲשֶׁר בְּיָדְךָ וַיִּתֶּן-לָהּ וַיָּבֵא אֵלֶיהָ וַתְּהַר לּוֹ: י"ט וַתִּקֶּם וַתִּלָּךְ וַתִּסַּר צַעֲיָפָה מֵעֲלֶיהָ וַתִּלְבַּשׁ בְּגָדֵי אִלְמָנוּתָהּ:

כ וַיִּשְׁלַח יְהוּדָה אֶת-גְּדִי הָעֲזִים בְּיַד רַעְהוּ הָעֵדְלָמִי לִקְחַת הָעֶרְבוֹן מִיַּד הָאִשָּׁה וְלֹא מָצְאָהּ: כא וַיִּשְׁאַל אֶת-אֲנָשֵׁי מְקוֹמָהּ לֵאמֹר אֵיךְ הַקְדָּשָׁה הוּא בְּעֵינֵינוּ עַל-הַדֶּרֶךְ וַיֹּאמְרוּ לֹא-הִיְתָה בָּזָה קְדָשָׁה: כב וַיֵּשֶׁב אֶל-יְהוּדָה וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא מָצָאתִיהָ וְגַם אֲנָשֵׁי הַמָּקוֹם אָמְרוּ לֹא-הִיְתָה בָּזָה קְדָשָׁה: כג וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוּדָה תִּקַּח-לָהּ פֶּן נִהְיָה לְבוֹז הִנֵּה שְׁלַחְתִּי הַגְּדִי הַזֶּה וְאַתָּה לֹא מָצָאתָהּ:

כד וַיְהִי כִּמְשָׁלֶשׁ חֳדָשִׁים וַיֵּגֶד לִיהוּדָה לֵאמֹר זָנְתָה תָּמָר כָּלֶתֶךָ וְגַם הִנֵּה הָרָה לְזָנוּנִים וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוּדָה הוֹצִיאוּהָ וְתִשְׂרֹף: כה הוּא מוֹצֵאת וְהִיא שְׁלַחָה אֶל-

a kid from the flock." She said, "Will you give me a pledge until you send it?" <sup>18</sup> He said, "What pledge shall I give you?" She said, "Your seal, your cord, and the staff you are holding." He gave them to her and went into her, and she conceived by him. <sup>19</sup> She left immediately, took off her veil and put on her widow's clothes.

<sup>20</sup> Judah sent the kid by his Adullamite friend to recover the pledge from the woman; but he did not find her. <sup>21</sup> He asked the men of her place, "Where is the prostitute who was by the roadside at Enaim?" They said, "There has been no prostitute there." <sup>22</sup> So, returning to Judah, he said, "I did not find her. And the men of the place said, "here has been no prostitute here." <sup>23</sup> Judah said, "Let her keep it, or we shall become contemptible. At least I sent her this kid, even though you did not find her."

<sup>24</sup> After three months, Judah was told, "Your daughter-in-law has played the harlot; and look, she is pregnant by prostitution." Judah said, "Take her out and burn her." <sup>25</sup> As she was brought out, she

<sup>18</sup> The seal strung on a cord and the staff, being intrinsically personal, serve to identify the owner.

<sup>19</sup> The literal translation of 'she left immediately' is 'and she arose and left', the first verb in the pair emphasising that she wasted no time.

<sup>20</sup> The literal translation of 'recover the pledge from the woman' is 'receive the pledge from the woman's hand'.

<sup>21</sup> A strict translation of 'prostitute' would be 'sacred prostitute', priestess of a pagan cult; it will be remembered that the background is Canaanite. In place of 'he asked the men of her place', here following the MT, the NJB has 'he inquired of the men of the place'.

<sup>22</sup> The MT quotes the reply of the 'men of place' – "there has been no (cult) prostitute here."

<sup>23</sup> The word translated 'contemptible' (לְבוֹז) describes the contempt that a respectable person would have for one who is worthless or disreputable.

<sup>24</sup> Tamar is, by levirate law (Dt 25:5), the betrothed of Shelah. Later, ordeal by fire was reserved for the daughters of priests (Lv 21:9).

<sup>25</sup> The juxtaposition of the first two clauses, both of which place the subject before the predicate, indicates synchronous action.

חַמִּיהָ לֵאמֹר לְאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר-אֵלֶּה לּוֹ אֲנֹכִי הָרָה וְתֹאמַר  
הַפְּרִינָא לְמִי הַחֲתָמָה וְהַפְּתִילִים וְהַמָּטָה הָאֵלֶּה:  
כּו וַיִּכְר יְהוּדָה וַיֹּאמֶר צְדָקָה מִמֶּנִּי כִּי-עַל-כֵּן לֹא-  
נִתְּתִיהָ לְשִׁלָּה בְּנִי וְלֹא-יִסָּף עוֹד לְדַעְתָּהּ:

כז וַיְהִי בַעֲת לְדִתָּהּ וְהִנֵּה תְאוּמִים בְּבֶטְנָהּ: כח וַיְהִי  
בְּלִדְתָּהּ וַיִּתְּנוּ יָד וַתִּקַּח הַמִּילָדָה וַתִּקְשֹׁר עַל-יָדוֹ שָׁנִי  
לֵאמֹר זֶה יֵצֵא רִאשֹׁנָה: כט וַיְהִי כִּמְשִׁיב יָדוֹ וְהִנֵּה יֵצֵא  
אֶחָיו וְתֹאמַר מִה-פָּרַצְתָּ עָלַי פָּרָץ וַיִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ פֶּרֶץ:  
ל וְאַחֲרָיִם יֵצֵא אֶחָיו אֲשֶׁר עַל-יָדוֹ הַשָּׁנִי וַיִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ  
זֶרַח: {ס}

sent to her father-in-law, saying, "I am pregnant by the man who owns these. Look and see whose owns this seal, cord, and staff."

<sup>26</sup> Judah saw them and said, "She is more upright than I because I did not give her to my son Shelah." He lay no more with her.

<sup>27</sup> At the time for her labour there were twins in her womb. <sup>28</sup> During the delivery, one put out a hand and the midwife took a scarlet thread and tied to the hand, saying, "This came out first." <sup>29</sup> But he drew his hand back and his brother came out, and she said, "What a breach you have made for yourself!" So, she named him Perez.

<sup>30</sup> Then his brother came out with the scarlet thread on his hand, so she named him Zerah.

<sup>26</sup> Judah singles Tamar out for approval for, judged by the levirate obligation, she was more in the right than he was. Within the limitations of patriarchal society, she acted boldly to achieve justice.

<sup>27</sup> The birth of the twins (compare 25:21–26) portrays the rivalry of Perez and Zerah, two clans of Judah (Nb 26:19–22) who were partially Canaanite. Perez, the firstborn, was an ancestor of David (Rt 4:18–22) and consequently of the Messiah (Mt 1:3, Lk 3:33).

<sup>28</sup> The words 'of them' (here following the *NJB*) are not present in the *MT*

<sup>29</sup> The name 'Perez' (פֶּרֶץ) means 'he who breaks through', referring to Perez reaching out his hand at birth before his brother was born. The naming signified the completion of Tamar's struggle and also depicted the destiny of the tribe of Perez who later became dominant (46:12 & Nb 26:20).

<sup>30</sup> Perhaps the child was named 'Zerah' (זֶרַח) because of the 'scarlet thread' (v. 28); though the Hebrew word used therein is not related to the name Zerah, there is a related root in Babylonian and western Aramaic that means 'scarlet'. In Hebrew, the name appears to be derived from a root meaning 'to shine'. The name could have originally meant something like 'shining one' or 'God has shone'. Zerah became the head of a tribe (Num 26:20) from whom Achan descended (Josh 7:1).

## בראשית פרק לט

א וַיֹּסֶף הוּרָד מִצְרַיִם וַיְקַנְהוּ פוֹטִיפָר סָרִיס פְּרָעָה  
שֶׁר הַטַּבָּחִים אִישׁ מִצְרֵי מִיד הַיִּשְׁמְעֵאלִים אֲשֶׁר  
הוֹרְדָהוּ שָׁמָּה: ב וַיְהִי יְהוָה אֶת־יוֹסֵף וַיְהִי אִישׁ מְצַלִּיחַ  
וַיְהִי בְּבֵית אֲדֹנָיו הַמִּצְרִי: ג וַיֵּרָא אֲדֹנָיו כִּי יְהוָה אִתּוֹ  
וְכָל אֲשֶׁר־הוּא עֹשֶׂה יְהוָה מְצַלִּיחַ בִּידּוֹ: ד וַיִּמָּצֵא יוֹסֵף  
חָן בְּעֵינָיו וַיִּשְׂרַת אֹתוֹ וַיִּפְקְדֵהוּ עַל־בֵּיתוֹ וְכָל־יִשְׁלֹ  
נָתַן בִּידּוֹ: ה וַיְהִי מֵאֲזַ הַפְּקִיד אֹתוֹ בְּבֵיתוֹ וְעַל כָּל־  
אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁלֹ וַיַּבְרֶךְ יְהוָה אֶת־בֵּית הַמִּצְרִי בְּגִלְל יוֹסֵף  
וַיְהִי בִרְכַּת יְהוָה בְּכָל־אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁלֹ בְּבֵית וּבְשָׂדֶה:  
ו וַיַּעֲזֹב כָּל־אֲשֶׁר־לֹ בִּיד־יוֹסֵף וְלֹא־יָדַע אֹתוֹ מֵאֻמָּה  
כִּי אִם־הִלָּחֵם אֲשֶׁר־הוּא אוֹכֵל וַיְהִי יוֹסֵף יָפֵה־תָאֵר  
וַיִּפֶּה מְרֹאֶה:

## GENESIS 39

<sup>1</sup> Joseph was brought down to Egypt. Potiphar the Egyptian, one of Pharaoh's officials and captain of the guard, bought him from the Ishmaelites who had taken him there. <sup>2</sup> Yahweh was with Joseph and he prospered and lived in the house of his Egyptian master. <sup>3</sup> His master saw how Yahweh was with him and how Yahweh made all he did succeed. <sup>4</sup> He was pleased with Joseph and made him his attendant and put him in charge of his house, entrusting everything to him. <sup>5</sup> And, from when he put him in charge of his house and all he had, Yahweh blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; Yahweh's blessing was on all he had, in both house and field. <sup>6</sup> He left all he had in Joseph's hands and concerned himself with nothing but the food he ate. Joseph was well built and handsome.

### GENESIS 39

- <sup>1</sup> The expression 'captain of the guard' might indicate that Potiphar was the chief executioner.
- <sup>2</sup> The phrase, 'he prospered', does not mean that Joseph became wealthy but that he was successful in what he was doing or making progress in his situation (see 24:21).
- <sup>3</sup> At the end of this verse, the MT adds 'in his hand' but this phrase is both awkward and redundant in modern English.
- <sup>4</sup> The phrase 'made him his attendant' refers to higher domestic service, usually along the lines of a personal attendant. Here, Joseph is made the household steward, a position well-attested in Egyptian literature.
- <sup>5</sup> The word translated 'blessed' carries the idea of enrichment, prosperity, success; it is the way believers describe success at the hand of God. The text illustrates the promise made to Abraham that whoever blesses his descendants will be blessed (12:1-3).
- <sup>6</sup> The passage gives us a good picture of Joseph as a young man who was responsible and faithful, both to his master and to his God. This happened within a very short time of his being sold into Egypt. It undermines the view that Joseph was a liar, a tattletale, an arrogant adolescent.



וַיְהִי אַחֲרֵי הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה וַתֵּשֶׂא אִשְׁת־אֲדֹנָיו אֶת־  
 עֵינֶיהָ אֶל־יוֹסֵף וַתֹּאמֶר שְׁכַבָּה עִמִּי: <sup>ח</sup> וַיִּמָּאֵן וַיֹּאמֶר  
 אֶל־אִשְׁת־אֲדֹנָיו הֵן אֲדֹנִי לֹא־יַדַּע אֶתִּי מִה־בֵּית וְכָל־  
 אֲשֶׁר־יֵשְׁלוֹ נָתַן בְּיָדִי: <sup>ט</sup> אֵינְנוּ גָדוֹל בְּבֵית הַזֶּה מִמֶּנִּי  
 וְלֹא־חֶשֶׂד מִמֶּנִּי מְאוּמָה כִּי אִם־אוֹתָךְ בְּאִשֶּׁר אֶת־  
 אִשְׁתּוֹ וְאִךְ אֶעֱשֶׂה הָרָעָה הַגְּדֹלָה הַזֹּאת וְחִטָּאתִי  
 לָאֱלֹהִים: <sup>י</sup> וַיְהִי כַּדְּבָרָה אֶל־יוֹסֵף יוֹם | יוֹם וְלֹא־שָׁמַע  
 אֵלֶיהָ לְשֹׁכֵב אֶצְלָהּ לַהֲיוֹת עִמָּה:

<sup>יא</sup> וַיְהִי כִּהְיוֹם הַזֶּה וַיָּבֹא הַבֵּיתָה לַעֲשׂוֹת מְלָאכְתּוֹ וְאִין  
 אִישׁ מֵאֲנָשֵׁי הַבֵּית שָׁם בְּבֵית: <sup>יב</sup> וַתִּתְּפֹשֶׁהוּ בְּבִגְדּוֹ  
 לֵאמֹר שְׁכַבָּה עִמִּי וַיַּעֲזֹב בְּגָדוֹ בְּיָדָהּ וַיֵּנָס וַיֵּצֵא  
 הַחוּצָה: <sup>יג</sup> וַיְהִי כִּרְאוּתָהּ כִּי־עָזַב בְּגָדוֹ בְּיָדָהּ וַיֵּנָס  
 הַחוּצָה: <sup>יד</sup> וַתִּקְרָא לָאֲנָשִׁי בֵיתָהּ וַתֹּאמֶר לָהֶם לֵאמֹר  
 רְאוּ הַבֵּיא לָנוּ אִישׁ עֲבָרִי לְצַחֵק בָּנוּ בָּא אֵלַי לְשֹׁכֵב  
 עִמִּי וְאֶקְרָא בְּקוֹל גָּדוֹל: <sup>טו</sup> וַיְהִי כִשְׁמַעוֹ כִּי־הִרִימָתִי  
 קוֹלִי וְאֶקְרָא וַיַּעֲזֹב בְּגָדוֹ אֶצְלִי וַיֵּנָס וַיֵּצֵא הַחוּצָה:

<sup>7</sup> Some time later, his master's wife took notice of him and said, "Lie with me." <sup>8</sup> But he refused, and said to his master's wife, "My master does not concern himself with what happens in the house with me; he has put all he has in my hands. <sup>9</sup> He is master in this house no more than I am. He has withheld nothing from me except yourself, because you are his wife. How could I do anything so wicked, and sin against God?" <sup>10</sup> Although she spoke to Joseph day after day, he would not agree to lie with her and surrender to her.

<sup>11</sup> Now one day Joseph, in the course of his duties, came to the house, and none of the men was there indoors. <sup>12</sup> She caught hold of him by his tunic and said, "Lie with me." But he left the tunic in her hand and ran out of the house. <sup>13</sup> Seeing he had left the tunic in her hand and left the house, <sup>14</sup> she called her servants and said to them, "Look at this! He has brought us a Hebrew to insult us. He came to me to lie with me, but I screamed; <sup>15</sup> and, when he heard me scream and shout, he left his tunic beside me and ran out of the house."

<sup>7</sup> The literal translation of 'took notice of him' is 'lifted up her eyes to him'.

<sup>8</sup> The phrase 'into my hands' is a metonymy for being under the control or care of Joseph.

<sup>9</sup> The nuance of potential imperfect fits the context of the phrase translated 'how could I do'.

<sup>10</sup> This verse begins with the temporal indicator, followed by the infinitive construct with כִּי; the first clause could therefore be taken as temporal.

<sup>11</sup> The literal translation of 'now one day' is 'it was about this day'.

<sup>12</sup> The literal translation of 'ran out of the house' is 'fled and went outside'.

<sup>13</sup> An alternative translation of 'tunic' is 'outer garment'.

<sup>14</sup> Potiphar's wife raises the ethnic issue when talking to her servants about what their boss had done.

<sup>15</sup> In place of 'scream and shout', here following the NJB, the NRSV (more literally following the MT) has 'raise my voice and cry out'.

<sup>טז</sup> וַתִּנַּח בְּגָדוֹ אֶצְלָהּ עַד-בּוֹא אֲדֹנָיו אֶל-בֵּיתוֹ:  
<sup>יז</sup> וַתְּדַבֵּר אֵלָיו כַּדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה לֵאמֹר בֶּא-אֵלֵי הָעֶבֶד  
הָעִבְרִי אֲשֶׁר-הִבֵּאתָ לָנוּ לְצַחֵק בִּי: <sup>יח</sup> וַיְהִי כַּהֲרִימִי  
קוֹלִי וְאֶקְרָא וַיַּעֲזֹב בְּגָדוֹ אֶצְלִי וַיֵּנָס הַחוּצָה: <sup>יט</sup> וַיְהִי  
כַּשְׁמַע אֲדֹנָיו אֶת-דְּבָרֵי אִשְׁתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר דִּבְרָה אֵלָיו  
לֵאמֹר כַּדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה עָשָׂה לִי עֲבָדְךָ וַיַּחַר אָפוֹ:  
<sup>כ</sup> וַיִּקַּח אֲדֹנִי יוֹסֵף אֹתוֹ וַיִּתְּנֵהוּ אֶל-בֵּית הַסֵּהר מְקוֹם  
אֲשֶׁר-אֲסִירֵי אֲסוּרֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲסוּרִים וַיְהִי-שָׁם בְּבֵית  
הַסֵּהר: <sup>כא</sup> וַיְהִי יְהוָה אֶת-יוֹסֵף וַיְיט אֵלָיו חֶסֶד וַיִּתֵּן חַנּוּן  
בְּעֵינֵי שַׂר בֵּית-הַסֵּהר: <sup>כב</sup> וַיִּתֵּן שַׂר בֵּית-הַסֵּהר בְּיַד-  
יוֹסֵף אֶת כָּל-הָאֲסִירִים אֲשֶׁר בְּבֵית הַסֵּהר וְאֵת כָּל-  
אֲשֶׁר עֹשִׂים שָׁם הוּא הָיָה עֹשֶׂה: <sup>כג</sup> אֵין שַׂר בֵּית-  
הַסֵּהר רָאָה אֶת-כָּל-מַאֲוָמָה בְּיָדוֹ בְּאֲשֶׁר יְהוָה אָתּוֹ  
וְאֲשֶׁר-הוּא עֹשֶׂה יְהוָה מִצְלִיחַ: {פ}

<sup>16</sup> She put his tunic down by her side until his master came home.  
<sup>17</sup> Then she told him the same tale, saying, "The Hebrew servant  
whom you bought us came in to insult me. <sup>18</sup> But when I screamed  
and called out, he left his garment by my side and made his escape."  
<sup>19</sup> When his master heard the words of his wife, which she said to  
him, saying, "This is how your servant treated me," he was furious.  
<sup>20</sup> Then Joseph's master took him and committed him to the prison,  
where the king's prisoners were confined. There in prison he stayed;  
<sup>21</sup> but Yahweh was with Joseph. He was kind to him and made him  
popular with the chief gaoler. <sup>22</sup> The chief gaoler put Joseph in charge  
of all the prisoners in the prison, making him responsible for  
everything done there. <sup>23</sup> The chief gaoler did not need to interfere  
with Joseph's administration, because Yahweh was with him, and  
Yahweh made everything that he undertook successful.

<sup>16</sup> Potiphar's wife uses Joseph's tunic as 'evidence' to support her false accusation.

<sup>17</sup> Now, when speaking to her husband, Potiphar's wife refers to Joseph as a Hebrew slave, a very demeaning description.

<sup>18</sup> As in v.15, the NRSV has 'raised my voice' in place of 'screamed', here following the NJB.

<sup>19</sup> The literal translation of 'he was furious' is 'his anger burned'.

<sup>20</sup> The literal translation of 'prison' is 'house of roundness', suggesting that the prison might have been a fortress or citadel. The *Kethib/Qere* difference here warrants an explanation.

<sup>21</sup> Strangely, Joseph, a slave, was not executed for adultery, for Yahweh was with him, not only in success (v. 2) but also in adversity.

<sup>22</sup> The literal translation of 'everything done there' is 'all that they were doing there, his doing'; this verse probably means that Joseph was in charge of everything that went on in the prison.

<sup>23</sup> The literal translation of 'did not need to interfere with' is 'was not looking at anything'.

## GENESIS 40

## בראשית פרק מ

א וַיְהִי אַחֲרֵי הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה חֲטָאוּ מִשְׁקָה מֶלֶךְ־  
מִצְרַיִם וְהָאֹפֶה לְאֲדֹנָיָהֶם לְמֶלֶךְ מִצְרַיִם: ב וַיִּקְצָץ  
פָּרְעָה עַל שְׁנֵי סֵרִיסָיו עַל שֶׁר הַמִּשְׁקִים וְעַל שֶׁר  
הָאוֹפִים: ג וַיִּתֵּן אֹתָם בְּמִשְׁמַר בֵּית שֶׁר הַטְּבָחִים אֶל־  
בֵּית הַסֹּהַר מְקוֹם אֲשֶׁר יוֹסֵף אָסוּר שָׁם: ד וַיִּפְקֹד שֶׁר  
הַטְּבָחִים אֶת־יוֹסֵף אֹתָם וַיִּשְׁרַת אֹתָם וַיְהִיו יָמִים  
בְּמִשְׁמַר: ה וַיַּחֲלֹמוּ חֲלוֹם שְׁנֵיָהֶם אִישׁ חֲלֹמוֹ בַּלַּיְלָה  
אֶחָד אִישׁ כְּפִתְרוֹן חֲלֹמוֹ הַמִּשְׁקָה וְהָאֹפֶה אֲשֶׁר  
לְמֶלֶךְ מִצְרַיִם אֲשֶׁר אָסוּרִים בְּבֵית הַסֹּהַר: ו וַיָּבֹא  
אֲלֵיהֶם יוֹסֵף בֹּבֶקֶר וַיֵּרָא אֹתָם וְהֵנֵם זַעֲפִים: ז וַיִּשְׁאַל  
אֶת־סֵרִיסֵי פָּרְעָה אֲשֶׁר אִתּוֹ בְּמִשְׁמַר בֵּית אֲדֹנָיו  
לֵאמֹר מַדּוּעַ פְּנִיכֶם רָעִים הַיּוֹם: ח וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלָיו חֲלוֹם  
חֲלָמְנוּ וּפְתָר אֵין אִתּוֹ וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵיהֶם יוֹסֵף הֲלוֹא  
לְאֱלֹהִים פְּתָרָנִים סָפְרוּ־נָא לִי:

<sup>1</sup> After these things happened, the king of Egypt's cupbearer and his baker offended their master the king of Egypt. <sup>2</sup> Pharaoh was angry with his two officials, the cupbearer and the baker, <sup>3</sup> and put them under arrest in the house of the captain of the guard, in the gaol where Joseph was confined. <sup>4</sup> The captain of the guard assigned Joseph to them to attend to their needs, and they stayed under arrest for some time. <sup>5</sup> Now both of them had dreams the same night, each with its own meaning for the cupbearer and the baker of the king of Egypt, who were prisoners in the gaol. <sup>6</sup> When Joseph came to them in the morning, he saw that they were gloomy, <sup>7</sup> and he asked Pharaoh's officials who were prisoners with him in his master's house, "Why these sad looks today?" <sup>8</sup> They told him, "We each had a dream but there is no one to interpret it." Joseph asked them, "Don't interpretations belong to God? Come, tell me them to me."

## GENESIS 40

- <sup>1</sup> The Hebrew term 'cupbearer' corresponds to the Egyptian *wb*, an official who often became a confidant of the king and wielded political power; Nehemiah held this post in Persia. The 'baker' may be the Egyptian *retehti*, the head of the bakers, who had privileges in the royal court.
- <sup>2</sup> The word סֵרִיס ('officials'), used here of these two men and of Potiphar (see 39:1), normally means 'eunuch' but evidence from Accadian texts shows that, in early times, the title was used of a court official in general; only later did it become more specialised in its use.
- <sup>3</sup> On the word here translated 'gaol', see #39:20.
- <sup>4</sup> The verb here translated 'attended to their needs' is the same as that translated 'made him (his) attendant' in 39:4.
- <sup>5</sup> In ancient belief, dreams were a channel of divine communication (1S 28:6); a wise interpreter could read the the future (37:5-10, Dn 2:26-28).
- <sup>6</sup> The verb זַעֲפִים ('gloomy') only occurs here and Dn 1:10; it means 'to be sick' or 'to be emaciated', probably in this case because of depression.
- <sup>7</sup> In place of 'sad', the NJB has 'black'.
- <sup>8</sup> Professional interpreters of dreams were unnecessary (41:16): interpretations 'belong to God' who knows and controls the events of the future.

<sup>9</sup> So, the cupbearer told his dream to Joseph, saying, “In my dream I saw a vine in front of me. <sup>10</sup> On the vine were three branches; as soon it budded, it blossomed, and its clusters ripened into grapes. <sup>11</sup> I had Pharaoh’s cup in my hand; I picked the grapes, squeezed them into Pharaoh’s cup, and put the cup into Pharaoh’s hand.” <sup>12</sup> “Here is the interpretation of it,” Joseph told him: “The three branches are three days. <sup>13</sup> Within three days, Pharaoh will lift up your head and restore you to your office, and you will hand Pharaoh his cup, as you did before, when you were his cupbearer. <sup>14</sup> But remember me when things go well with you, and show me kindness by mentioning me to Pharaoh, to get me out of this house. <sup>15</sup> I was kidnapped from the land of the Hebrews in the first place, and even here I have done nothing to warrant imprisonment.” <sup>16</sup> When the baker saw that the

<sup>9</sup> The literal translation of ‘saying’ is ‘and he said to him’.

<sup>10</sup> In place of ‘ripened into grapes’, here following the NRSV, the NJB has ‘became ripe grapes’.

<sup>11</sup> The cupbearer’s dream is dominated by sets of three: three branches, three stages of growth, and three actions of the cupbearer.

<sup>12</sup> In place of ‘are’, here following the MT, NJB & NRSV, NETB has ‘represent’.

<sup>13</sup> The Hebrew idiom ‘lift up your head’ usually refers to restoring dignity, office, or power; it is comparable to the modern saying ‘someone can hold his head up high’.

<sup>14</sup> The verb זכר in the Hiphil stem means ‘to cause to remember’, ‘to make mention to boast’; the implication is that Joseph would be pleased for them to tell his story and give him the credit due him so that Pharaoh would release him: since Pharaoh had never met Joseph, the simple translation of ‘cause him to remember me’ would mean little.

<sup>15</sup> The verb גנב means ‘to steal’, but in the Piel/Pual stem ‘to steal away’; the translation ‘kidnapped’ is closer to the sense, meaning he was stolen and carried off. The preceding infinitive absolute underscores the point Joseph is making.

<sup>16</sup> The meaning of the Hebrew noun חֲרִי (‘cake’) is uncertain; some have suggested the meaning ‘wicker’ instead; comparison with texts from Ebla suggests the meaning ‘pastries made with white flour’.

טֹב פָּתַר וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל־יוֹסֵף אֶף־אֲנִי בַחֲלוּמִי וְהִנֵּה  
שְׁלֹשָׁה סִלִּי חָרִי עַל־רֹאשִׁי: ז' וּבִסֵּל הֶעֱלִיזוֹן מִכָּל  
מֵאֲכָל פֶּרֶעָה מַעֲשֶׂה אִפָּה וְהָעוֹף אָכַל אֹתָם מִן־הַסֵּל  
מֵעַל רֹאשִׁי: ח' וַיַּעַן יוֹסֵף וַיֹּאמֶר זֶה פָּתְרָנִי שְׁלֹשֶׁת  
הַסֵּלִים שְׁלֹשֶׁת יָמִים הֵם: ט' בְּעוֹד | שְׁלֹשֶׁת יָמִים יֵשָׂא  
פֶּרֶעָה אֶת־רֹאשְׁךָ מֵעֲלִידָה וְתָלָה אוֹתְךָ עַל־עֵץ וְאָכַל  
הָעוֹף אֶת־בְּשָׂרְךָ מֵעֲלִידָה:

כ' וַיְהִי | בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁלִישִׁי יוֹם הַלֵּדָת אֶת־פֶּרֶעָה וַיַּעַשׂ  
מִשְׁתֶּה לְכָל־עֲבָדָיו וַיֵּשָׂא אֶת־רֹאשׁ | שֵׁר הַמְּשָׁקִים  
וְאֶת־רֹאשׁ שֵׁר הָאֲפִים בְּתוֹךְ עֲבָדָיו: כא' וַיֵּשֶׁב אֶת־שֵׁר  
הַמְּשָׁקִים עַל־מִשְׁקָהוּ וַיִּתֵּן הַכֹּס עַל־כַּף פֶּרֶעָה:  
כב' וְאֵת שֵׁר הָאֲפִים תָּלָה כַּאֲשֶׁר פָּתַר לָהֶם יוֹסֵף:  
כג' וְלֹא־זָכַר שֵׁר־הַמְּשָׁקִים אֶת־יוֹסֵף וַיִּשְׁכַּחְהוּ: {פ}

interpretation had been favourable, he said to Joseph, "I too had a dream; there were three cakes trays on my head.<sup>17</sup> In the top tray there were all kinds of Pharaoh's cakes, but the birds ate them off the tray on my head."<sup>18</sup> Joseph answered, "Here is the interpretation of it: the three trays are three days.<sup>19</sup> In another three days Pharaoh will lift up your head and hang you on a pole and the birds will eat your flesh."

<sup>20</sup> On the third day, it was Pharaoh's birthday and he gave a banquet for all his officials, and he 'lifted the heads' of the cupbearer and the baker in the presence of his officials.<sup>21</sup> The cupbearer he restored to his cup-bearing, to hand Pharaoh his cup; <sup>22</sup> the baker he hanged. It was as Joseph had said in his interpretation.<sup>23</sup> Yet, the cupbearer did not remember Joseph; he forgot him.

<sup>17</sup> The NJB adds 'favourite' before 'cakes'.

<sup>18</sup> In place of 'are', here following the MT, NJB & NRSV, NETB has 'represent' (cf. v. 12).

<sup>19</sup> 'Lift up your head' is an expression that usually has a favourable sense (see v. 13, 2K 25:27, Jr. 52:31). Here, however, there is a grim play on words: the head of the cupbearer is to be 'lifted up'; he will be pardoned (v. 13). The head of the baker will also be 'lifted up': he is to be hanged. See also the following verse.

<sup>20</sup> The translation puts the phrase 'lifted the heads' in quotation marks (following NETB) because it is used metaphorically here and has a double meaning: with respect to the cupbearer, it means 'reinstate' (v. 13), but with respect to the baker it means 'execute' (v. 19).

<sup>21</sup> In place of 'cup-bearing', here following the NRSV, the NJB has 'office of cupbearer'.

<sup>22</sup> The dreams were fulfilled exactly as Joseph had predicted, down to the very detail; here was confirmation that Joseph could interpret dreams and that his own dreams were still valid. It would have been a tremendous encouragement to his faith, but it would also have been a great disappointment to spend two more years in prison.

<sup>23</sup> The wayyiqtol verbal form ('forgot') here has a reiterative or emphasising function



## GENESIS 41

## בראשית פרק מא

- א וַיְהִי מִקֵּץ שְׁנָתַיִם יָמִים וּפְרָעָה חָלַם וְהִנֵּה עֹמֵד עַל-  
הַיָּאֵר: ב וְהִנֵּה מִן־הַיָּאֵר עֹלֹת שִׁבְעַת פָּרוֹת יְפוֹת מְרֹאֶה  
וּבְרִיאוֹת בָּשָׂר וְתַרְעִינָה בָּאָחוּ: ג וְהִנֵּה שִׁבְעַת פָּרוֹת  
אַחֲרוֹת עֹלֹת אַחֲרֵיהֶן מִן־הַיָּאֵר רָעוֹת מְרֹאֶה וְדָקוֹת  
בָּשָׂר וְתַעֲמֻדָּנָה אֵצֶל הַפָּרוֹת עַל־שֹׁפֶת הַיָּאֵר:  
ד וְתֹאכְלֵנָה הַפָּרוֹת רָעוֹת הַמְרֹאֶה וְדָקֹת הַבָּשָׂר אֵת  
שִׁבְעַת הַפָּרוֹת יִפֹּת הַמְרֹאֶה וְהַבְּרִיאוֹת וַיִּקָּץ פְּרָעָה:  
ה וַיִּישָׁן וַיַּחֲלֹם שֵׁנִית וְהִנֵּה שִׁבְעַת שְׂבָלִים עֹלֹת בִּקְנֵה  
אֶחָד בְּרִיאוֹת וְטֹבוֹת: ו וְהִנֵּה שִׁבְעַת שְׂבָלִים דָּקוֹת  
וְשֹׁדוּפֹת קִדְּיִם צִמְחוֹת אַחֲרֵיהֶן: ז וְתֹבֵלְעָנָה הַשְּׂבָלִים  
הַדָּקוֹת אֵת שִׁבְעַת הַשְּׂבָלִים הַבְּרִיאוֹת וְהַמְּלֵאוֹת וַיִּקָּץ  
פְּרָעָה וְהִנֵּה חֲלוֹם:  
ח וַיְהִי בִבְקֹר וַתִּפְעֹם רוּחוֹ וַיִּשְׁלַח וַיִּקְרָא אֶת־כָּל־  
חֲרָטְמֵי מִצְרַיִם וְאֶת־כָּל־חֲכָמֶיהָ וַיְסַפֵּר פְּרָעָה לָהֶם
- 1 Two full years later it happened that Pharaoh had a dream. And behold, he was standing by the Nile, 2 and there, coming up from the Nile, were seven cows, sleek and fat, and they began to feed among the rushes. 3 Then seven other cows, ugly and lean, came up from the Nile after them; and these went over and stood beside the other cows on the bank of the Nile. 4 The ugly and lean cows ate the seven sleek and fat cows. Then Pharaoh awoke. 5 He fell asleep and dreamed a second time: there, growing on one stalk, were seven ears of corn full and ripe. 6 Then, sprouting up after them came seven ears of corn, meagre and scorched by the east wind. 7 The scanty ears of corn swallowed the full and ripe ears of corn. Then Pharaoh awoke; it was a dream. 8 In the morning, feeling disturbed, he called for all the magicians and wise men of Egypt. Pharaoh told them his dreams, but no one

## GENESIS 41

- 1 The literal translation of 'two full years' is 'two years, days'.  
2 Egypt's fertility, symbolised by the sacred cows, was dependent upon the Nile.  
3 The literal translation of 'ugly and lean' is 'bad of appearance and thin of flesh'.  
4 An alternative translation for 'sleek' (here following the NJB) is 'fine-looking'.  
5 The literal translation of 'growing' is 'coming up'.  
6 The 'east wind' refers to the sirocco, a burning wind from the desert that withers vegetation (Ho 13:15).  
7 Pharaoh's two dreams, as explained in the following verses, pertained to the economy of Egypt.  
8 The term חֲרָטְמֵי ('magicians') is an Egyptian loanword that describes a class of priests who were skilled in such interpretations. 'Dreams' follows the Samaritan Pentateuch; the MT has the singular ('dream'), which may be a collective term.



אֶת־חֲלֹמוֹ וְאִין־פֹּתֵר אוֹתָם לַפֶּרְעָה: <sup>ט</sup> וַיִּדְבֹּר שֶׁר  
הַמִּשְׁקִים אֶת־פֶּרְעָה לֵאמֹר אֶת־חֲטָאֵי אֲנִי מִזְכִּיר  
הַיּוֹם: <sup>י</sup> פֶּרְעָה קִצֵּף עַל־עַבְדָּיו וַיִּתֵּן אֹתִי בְּמִשְׁמַר בֵּית  
שֶׁר הַטִּבְחִים אֹתִי וְאֵת שֶׁר הָאֲפִים: <sup>יא</sup> וַנַּחֲלֵמָה חֲלוֹם  
בַּלַּיְלָה אֶחָד אֲנִי וְהוּא אִישׁ כִּפְתָּרוֹן חֲלֹמוֹ חֲלֹמְנוּ:  
<sup>יב</sup> וְשָׁם אֲתָנוּ נָעַר עַבְדִּי עֶבֶד לְשֶׁר הַטִּבְחִים וְנִסְפָּר־  
לֹו וַיִּפְתָּר־לָנוּ אֶת־חֲלֹמֹתֵינוּ אִישׁ כְּחֲלֹמוֹ פִּתָּר: <sup>יג</sup> וַיְהִי  
כַּאֲשֶׁר פִּתָּר־לָנוּ כֵּן הָיָה אֹתִי הֵשִׁיב עַל־כַּנִּי וְאֹתִי  
תָּלָה:

<sup>יד</sup> וַיִּשְׁלַח פֶּרְעָה וַיִּקְרָא אֶת־יוֹסֵף וַיְרִיצֵהוּ מִן־הַבּוֹר  
וַיַּגְלַח וַיַּחֲלֵף שְׂמֹלֶתוֹ וַיָּבֵא אֶל־פֶּרְעָה: <sup>טו</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר  
פֶּרְעָה אֶל־יוֹסֵף חֲלוֹם חֲלֹמֹתִי וּפִתָּר אֵין אֹתוֹ וְאֲנִי  
שָׁמַעְתִּי עָלֶיךָ לֵאמֹר תִּשְׁמַע חֲלוֹם לִפְתָּר אֹתוֹ: <sup>טז</sup> וַיַּעַן  
יוֹסֵף אֶת־פֶּרְעָה לֵאמֹר בְּלִעְדִּי אֱלֹהִים יַעֲנֶה אֶת־  
שְׁלוֹם פֶּרְעָה:

could interpret it for Pharaoh. <sup>9</sup> Then the cupbearer said to Pharaoh, "Today I recall my offences. <sup>10</sup> Pharaoh was angry with his servants and put the baker and me in custody in the house of the captain of the guard. <sup>11</sup> We had a dream one night, he and I, and each man's dream had a meaning for himself. <sup>12</sup> There was a young Hebrew with us, one of the servants under the captain of the guard; we told him our dreams and he interpreted them, giving each of us the meaning of his dream. <sup>13</sup> It turned out just as he had interpreted for us: he restored me to my place but hanged him."

<sup>14</sup> Then Pharaoh summoned Joseph, and they hurried him from prison. He shaved, changed his clothes, and came before Pharaoh. <sup>15</sup> Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I have had a dream which no one can interpret. But I have heard it said of you that when you hear a dream you can interpret it." <sup>16</sup> Joseph answered Pharaoh, "It isn't me. It is God who will give Pharaoh a favourable answer."

<sup>9</sup> The cupbearer's 'offences' were those that landed him in prison.

<sup>10</sup> 'In custody' follows the NRSV; the NJB has 'under arrest'.

<sup>11</sup> Translated literally, this verse reads, "and we dreamed a dream in one night, I and he, each according to the interpretation of his dream we dreamed."

<sup>12</sup> An alternative reading of 'servants under' is 'slaves belonging to'.

<sup>13</sup> In place of the final pronominal 'he', here following the MT (& NJB), the NRSV (& NETB) clarifies with 'the baker'.

<sup>14</sup> The literal translation of 'summoned' is 'sent and called', indicating a summons to the royal court.

<sup>15</sup> Literally translated, this verse ends, "you hear a dream to interpret it," which may carry the meaning, "you only have to hear a dream to be able to interpret it."

<sup>16</sup> In place of 'give Pharaoh a favourable answer' (שְׁלוֹם פֶּרְעָה), here following the NJB & NRSV, NETB has 'speak concerning the welfare of Pharaoh'. Joseph denies having any occult art and ascribes his skill solely to God (see #40:6).

יז וַיֹּדְבֶר פַּרְעֹה אֶל־יוֹסֵף בַּחֲלֹמֵי הַנָּגִי עֹמֵד עַל־שֹׁפֶת הַיָּאֵר: יח וְהִנֵּה מִן־הַיָּאֵר עֹלֹת שִׁבְעַ פְּרוֹת בְּרִיאֹת בָּשָׂר וַיִּפֹּת תָּאֵר וַתִּרְעִינָה בָּאָחוּ: יט וְהִנֵּה שִׁבְעַ־פְּרוֹת אַחֲרוֹת עֹלֹת אַחֲרֵיהֶן דֵּלוֹת וְרַעוֹת תָּאֵר מְאֹד וְרָקוֹת בָּשָׂר לֹא־רָאִיתִי כַּהֵנָּה בְּכָל־אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם לָרֹעַ: כ וַתֹּאכֻלְנָה הַפְּרוֹת הָרָקוֹת וְהָרַעוֹת אֶת שִׁבְעַ הַפְּרוֹת הָרֵאשֹׁנוֹת הַבְּרִיאֹת: כא וַתִּבְאֶנָּה אֶל־קִרְבָּנָהּ וְלֹא נֹדַע כִּי־בָאוּ אֶל־קִרְבָּנָהּ וּמָרְאִיהֶן רָע כַּאֲשֶׁר בַּתְּחִלָּה וַאֲיָקֹץ: כב וְאָרָא בַּחֲלֹמִי וְהִנֵּה שִׁבְעַ שְׂבָלִים עֹלֹת בְּקִנָּה אֶחָד מִלֵּאֹת וְטִבּוֹת: כג וְהִנֵּה שִׁבְעַ שְׂבָלִים צְנֻמוֹת דַּקּוֹת שְׂדָפוֹת קָדִים צִמְחוֹת אַחֲרֵיהֶם: כד וַתִּבְלַעְן הַשְּׂבָלִים הַדַּקֹּת אֶת שִׁבְעַ הַשְּׂבָלִים הַטִּבּוֹת וַאֲמַר אֶל־הַחֲרֻטָּמִים וְאִין מֵגִיד לִי:

כה וַיֹּאמֶר יוֹסֵף אֶל־פַּרְעֹה חֲלוֹם פַּרְעֹה אֶחָד הוּא אֶת אֲשֶׁר הָאֱלֹהִים עֹשֶׂה הַגִּיד לְפַרְעֹה: כו שִׁבְעַ פָּרֶת

<sup>17</sup> Therefore, Pharaoh told Joseph, "Look, in my dream I was standing on the bank of the Nile. <sup>18</sup> There were seven cows, fat and sleek, coming up out of the Nile, and they began to feed among the rushes. <sup>19</sup> Then seven other cows came up after them, starved, ugly and lean; I have never seen such ugly ones in all the land of Egypt. <sup>20</sup> The lean and ugly cows ate up the seven fat cows; <sup>21</sup> but when they had eaten them up, it was impossible to tell that they had eaten them, for they remained as lean as before; then I woke up. <sup>22</sup> Then again, in my dream, there, growing on one stalk, were seven ears of corn, beautifully ripe; <sup>23</sup> but sprouting up after them came seven ears of corn, withered, meagre and scorched by the east wind. <sup>24</sup> The shrivelled ears of corn swallowed the seven ripe ears of corn. I told the magicians this, but no one could tell me the meaning."

<sup>25</sup> Joseph told Pharaoh, "Pharaoh's dreams are one and the same: God has revealed to Pharaoh what he is going to do. <sup>26</sup> The seven fine

<sup>17</sup> The use of the particle הִנֵּה ('look') invites the hearer to observe the scene through Pharaoh's eyes.

<sup>18</sup> Literally translated, this verse reads, "and look, from the Nile seven cows were coming up, fat of flesh and attractive, and they grazed in the rushes."

<sup>19</sup> In place of 'ugly ones' (here following the MT & NRSV), the NJB has 'poor cows'.

<sup>20</sup> Before 'fat', the MT inserts the word 'first'.

<sup>21</sup> The literal translation of 'when they had eaten them up' is 'when they went inside them'.

<sup>22</sup> The NRSV starts this verse with: "I fell asleep a second time, and then in my dream ..."

<sup>23</sup> The literal translation of 'but' is 'and look' (וְהִנֵּה) – see #17.

<sup>24</sup> Literally translated, this verse ends, "and there was no telling."

<sup>25</sup> The active participle at the end of this verse indicates what is imminent

<sup>26</sup> The literal translation of 'it is the same dream' is 'one dream it is'.

הַטֹּבֹת שֶׁבַע שָׁנִים הֵנָּה וְשֶׁבַע הַשְּׁבִלִים הַטֹּבֹת שֶׁבַע שָׁנִים הֵנָּה חֲלוֹם אֶחָד הוּא: <sup>כז</sup> וְשֶׁבַע הַפְּרוֹת הַרְקוֹת וְהָרֵעֶת הָעֵלֶת אַחֲרֵיהֶן שֶׁבַע שָׁנִים הֵנָּה וְשֶׁבַע הַשְּׁבִלִים הַרְקוֹת שְׂדֵפוֹת הַקָּדִים יִהְיוּ שֶׁבַע שָׁנֵי רָעָב: <sup>כח</sup> הוּא הַדְּבָר אֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְתִּי אֶל־פֶּרְעָה אֲשֶׁר הָאֱלֹהִים עָשָׂה הָרָאָה אֶת־פֶּרְעָה: <sup>כט</sup> הֵנָּה שֶׁבַע שָׁנִים בָּאוֹת שֶׁבַע גְּדוֹל בְּכָל־אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם: <sup>ל</sup> וְקָמוּ שֶׁבַע שָׁנֵי רָעָב אַחֲרֵיהֶן וְנִשְׁכַּח כָּל־הַשְּׁבַע בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם וְכָל־הָרָעָב אֶת־הָאֶרֶץ: <sup>לא</sup> וְלֹא־יִזְדַּע הַשְּׁבַע בְּאֶרֶץ מִפְּנֵי הָרָעָב הַהוּא אַחֲרֵי־כֵן כִּי־כָבֵד הוּא מְאֹד: <sup>לב</sup> וְעַל הַשָּׁנֹת הַחֲלוֹם אֶל־פֶּרְעָה פַעַמִּים כִּי־נִכְוֶן הַדְּבָר מֵעַם הָאֱלֹהִים וּמִמֶּהָר הָאֱלֹהִים לַעֲשׂוֹתוֹ: <sup>לג</sup> וְעַתָּה יֵרָא פֶּרְעָה אִישׁ נָבוֹן וְחָכָם וַיִּשְׁתַּתְּהוּ עַל־אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם: <sup>לד</sup> יַעֲשֶׂה פֶּרְעָה וַיִּפְקֹד פְּקָדִים עַל־הָאֶרֶץ

cows are seven years and the seven ripe ears are seven years; it is the same dream. <sup>27</sup> The seven lean and ugly cows coming up after them are seven years, as are the seven empty ears scorched by the east wind: there will be seven years of famine. <sup>28</sup> It is as I have told Pharaoh: God has revealed to Pharaoh what he is going to do. <sup>29</sup> Seven years are coming, bringing great plenty to the whole land of Egypt, <sup>30</sup> but seven years of famine will follow them, when all the plenty in the land of Egypt will be forgotten, and famine will devastate the land. <sup>31</sup> The famine that is to follow will be so very severe that no one will remember what plenty the country enjoyed. <sup>32</sup> The reason why the dream came to Pharaoh twice is because God has decreed the event and is impatient to bring it about. <sup>33</sup> "Let Pharaoh look for a man who is discreet and wise to govern the land of Egypt. <sup>34</sup> Pharaoh should appoint supervisors over the

<sup>27</sup> Another translation of 'empty' could be 'shrivelled'.

<sup>28</sup> Literally translated, this verse opens, "It is the word that I spoke to Pharaoh."

<sup>29</sup> For this verse (here following the NJB) the NRSV reads, "There will come seven years of great plenty throughout all the land of Egypt."

<sup>30</sup> In place of 'devastate' (here following NETB), NJB has 'exhaust' and NRSV has 'consume'; the verb כָּלָה in the Piel stem means 'to finish', 'to destroy' or 'to bring an end to'. The severity of the famine will ruin the land of Egypt.

<sup>31</sup> A more literal translation of 'severe' is 'heavy'.

<sup>32</sup> Two dreams with the same meaning (v. 25) show that the event is *fixed* or predestined by God. Note that this sense of God's overruling sovereignty does not evoke a fatalistic resignation but a practical plan of action.

<sup>33</sup> The jussive form in the opening remark (literally, 'let Pharaoh choose') expresses Joseph's advice to Pharaoh.

<sup>34</sup> The literal translation of 'supervisors' is 'appointees'; the noun is a cognate accusative of the preceding verb, but since 'appoint appointees' would be redundant in English, the term 'supervisors' (following the NJB – the NRSV has 'overseers') is used in the translation instead.

וַחֲמֵשׁ אֶת־אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם בְּשֶׁבַע שָׁנֵי הַשְּׁבַע: <sup>ל</sup>וְיִקְבְּצוּ  
 אֶת־כָּל־אֹכֶל הַשָּׁנִים הַטֹּבוֹת הַבָּאת הָאֵלֶּה וַיִּצְבְּרוּ־  
 בָּר תַּחַת יַד־פַּרְעֹה אֹכֶל בְּעָרִים וְשָׁמְרוּ: <sup>לו</sup>וְהָיָה  
 הָאֹכֶל לִפְקֻדֹן לְאֶרֶץ לְשֶׁבַע שָׁנֵי הָרָעָב אֲשֶׁר תֵּהְיֶינָה  
 בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם וְלֹא־תִכָּרֵת הָאֶרֶץ בְּרָעָב:

<sup>לז</sup>וַיִּיטֵב הַדָּבָר בְּעֵינֵי פַרְעֹה וּבְעֵינֵי כָל־עַבְדָּיו:  
<sup>לח</sup>וַיֹּאמֶר פַּרְעֹה אֶל־עַבְדָּיו הֲנִמְצָא כֹּה־אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר  
 רוּחַ אֱלֹהִים בּוֹ: <sup>לט</sup>וַיֹּאמֶר פַּרְעֹה אֶל־יוֹסֵף אַחֲרֵי  
 הוֹדִיעַ אֱלֹהִים אוֹתָךְ אֶת־כָּל־זֹאת אֵין־נִבֹן וְחָכָם  
 כְּמוֹךָ: <sup>מ</sup>אֵתָּה תִּהְיֶה עַל־בֵּיתִי וְעַל־פִּיךָ יִשָּׁק כָּל־עַמִּי  
 רַק הַכֶּסֶּא אֲגַדֵּל מִמֶּךָ: <sup>מא</sup>וַיֹּאמֶר פַּרְעֹה אֶל־יוֹסֵף  
 רְאֵה נָתַתִּי אֹתְךָ עַל כָּל־אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם: <sup>מב</sup>וַיֹּסֶר פַּרְעֹה  
 אֶת־טַבַּעְתּוֹ מֵעַל יָדוֹ וַיִּתֵּן אֹתָהּ עַל־יַד יוֹסֵף וַיַּלְבֵּשׁ

land and collect one-fifth of the land of Egypt in the seven years of plenty. <sup>35</sup> Let them collect all food of these good years that are coming and store the corn in Pharaoh's name, and place the food in the cities and hold it. <sup>36</sup> The food will be to supply the land in the seven years of famine that will befall the land of Egypt; thus, the land will not perish in the famine."

<sup>37</sup> The proposal pleased Pharaoh and all his servants. <sup>38</sup> Then Pharaoh asked his ministers, "Can we find a man like this, in whom is the spirit of God?" <sup>39</sup> So, Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Since God has shown you all this, there is no one as discrete and wise as you. <sup>40</sup> You shall be my chancellor, and all my people shall respect your orders; only this throne shall set me above you." <sup>41</sup> Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I hereby set you over the whole land of Egypt." <sup>42</sup> Pharaoh took the ring from his hand and put in on Joseph's; he clothed him in fine

<sup>35</sup> The 2<sup>nd</sup> occurrence of the word 'food' in this verse is an adverbial accusative.

<sup>36</sup> Literally translated, this verse ends, "and the land will not be cut off in the famine."

<sup>37</sup> For this verse, here following the NRSV, the NJB reads, "Pharaoh and all his ministers approved of what he had said."

<sup>38</sup> The rhetorical question expects the answer "No, of course not!"

<sup>39</sup> In place of 'discrete', here following the NJB, the NRSV has 'discerning'.

<sup>40</sup> Joseph was made prime minister, second only to Pharaoh in authority.

<sup>41</sup> The translation 'I hereby set' assumes that the perfect verbal form (נָתַתִּי) is descriptive of a present action; another option is to understand it as rhetorical, in which case Pharaoh describes a still future action as if it had already occurred in order to emphasise its certainty: in this case one could translate 'I have set' or 'I will set'.

<sup>42</sup> The signet ring empowered Joseph to act as Pharaoh's representative (compare Est 3:10, 8:2). The Hebrew word שֵׁשׁ is an Egyptian loanword that describes the fine linen robes that Egyptian royalty wore; the clothing signified Joseph's rank.

אתו בגדי־שש וישם רֶבֶד הַזֶּהב עַל־צוּאָרָיו: <sup>מג</sup> וירַכֵּב  
אתו במִרְכַּבֶּת הַמִּשְׁנָה אֲשֶׁר־לוֹ ויקראוּ לִפְנֵי אֲבִרָךְ  
וַיִּתֶּן אוֹתוֹ עַל כָּל־אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם:

<sup>מד</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר פֶּרְעֹה אֶל־יוֹסֵף אֲנִי פֶרְעֹה וּבְלַעַדֶּיךָ לֹא־  
יָרִים אִישׁ אֶת־יָדוֹ וְאֶת־רַגְלוֹ בְּכָל־אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם:  
<sup>מה</sup> וַיִּקְרָא פֶּרְעֹה שֵׁם־יוֹסֵף צַפְנַת פַּעֲנַח וַיִּתֶּן־לוֹ אֶת־  
אֲסֵנַת בַּת־פּוֹטִיפֵר עַמְּסֵי פֶרַע כִּהֵן אֵן לְאִשָּׁה וַיֵּצֵא יוֹסֵף עַל־  
אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם:

<sup>מו</sup> וַיֹּסֶף בֶּן־שְׁלֹשִׁים שָׁנָה בַּעֲמֻדּוֹ לִפְנֵי פֶרְעֹה מֶלֶךְ־  
מִצְרַיִם וַיֵּצֵא יוֹסֵף מִלִּפְנֵי פֶרְעֹה וַיַּעֲבֹר בְּכָל־אֶרֶץ  
מִצְרַיִם: <sup>מז</sup> וַתַּעַשׂ הָאֶרֶץ בְּשֶׁבַע שָׁנֵי הַשְּׁבַע לִקְמָצִים:  
<sup>מח</sup> וַיִּקְבֹּץ אֶת־כָּל־אֲכָל שְׁבַע שָׁנִים אֲשֶׁר הָיוּ בָּאֶרֶץ  
מִצְרַיִם וַיִּתֶּן־אֲכָל בְּעָרִים אֲכָל שְׂדֵה־הָעִיר אֲשֶׁר  
סְבִיבֶתֶיהָ נָתַן בְּתוֹכָהּ: <sup>מט</sup> וַיַּצְבֵּר יוֹסֵף בָּר כַּחֲזֹל הַיָּם  
הָרַבָּה מְאֹד עַד כִּי־חָדַל לִסְפֹּר כִּי־אֵין מִסְפָּר:

linen and put a gold chain round his neck. <sup>43</sup> He made him ride in the second best chariot he had, and they cried before him "Abrek." This is how he became governor of the whole land of Egypt.

<sup>44</sup> Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I am Pharaoh: without your permission no one is to move hand or foot throughout the whole land of Egypt."

<sup>45</sup> Pharaoh named Joseph Zaphenath-Paneah, and gave his Asenath the daughter of Potiphera, Priest of On, for his wife. Joseph travelled through the land of Egypt.

<sup>46</sup> Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh king of Egypt; on leaving Pharaoh's presence, Joseph went through the whole land of Egypt. <sup>47</sup> In the seven years of plenty, the soil yielded generously. <sup>48</sup> He collected all the food of the seven abundant years in the land of Egypt, and allotted food to the towns. He placed in each the food from the surrounding countryside. <sup>49</sup> Joseph stored the corn like the sand of the sea, so much that they stopped reckoning, since it was beyond all estimating.

<sup>43</sup> The runners before his chariot-of-state cry 'Abrek' (אַבְרֵךְ), which suggests the Egyptian, 'ib-r-q', "thy heart to thee," "beware," or, "make way."

<sup>44</sup> The idiom 'move hand or foot' means 'take any action' here.

<sup>45</sup> Egyptian names: 'Zaphenath-Paneah' means 'God says: he is living'; 'Asenath' means 'belonging to the goddess Neit'; 'Potiphera', the same name as the 'Potiphar' of 37:36, means 'Gift of Ra'.

<sup>46</sup> Joseph's slavery and imprisonment lasted thirteen years (see 37:2-3).

<sup>47</sup> The literal translation of 'yielded generously' is 'brought forth by handfuls'.

<sup>48</sup> Literally translated, the first sentence reads, "He collected of the seven years which were in the land of Egypt and placed food in the cities."

<sup>49</sup> To emphasise the vast amount of grain he stored up, the MT modifies the verb 'gathered' with an infinitive absolute and an adverb.



וַיֹּסֶף יָלֵד שְׁנֵי בָנִים בְּטָרִם תְּבוֹא שְׁנַת הָרָעָב אֲשֶׁר  
יִלְדָה-לוֹ אֲסֵנַת בַּת-פּוֹטִי פֶרַע כֹּהֵן אוֹן: <sup>נא</sup> וַיִּקְרָא יוֹסֵף  
אֶת-שֵׁם הַבְּכוֹר מְנַשֶּׁה כִּי-נִשְׁכַּח אֱלֹהִים אֶת-כָּל-עֲמָלִי  
וְאֵת כָּל-בֵּית אָבִי: <sup>נב</sup> וְאֵת שֵׁם הַשֵּׁנִי קָרָא אֶפְרַיִם כִּי-  
הִפְרִנִי אֱלֹהִים בְּאֶרֶץ עֲנִי:

<sup>נג</sup> וַתֵּכֶלֶינָה שִׁבְעַת שָׁנִים הַשְּׁבַע אֲשֶׁר הָיָה בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם:  
<sup>נד</sup> וַתֵּחֲלִינָה שִׁבְעַת שָׁנִים הָרָעָב לָבוֹא כַּאֲשֶׁר אָמַר יוֹסֵף  
וַיְהִי רָעָב בְּכָל-הָאֲרָצוֹת וּבְכָל-אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם הָיָה לֶחֶם:  
<sup>נה</sup> וַתִּרְעַב כָּל-אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם וַיִּצְעַק הָעָם אֶל-פַּרְעֹה  
לֶלֶחֶם וַיֹּאמֶר פַּרְעֹה לְכָל-מִצְרַיִם לָכוּ אֶל-יוֹסֵף אֲשֶׁר-  
יֹאמַר לָכֶם תַּעֲשׂוּ: <sup>נו</sup> וְהָרָעָב הָיָה עַל כָּל-פְּנֵי הָאֲרֶץ  
וַיִּפְתָּח יוֹסֵף אֶת-כָּל-אֲשֶׁר בָּהֶם וַיִּשְׁבֹּר לַמִּצְרַיִם  
וַיַּחֲזֹק הָרָעָב בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם: <sup>נז</sup> וְכָל-הָאֲרֶץ בָּאוּ  
מִצְרַיִמָּה לְשָׁבֹר אֶל-יוֹסֵף כִּי-חָזַק הָרָעָב בְּכָל-הָאֲרֶץ:

<sup>50</sup> Before the year of famine came, Joseph had two sons, born to him by Asenath, daughter of Potiphra priest of On. <sup>51</sup> Joseph named the firstborn Manasseh, saying, "For, God has made me forget all my trouble and all my father's house." <sup>52</sup> He named the second Ephraim, saying, "For, God has made me fruitful in the land of my suffering." <sup>53</sup> Then the seven years of plenty there was in the land of Egypt ended; <sup>54</sup> and the seven years of famine began to come as Joseph had said. There was famine in all lands, but throughout the land of Egypt, there was bread. <sup>55</sup> When all the land was hungry, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread, but Pharaoh told all the Egyptians, "Go to Joseph! Do what he tells you." <sup>56</sup> There was famine all over the world. Then Joseph opened all the granaries and sold grain to the Egyptians; the famine was sore in the land of Egypt. <sup>57</sup> All countries came to Egypt, to Joseph, to buy corn, for the famine was sore throughout the world.

<sup>50</sup> In place of 'year', here following the MT (& NJB), the NRSV has 'years'.

<sup>51</sup> The name 'Manasseh' is explained by 'nashshani' ('he has made me forget').

<sup>52</sup> The name 'Ephraim' is explained by 'hiphrani' ('he has made me fruitful').

<sup>53</sup> In place of 'ended', here following the NJB, the NRSV has 'came to an end'.

<sup>54</sup> In the NJB, this verse is a separate sentence lacking the conjunction; here, we follow the MT (& NRSV).

<sup>55</sup> The literal translation of 'all the Egyptians' is 'all Egypt'; the name of the country is used by metonymy for the inhabitants.

<sup>56</sup> In place of 'Joseph opened all the granaries', here following the LXX (ἀνέφξεν δὲ Ἰωσήφ πάντας τοὺς σιτοβολῶνας) and Peshitta, the MT reads 'he opened all that was in (or among) them'.

<sup>57</sup> The literal translation of 'all countries' is 'all the earth', which refers here (by metonymy) to the people of the earth; note that the following verb is plural in form, indicating that the inhabitants of the earth are in view.



## GENESIS 42

## בראשית פרק מב

א וַיֵּרָא יַעֲקֹב כִּי יֹשְׁבֵר בְּמִצְרַיִם וַיֹּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב לְבָנָיו  
לָמָּה תִּתְּרֹאוּ: ב וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֵּה הָנָה שְׂמַעְתִּי כִּי יֹשְׁבֵר  
בְּמִצְרַיִם רְדוֹ-שָׁמָּה וּשְׁבֵרוּ-לָנוּ מִשָּׁם וְנָחִיָּה וְלֹא  
נָמוּת: ג וַיֵּרְדּוּ אַחֲיֵי-יוֹסֵף עֲשָׂרָה לְשֹׁבֵר בָּר מִמִּצְרַיִם:  
ד וְאֶת-בְּנֵימִן אָחִי יוֹסֵף לֹא-שָׁלַח יַעֲקֹב אֶת-אָחִיו כִּי  
אָמַר פֶּן-יִקְרָאנוּ אֶסּוֹן:

ה וַיָּבֹאוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לְשֹׁבֵר בְּתוֹךְ הַבָּאִים כִּי-הָיָה  
הָרָעָב בְּאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן: ו וַיּוֹסֶף הוּא הַשְׁלִיט עַל-הָאָרֶץ  
הוּא הַמְּשַׁבֵּיר לְכָל-עַם הָאָרֶץ וַיָּבֹאוּ אָחִי יוֹסֵף  
וַיִּשְׁתַּחוּ-לוֹ אַפַּיִם אֶרֶץ: ז וַיֵּרָא יוֹסֵף אֶת-אָחִיו  
וַיִּכְרַם וַיִּתְּנָכֵר אֱלֵיהֶם וַיְדַבֵּר אִתָּם קָשׁוֹת וַיֹּאמֶר  
אֲלֵהֶם מֵאֵין בָּאתֶם וַיֹּאמְרוּ מֵאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן לְשֹׁבֵר-אֶכֶל:

<sup>1</sup> Now Jacob saw that there was grain in Egypt; Jacob said to his sons, "Why do you stand looking at one another?" <sup>2</sup> He said, "I hear that there is corn in Egypt. Go down and buy corn for us there, that we may live and not die." <sup>3</sup> So, ten of Joseph's brothers went down to buy grain in Egypt. <sup>4</sup> But Jacob did not send Joseph's brother Benjamin with his brothers. "No harm must come to him," he said.

<sup>5</sup> Israel's sons went, like others, to buy grain, for there was famine in the land of Canaan. <sup>6</sup> Now Joseph was governor of the land and sold grain to all comers. So, Joseph's brothers went and bowed down before him, with their faces to the ground. <sup>7</sup> Joseph saw his brothers and recognised them but he did not reveal himself to them, and he spoke harshly to them. "Where have you come from?" he asked. "From the land of Canaan to buy food" they replied.

## GENESIS 42

- <sup>1</sup> The point of Jacob's question is that his sons should be going to get grain rather than sitting around doing nothing; Jacob, as the patriarch, still makes the decisions for the whole clan.
- <sup>2</sup> Following the imperatives, the verbal form with prefixed *vav* ('may live') expresses purpose of result; the imperfect tense of 'die' continues the nuance of the verb before it.
- <sup>3</sup> The NJB has 'corn' in place of 'grain', here following the NRSV.
- <sup>4</sup> The noun אֶסּוֹן is a rare word meaning 'harm' or 'accident'; apart from its use in these passages it occurs in Ex 21:22-23 of an accident to a pregnant woman. The term is a rather general one, but Jacob was no doubt thinking of his loss of Joseph.
- <sup>5</sup> The literal translation of 'like others' is 'in the midst of the coming ones'.
- <sup>6</sup> In bowing down before him, Joseph's brothers unwittingly fulfil the prediction of his dream (v. 9, see 37:5-11).
- <sup>7</sup> Joseph intends to test his brothers to see if they have changed and have the integrity to be patriarchs of the tribes of Israel.

ח וַיִּכְּר יוֹסֵף אֶת־אָחִיו וְהֵם לֹא הִכְרָהוּ: ט וַיִּזְכֹּר יוֹסֵף  
את הַחֲלֻמוֹת אֲשֶׁר חָלַם לָהֶם וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם מִרְגָּלִים  
אַתֶּם לָרְאוֹת אֶת־עֲרוֹת הָאָרֶץ בָּאתֶם: י וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלָיו  
לֹא אֲדֹנֵי וְעַבְדֶּיךָ בָּאוּ לְשִׁבְר־אֶכָּל: יא כָּלֵנוּ בְנֵי אִישׁ־  
אֶחָד נָחֵנוּ כְּנִים אֲנַחְנוּ לֹא־הָיוּ עַבְדֶּיךָ מִרְגָּלִים:  
יב וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם לֹא כִי־עֲרוֹת הָאָרֶץ בָּאתֶם לָרְאוֹת:  
יג וַיֹּאמְרוּ שְׁנַיִם עָשָׂר עַבְדֶּיךָ אָחִים | אֲנַחְנוּ בְנֵי אִישׁ־  
אֶחָד בָּאָרֶץ כְּנָעַן וְהִנֵּה הֶקְטַן אֶת־אֲבִינוּ הַיּוֹם וְהָאֶחָד  
אֵינָנוּ: יד וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם יוֹסֵף הוּא אֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְתִּי אֲלֵכֶם  
לֵאמֹר מִרְגָּלִים אַתֶּם: טו בְּזֹאת תִּבְחָנוּ חֵי פְרַעֲה אִם־  
תֵּצְאוּ מִזֶּה כִּי אִם־בָּבוֹא אֲחִיכֶם הֶקְטַן הִנֵּה: טז שְׁלָחוּ  
מִכֶּם אֶחָד וַיִּקַּח אֶת־אֲחִיכֶם וְאַתֶּם הֶאֱסְרוּ וַיִּבְחָנוּ  
דְּבָרֵיכֶם הָאֵמֶת אִתְּכֶם וְאִם־לֹא חֵי פְרַעֲה כִּי מִרְגָּלִים  
אַתֶּם: יז וַיֹּאסֶף אֹתָם אֶל־מִשְׁמַר שְׁלֹשֶׁת יָמִים:

8 Joseph recognised his brothers but they did not recognise him.  
9 Joseph remembered the dreams he had about them and said to them, "You are spies; you have come to find the land's weak points."  
10 They said, "No, my lord, your servants have come to buy food.  
11 We are all one man's sons; we are honest men! Your servants are not spies."  
12 He said, "No! You have come to find the land's weak points."  
13 They said, "Your servants are twelve brothers, sons of one man, in the land of Canaan. The youngest is today with our father, and one is no more."  
14 Joseph told them, "It is as I said: you are spies.  
15 You are to take this test: as Pharaoh lives, you shall not leave unless your youngest brother comes here.  
16 Send one of you to fetch your brother, while the rest are bound, so that your words may be tested, to see whether you are honest. If not, then as surely as Pharaoh lives you are spies."  
17 Then he kept them all in custody for three days.

<sup>8</sup> Life in Egypt had clearly changed Joseph's appearance – to say nothing of his Egyptian attire.

<sup>9</sup> The charge of espionage was natural, for Egypt's frontier, facing Canaan, was vulnerable to attack (Ex 1:10).

<sup>10</sup> The literal translation of 'exclaimed' (here following NETB) is 'said to him'.

<sup>11</sup> For the last sentence, here following the NJB, the NRSV has, "Your servants have never been spies."

<sup>12</sup> Literally translated, this verse reads, "and he said, 'No, for the nakedness of the land you have come to see.'" The order of the introductory clause and the direct discourse has been rearranged in the translation for clarity.

<sup>13</sup> In place of 'is no more' – here following the MT, NJB & NRSV – NETB has 'is no longer alive'.

<sup>14</sup> For the third time in the discourse, Joseph accuses his brothers of being spies (cf. vv. 9 & 12).

<sup>15</sup> The phrase 'as Pharaoh lives' was an oath in the name of Pharaoh, who was regarded as divine in Egypt.

<sup>16</sup> The literal translation of 'send one of you to fetch' is 'send from you one and let him take'.

<sup>17</sup> The word used here for 'kept in custody' is not normally used in a context like this (for placing someone in prison), but it forms a wordplay on the name Joseph and keeps the comparison working.

י"ח וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם יוֹסֵף בְּיוֹם הַשְּׁלִישִׁי זֹאת עֲשׂוּ וְחִי  
את־הָאֱלֹהִים אֲנִי יִרָא׃ י"ט אִם־כֹּנִים אַתֶּם אֲחֵיכֶם  
אֶחָד יֵאָסֶר בְּבֵית מִשְׁמָרְכֶם וְאַתֶּם לָכוּ הִבִּיאוּ שֶׁבֶר  
רַעֲבֹן בְּתֵיכֶם׃ כ' וְאַת־אֲחֵיכֶם הִקְטַן תִּבְיֹאוּ אֵלַי  
וַיֹּאמְרוּ דְּבָרֵיכֶם וְלֹא תָמוּתוּ וַיַּעֲשׂוּ־כֵן׃ כא וַיֹּאמְרוּ  
אִישׁ אֶל־אָחִיו אֲבֹל־אֲשָׁמִים | אֲנַחְנוּ עַל־אָחִינוּ אֲשֶׁר  
רָאִינוּ צָרָת נַפְשׁוֹ בַּהֲתַחֲנוּנוֹ אֲלֵינוּ וְלֹא שָׁמַעְנוּ עַל־כֵּן  
בָּאָה אֲלֵינוּ הַצָּרָה הַזֹּאת׃ כב וַיַּעַן רְאוּבֵן אֶתֶם לֹא־אָמַרְתִּי  
הַלֹּא אֲמַרְתִּי אֲלֵיכֶם | לֵאמֹר אֶל־תַּחֲטְאוּ בִּילֵד וְלֹא  
שָׁמַעְתֶּם וְגַם־דָּמּוּ הִנֵּה נִדְרָשׁ׃ כג וְהֵם לֹא יָדְעוּ כִּי  
שָׁמַע יוֹסֵף כִּי הִמְלִיץ בֵּינָתָם׃ כד וַיֵּסֶב מֵעַלֵּיהֶם וַיִּבְדָּךְ  
וַיֵּשֶׁב אֲלֵהֶם וַיְדַבֵּר אֲלֵהֶם וַיִּקַּח מֵאֶתֶם אֶת־שִׁמְעוֹן  
וַיֹּאסֶר אֹתוֹ לְעֵינֵיהֶם׃

כה וַיֵּצֵא יוֹסֵף וַיִּמְלֵא אֶת־כְּלֵיהֶם בָּרֶ וְלִהְשִׁיב כֶּסֶף־הֶם  
אִישׁ אֶל־שַׁקּוֹ וְלָתֵת לָהֶם צֹדֶה לַדֶּרֶךְ וַיַּעַשׂ לָהֶם כֵּן׃

<sup>18</sup> On the third day Joseph said to them, "Do this and you shall live; for, I fear God; <sup>19</sup> if you are honest men, let one of your brothers stay in your place; the rest of you go and take corn to relieve the hunger of your houses. <sup>20</sup> Bring me your youngest brother so your words will be verified and you shall not die!" They did so. <sup>21</sup> They said to one another, "Truly we are being punished for our brother; we saw his misery of soul when he begged our mercy, but we did not listen; so, this misery has come to us." <sup>22</sup> Reuben answered them, "Did I not tell you not to wrong the boy? But you did not listen and now we pay for his blood." <sup>23</sup> They did not know that Joseph understood, as he was using an interpreter. <sup>24</sup> He turned away from them and wept; then he went back to them, spoke to them, and took Simeon from among them and had him bound while they looked on.

<sup>25</sup> Joseph gave the order to fill their bags with corn, to put back each man's money in his sack, and to give them provisions for the way.

<sup>18</sup> Joseph brings God into the picture to awaken his brothers' consciences.

<sup>19</sup> The literal translation of 'to relieve the famine of your houses' is 'for the hunger of your households'.

<sup>20</sup> The Niphal form of the verb here translated as 'be verified' has the sense of 'to be faithful', 'to be sure' or 'to be reliable'.

<sup>21</sup> Once again, the brothers have to announce to their father that misfortune has befallen one of his sons (compare Ch. 37).

<sup>22</sup> God requires compensation from those who shed innocent blood (see 9:6). In other words, God exacts punishment for the crime of murder.

<sup>23</sup> The brothers were not aware that Joseph could understand them as they spoke the preceding words in their native language.

<sup>24</sup> An interest in human emotions is one of the characteristics of the closing chapters of Genesis.

<sup>25</sup> The literal translation of the last sentence, here following the NJB & NRSV, is "and he did for them so." Joseph would appear to be the subject of the singular verb; if the text is retained, the statement seems to be a summary of the preceding, more detailed statement. However, some read the verb as plural, "and they did for them so." In this case, the statement indicates that Joseph's subordinates carried out his orders.

כו וישאו את־שִׁבְרָם עַל־חֲמֵרֵיהֶם וילכו משם:  
כז ויפתח האחד את־שִׁקּוֹ לָתֵת מִסְפּוֹא לַחֲמֹרוֹ בַּמְלֹן  
וירא את־כֶּסֶפוֹ וְהִנֵּה־הוא בְּפִי אִמְתַּחְתּוֹ: כח ויאמר  
אֶל־אָחִיו הוֹשֵׁב כִּסְפִי וְגַם הִנֵּה בְּאִמְתַּחְתִּי ויצא לָבָם  
ויחרדוּ אִישׁ אֶל־אָחִיו לֵאמֹר מִה־זֹּאת עָשָׂה אֱלֹהִים  
לָנוּ:

כט ויבאו אל־יעקב אֲבֵיהֶם אֶרְצָה כְּנָעַן ויגידוּ לוֹ אֵת  
כָּל־הַקֶּרֶת אֲתֶם לֵאמֹר: לִדְבַר הָאִישׁ אֲדֹנֵי הָאָרֶץ  
אֲתָנוּ קִשּׁוֹת וַיִּתֵּן אֲתָנוּ כַּמְרָגָלִים אֶת־הָאָרֶץ:  
לא ונאמר אֵלָיו כְּנִים אֲנַחְנוּ לֹא הִיָּינוּ מְרָגָלִים:  
לב שְׁנַיִם־עָשָׂר אֲנַחְנוּ אֲחִים בְּנֵי אָבִינוּ הָאֶחָד אֵינָנוּ  
וְהַקָּטָן הַיּוֹם אֶת־אָבִינוּ בָּאָרֶץ כְּנָעַן: לג ויאמר אֵלָיו  
הָאִישׁ אֲדֹנֵי הָאָרֶץ בְּזֹאת אֲדַע כִּי כְנִים אַתֶּם אֲחֵיכֶם  
הָאֶחָד הִנִּיחוּ אֹתִי וְאֶת־רַעְבּוֹן בְּתִיכֶם קָחוּ וּלְכוּ:  
לד וְהֵבִיאוּ אֶת־אֲחֵיכֶם הַקָּטָן אֵלָי וְאֲדַעָה כִּי לֹא

This was done for them. <sup>26</sup> They loaded the corn on their donkeys and left. <sup>27</sup> When one of them opened his sack to feed his donkey, at the lodging place, he saw his money in the mouth of his sack. <sup>28</sup> He said to his brothers, "My money has been put back; here it is in my corn sack." Their hearts sank, and they looked at one another in panic, saying, "What is this that God has done to us?"

<sup>29</sup> Returning to their father Jacob in the land of Canaan, they told him all that had happened to them. <sup>30</sup> "The man, the lord of the land spoke harshly to us, taking us for men spying on the land. <sup>31</sup> We told him, "We are honest men, not spies. <sup>32</sup> We are twelve brothers, sons of our father; one of us is no more, and the youngest is today with our father in the land of Canaan." <sup>33</sup> But the man, the lord of the land said to us, "This is how I shall know if you are honest: leave one of your brothers with me, take corn for your families and go. <sup>34</sup> And bring me back your youngest brother and then I shall know that you

<sup>26</sup> The literal translation of 'left' is 'went from there'.

<sup>27</sup> The literal translation of 'one of them' is 'and the one'; the article indicates that the individual is vivid in the mind of the narrator, yet it is not important to identify him by name. In place of 'at the lodging place', here following the MT, the NJB has 'when they camped for the night'.

<sup>28</sup> The exact meaning of the phrase translated 'their hearts sank' (as NJB, NIV) is unclear, since the expression is used only here; the NRSV & NETB have 'they were dismayed'.

<sup>29</sup> At the end of this verse, the MT adds 'saying', although the participle is redundant in contemporary English.

<sup>30</sup> An alternative rendition of 'taking us for men' is 'charged us with'.

<sup>31</sup> The MT repeats 'we are' before 'spies'.

<sup>32</sup> In place of 'today', here following the MT, the NJB has 'at present'.

<sup>33</sup> The word 'corn' is not in the MT but has been supplied in the translation for stylistic reasons.

<sup>34</sup> Joseph's brothers soften the news considerably, making it sound like Simeon was a guest of Joseph instead of being bound in prison.

מִרְגָּלִים אַתֶּם כִּי כְנִים אַתֶּם אֶת־אֲחֵיכֶם אֶתֶּן לָכֶם  
וְאֶת־הָאָרֶץ תִּסְחָרוּ:

לֹה וַיְהִי הֵם מְרִיקִים שְׁקִיָּהֶם וְהִנֵּה־אִישׁ צֹרֹר־כֶּסֶף  
בְּשָׁקוֹ וַיֵּרְאוּ אֶת־צֹרֹת כֶּסֶפִּיהֶם הֵמָּה וְאֲבִיהֶם  
וַיִּירָאוּ: לֹה וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם יַעֲקֹב אֲבִיהֶם אֲתִי שְׁכַלְתֶּם  
יוֹסֵף אֵינְנִי וְשִׁמְעוֹן אֵינְנִי וְאֶת־בְּנֵימִן תִּקְחוּ עָלַי הִיוּ  
כָּלָנָה:

לֹה וַיֹּאמֶר רְאוּבֵן אֶל־אָבִיו לֵאמֹר אֶת־שְׁנֵי בְנֵי תַמִּית  
אִם־לֹא אָבִיאוּנִי אֵלַיךְ תִּנָּה אֹתוֹ עַל־יָדַי וְאֲנִי אֲשִׁיבֶנּוּ  
אֵלַיךְ: לֹה וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא־יֵרֵד בְּנִי עִמָּכֶם כִּי־אָחִיו מָתָּה וְהוּא  
לְבַדּוֹ נִשְׁאָר וְקִרְאָהוּ אֶסּוֹן בַּדֶּרֶךְ אֲשֶׁר תֵּלְכוּ־בָּהּ  
וְהוֹרַדְתֶּם אֶת־שִׁיבְתִּי בִּיגּוֹן שְׂאוּלָה:

are not spies but honest men. Then I will hand over your brother to you, and you can trade in the country.””

<sup>35</sup> As they emptied their sacks, each found his bag of money in his sack. On seeing their bags of money, they were afraid, and so was their father. <sup>36</sup> Then their father Jacob said to them, “You are robbing me of my children; Joseph is no more; Simeon is no more; and now you want to take Benjamin. All this I must bear.”

<sup>37</sup> Reuben said to his father, “Kill my two sons if I do not bring him back to you; put him in my care and I will bring him back to you.”

<sup>38</sup> He said, “My son shall no go down with you, for his brother is dead and he only is left; if harm came to him on the way you are going, you will bring down my grey hairs with sorrow to Sheol.”

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<sup>35</sup> Now each of the brothers discovers their money, whereas in v. 27 only one of them did so.

<sup>36</sup> The nuance of the imperfect verbal form (*‘you want to take’*) is desiderative here.

<sup>37</sup> The nuance of the imperfect verbal form (*‘you may put’*) is permissive here.

<sup>38</sup> Jacob speaks of Benjamin as the only surviving son of his beloved Rachel.

## GENESIS 43

## בראשית פרק מג

א וְהָרֶעֱב בְּבֶד בְּאֶרֶץ: ב וַיְהִי כַּאֲשֶׁר כָּלוּ לֵאכֹל אֶת-  
הַשֶּׁבֶר אֲשֶׁר הָבִיאוּ מִמִּצְרַיִם וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵיהֶם אָבִיהֶם  
שָׁבוּ שְׁבוּ-לָנוּ מִעֵט-אֶכֶל: ג וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו יְהוּדָה  
לֵאמֹר הָעֵד הָעֵד בְּנֹו הָאִישׁ לֵאמֹר לֹא-תֵרָאוּ פָנַי  
בְּלִתִּי אֲחִיכֶם אִתְּכֶם: ד אִם-יֵשֶׁךְ מִשְׁלַח אֶת-אֲחִינוּ  
אִתָּנוּ נֵרְדָּה וְנִשְׁבְּרָה לָךְ אֶכֶל: ה וְאִם-אֵינֶךָ מִשְׁלַח לֹא  
נֵרְד כִּי-הָאִישׁ אָמַר אֵלֵינוּ לֹא-תֵרָאוּ פָנַי בְּלִתִּי  
אֲחִיכֶם אִתְּכֶם: ו וַיֹּאמֶר יִשְׂרָאֵל לָמָּה הִרְעַתֶּם לִי  
לְהִגִּיד לָאִישׁ הָעוֹד לָכֶם אֵח: ז וַיֹּאמְרוּ שְׂאוֹל שְׂאוֹל-  
הָאִישׁ לָנוּ וְלִמְוֹלָדֵתָנוּ לֵאמֹר הָעוֹד אֲבִיכֶם חַי הִישׁ  
לָכֶם אֵח וְנִגְדֵּל-לוֹ עַל-פִּי הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה הַיְדוּעַ נִדַּע  
כִּי יֹאמֶר הוֹרִידוּ אֶת-אֲחִיכֶם: ח וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוּדָה אֶל-  
יִשְׂרָאֵל אָבִיו שְׁלַח הַנֶּעֱר אִתִּי וְנִקְוָמָה וְנִלְכָּה וְנִחְיָה

1 The famine was sore in the land; 2 when they had eaten the corn they had brought from Egypt, their father said to them, "Go back and buy us a little food." 3 Judah said, "But the man expressly warned us. He said, "You will not see my face unless your brother is with you." 4 If you send our brother with us, we will go down and buy food for you; 5 but, if you do not send him, we will not go down, for the man told us, "You will not see my face unless your brother is with you." 6 Israel said, "Why did you bring this misery on me by telling the man you had another brother?" 7 They said, "He asked us about ourselves and our kin, "Is your father still alive?" and, "Have you a brother?" That is why we told him. How could we know he would say, "Bring your brother down?" 8 Judah said to his father Israel, "Send the boy with me, and we will go now, so that we may live and

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- 1 The disjunctive clause gives supplemental information that is important to the storyline.
- 2 Simeon, left as a hostage in Egypt (vv. 14, 23), is apparently forgotten, for the brothers return only when more grain is needed.
- 3 Joseph's 'oath' was tantamount to a threat or warning.
- 4 Literally translated, this verse opens, 'If there is you sending'.
- 5 The last part of this verse, which repeats v. 3, may be a gloss, or it may just reflect the emphatic style of the narrator.
- 6 The phrase 'bring this misery' may have a moral connotation – 'Why did you do this evil to me?'
- 7 The report given here concerning Joseph's interrogation does not exactly match the previous account where they supplied the information to clear themselves (see 42:13).
- 8 After the preceding cohortatives, the prefixed verbal form here translated 'may live' (either imperfect or cohortative) with the prefixed conjunction here indicates purpose or result.



וְלֹא נָמוּת גַּם־אֲנַחְנוּ גַּם־אַתָּה גַּם־טַפָּנוּ: <sup>ט</sup> אֲנִכִּי  
אֶעֱרֹבֶנּוּ מִיָּדִי תִּבְקֶשְׁנוּ אִם־לֹא הִבִּיאתִיו אֵלֶיךָ  
וְהִצַּגְתִּיו לְפָנֶיךָ וְחָטֵאתִי לָךְ כָּל־הַיָּמִים: <sup>י</sup> כִּי לֹלֵא  
הַתְּמַהֲמָהֵנוּ כִּי־עָתָה שָׁבְנוּ זֶה פַּעַמִּים:

<sup>יא</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִם יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲבִיהֶם אִם־כֵּן | אֲפֹאֵז זֹאת  
עֲשׂוּ קָחוּ מִזֶּמֶרֶת הָאָרֶץ בְּכֵלֵיכֶם וְהוֹרִידוּ לְאִישׁ  
מִנְחָה מַעֵט צָרִי וּמַעֵט דָּבֶשׁ נֹכָאת וְלֵט בָּטָנִים  
וְשִׁקְדִים: <sup>יב</sup> וְכֶסֶף מִשְׁנֶה קָחוּ בְיָדְכֶם וְאֶת־הַכֶּסֶף  
הַמוֹשֵׁב בְּפִי אֲמַתְחֹתִיכֶם תְּשִׁיבוּ בְיָדְכֶם אוֹלֵי מִשְׁנֶה  
הוּא: <sup>יג</sup> וְאֶת־אֲחֵיכֶם קָחוּ וְקוּמוּ שׁוּבוּ אֶל־הָאִישׁ:  
<sup>יד</sup> וְאֵל שְׂדֵי יִתֵּן לָכֶם רַחֲמִים לְפָנֵי הָאִישׁ וְשַׁלַּח לָכֶם  
אֶת־אֲחֵיכֶם אַחֵר וְאֶת־בְּנֵימִן וְאֲנִי כָאֲשֶׁר שָׁכַלְתִּי  
שָׁכַלְתִּי:

<sup>טו</sup> וַיִּקְחוּ הָאֲנָשִׁים אֶת־הַמִּנְחָה הַזֹּאת וּמִשְׁנֶה־כֶּסֶף  
לְקָחוּ בְיָדָם וְאֶת־בְּנֵימִן וַיִּקְמוּ וַיֵּרְדּוּ מִצְרַיִם וַיַּעֲמְדוּ

not die, you and we and also our little ones. <sup>9</sup> I will go surety for him, and you can hold me liable; if I do not bring him back to you and set him before you, let me bear the blame forever. <sup>10</sup> But, if we had not delayed, we could have returned twice by now!"

<sup>11</sup> Then their father Israel said to them, "If it must be so, then do this; take some of the land's best products in your bags, and take them to the man as a gift, a little balsam, a little honey, gum, myrrh, pistachio nuts, and almonds. <sup>12</sup> Take double the amount of money with you and return the money put back in the mouths of your sack; it may have been a mistake. <sup>13</sup> Take your brother and go back to the man. <sup>14</sup> May El Shaddai move the man to be kind to you and allow you to bring back your other brother and Benjamin. As for me, if I am bereaved of my children, I am bereaved."

<sup>15</sup> The men took this gift; they took double the amount of money with them, and Benjamin. Then they arose and went down to Egypt and

<sup>9</sup> Judah's offer here to be surety for the return of Benjamin is paralleled by Reuben's offer in Ch. 42. (See #42:37).

<sup>10</sup> In place of 'returned twice', here following the MT, the NJB has 'been back again'.

<sup>11</sup> In place of 'myrrh', here following NETB, the NJB has 'tragacanth resin' and the NRSV has simply 'resin'.

<sup>12</sup> The literal translation of 'return' is 'take back in your hand'; the imperfect verbal form probably has an injunctive or obligatory force here, since Jacob is instructing his sons.

<sup>13</sup> 'The man' refers to the Egyptian official, whom the reader or hearer of the narrative knows is Joseph; in this context, both the sons and Jacob refer to him simply as 'the man' (see vv. 3-7).

<sup>14</sup> Several Jewish commentators suggest that the expression 'your other brother' refers to Joseph, which would mean that Jacob prophesied unwittingly; however, it is much more likely that Simeon is the referent of the phrase (see 42:24).

<sup>15</sup> The first verb in the phrase 'they arose and went down' has an adverbial function, emphasising that they departed right away.

לִפְנֵי יוֹסֵף: <sup>טז</sup> וַיֵּרָא יוֹסֵף אֶת־בְּנֵימִין וַיֹּאמֶר  
לְאִשֶּׁר עַל־בֵּיתוֹ הֵבֵא אֶת־הָאֲנָשִׁים הַבֵּיתָה וטִבַּח  
טִבַּח וְהָכֵן כִּי אֲנִי יֹאכְלוּ הָאֲנָשִׁים בַּצֹּהֲרִים: <sup>יז</sup> וַיַּעַשׂ  
הָאִישׁ כַּאֲשֶׁר אָמַר יוֹסֵף וַיָּבֵא הָאִישׁ אֶת־הָאֲנָשִׁים  
בֵּיתָה יוֹסֵף:

<sup>יח</sup> וַיִּירָאוּ הָאֲנָשִׁים כִּי הוּבְאוּ בֵּית יוֹסֵף וַיֹּאמְרוּ עַל־  
דְּבַר הַכֶּסֶף הֵשֵׁב בְּאֲמַתְחַתֵּינוּ בַּתְּחִלָּה אֲנַחְנוּ  
מוֹבָאִים לְהִתְגַּלֵּל עָלֵינוּ וּלְהִתְנַפֵּל עָלֵינוּ וּלְקַחַת אֶתְנוּ  
לְעִבָדִים וְאֶת־חֲמֹרֵינוּ: <sup>יט</sup> וַיִּגְשׁוּ אֶל־הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר עַל־  
בֵּית יוֹסֵף וַיְדַבְּרוּ אֵלָיו פֶּתַח הַבַּיִת: <sup>כ</sup> וַיֹּאמְרוּ בִּי אֲדֹנָי  
יֵרֵד יִרְדְּנוּ בַּתְּחִלָּה לְשֹׁבֵר־אֶכֶל: <sup>כא</sup> וַיְהִי כִּי־בָאוּ אֶל־  
הַמְּלֹאֵן וַנִּפְתַּח אֶת־אֲמַתְחַתֵּינוּ וְהִנֵּה כֶּסֶף־אִישׁ בְּפִי  
אֲמַתְחַתּוֹ כֶּסֶפְנוּ בְּמִשְׁקָלוֹ וַנִּשֵּׁב אֹתוֹ בִּידְנוּ: <sup>כב</sup> וְכֶסֶף  
אַחֵר הוֹרְדְּנוּ בִידְנוּ לְשֹׁבֵר־אֶכֶל לֹא יָדַעְנוּ מִי־שָׁם  
כֶּסֶפְנוּ בְּאֲמַתְחַתֵּינוּ: <sup>כג</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר שְׁלוֹם לָכֶם אֶל־תִּירָאוּ  
אֱלֹהֵיכֶם וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבֹתֵיכֶם נָתַן לָכֶם מִטָּמוֹן

presented themselves to Joseph. <sup>16</sup> When Joseph saw Benjamin with them, he said to his chamberlain, "Take these men to the house. Slaughter a beast and prepare it, for these men are to eat with me at midday." <sup>17</sup> The man did as Joseph had ordered and took the men to Joseph's house.

<sup>18</sup> The men were afraid at being taken to Joseph's house, thinking, "We are being taken there because of the money replaced in our corn sacks the first time. They want to set on us, fall on us and make slaves of us, and take our donkeys." <sup>19</sup> So, they went to Joseph's chamberlain and spoke to him at the entrance to the house. <sup>20</sup> "By your leave, sir," they said, "we came down once before to buy food, <sup>21</sup> and when we reached camp and opened our corn-sacks, there was each man's money in the mouth of his sack, to its full amount, but we have brought it back with us, <sup>22</sup> and we have brought more money to buy food. We do not know who put the money in our sacks." <sup>23</sup> "Peace," he replied, "Do not be afraid; your God, and your father's God, has

<sup>16</sup> An alternative reading for 'chamberlain' (here following the NJB) is 'steward of his house' (as NRSV).

<sup>17</sup> This verse is a summary statement; the next verses delineate intermediate steps (see v. 24) in the process.

<sup>18</sup> The infinitives in the last sentence indicate the purpose (as viewed by the brothers) for their being brought to Joseph's house.

<sup>19</sup> See #16 on the use of the word 'chamberlain'.

<sup>20</sup> The literal translation of the phrase 'once before' is 'in the beginning'.

<sup>21</sup> The literal translation of 'to its full amount' is 'in its weight'.

<sup>22</sup> The NJB & NRSV have 'our money' in place of 'the money', here following NETB.

<sup>23</sup> The chamberlain has been instructed by Joseph (42:25) and knows what the latter intends to do. This verse is the first clear reference in the story to the theme of divine providence: that God works through the human actions to do his will.

בְּאִמְתַּחֲתֵיכֶם כֶּסֶףכֶּם בָּא אֵלַי וַיֹּצֵא אֲלֵהֶם אֶת־  
שְׁמֵעוֹן:

כד וַיָּבֵא הָאִישׁ אֶת־הָאֲנָשִׁים בֵּיתָה יוֹסֵף וַיִּתֶּן־מַיִם  
וַיִּרְחֲצוּ רַגְלֵיהֶם וַיִּתֶּן מִסְפּוֹא לַחֲמֹרֵיהֶם: כה וַיִּכְנֹוּ  
אֶת־הַמִּנְחָה עַד־בּוֹא יוֹסֵף בַּצָּהָרִים כִּי שָׁמְעוּ כִּי־שָׁם  
יֹאכְלוּ לֶחֶם:

כו וַיָּבֵא יוֹסֵף הַבֵּיתָה וַיָּבִיאוּ לוֹ אֶת־הַמִּנְחָה אֲשֶׁר־  
בְּיָדָם הַבֵּיתָה וַיִּשְׁתַּחוּ־לוֹ אָרְצָה: כז וַיִּשְׁאַל לָהֶם  
לְשָׁלוֹם וַיֹּאמֶר הַשָּׁלוֹם אֲבִיכֶם הַזֶּקֶן אֲשֶׁר אָמַרְתֶּם  
הַעוֹדְנֵנוּ חַי: כח וַיֹּאמְרוּ שָׁלוֹם לְעַבְדְּךָ לְאֲבִינוּ עוֹדְנֵנוּ חַי  
וַיִּקְדּוּ וַיִּשְׁתַּחוּ וַיִּשְׁתַּחוּ: כט וַיִּשָּׂא עֵינָיו וַיֵּרָא אֶת־  
בְּנִימִין אָחִיו בֶּן־אִמּוֹ וַיֹּאמֶר הֲזֶה אַחִיכֶם הַקָּטָן אֲשֶׁר  
אָמַרְתֶּם אֵלַי וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים יַחְנֶךָ בְּנִי: ל וַיִּמָּהֵר יוֹסֵף  
כִּי־נִכְמְרוּ רַחֲמָיו אֶל־אָחִיו וַיִּבְקֹשׁ לִבְכוֹת וַיָּבֵא  
הַחֲדָרָה וַיִּבְדֵּךְ שָׁמָּה: לא וַיִּרְחֹץ פָּנָיו וַיֵּצֵא וַיִּתְאַפֵּק

put a treasure in your sacks: your money reached me;" and he brought Simeon out to them.

<sup>24</sup> The man took the men into Joseph's house. He offered them water to wash their feet and gave their donkeys fodder. <sup>25</sup> They arranged their gift while they waited for Joseph to come at midday, for they had heard they were to dine there.

<sup>26</sup> When Joseph came home, they gave him the gift they had with them and bowed before him to the ground. <sup>27</sup> He greeted them well, asking, "Is your aging father well, the one you told me of? Is he still alive?" <sup>28</sup> They said, "Your servant our father is well; he is still alive," and they bowed humbly. <sup>29</sup> He looked up and saw Benjamin, his brother, his mother's son, and said, "Is this your youngest brother, of whom you told me?" Then he said, "God be good to you, my son."

<sup>30</sup> Joseph hurried out; he was overcome by affection for his brother and wanted to cry; he went to his room and wept. <sup>31</sup> Then he washed

<sup>24</sup> The NRSV opens with: "The steward brought the men into Joseph's house."

<sup>25</sup> The literal translation of 'dine' is 'eat bread'; the imperfect verbal form is used here as a historic future (future from the perspective of the past).

<sup>26</sup> After, 'with them', the MT repeats, 'at the house'. Note the unusual/unexpected dagesh on the א in וַיָּבִיאוּ.

<sup>27</sup> The literal translation of 'greeted them kindly' is 'asked them concerning peace'.

<sup>28</sup> The Kethib/Qere difference here warrants an explanation.

<sup>29</sup> Joseph was evidently much older than Benjamin (see 30:22ff and 35:16). It is even possible that there was a tradition according to which Benjamin was born after Joseph was kidnapped (see #37:10).

<sup>30</sup> Literally translated, 'he was overcome by affection for his brother' reads, 'the affection boiled up concerning his brother'; the same expression is used in 1K 3:26 for the mother's feelings for her endangered child.

<sup>31</sup> The literal translation of 'composing himself, he said' is 'he controlled himself and said'.

וַיֹּאמֶר שִׁימוּ לָחֶם: <sup>לֵב</sup> וַיִּשְׁימוּ לוֹ לִבְדּוֹ וְלָהֶם לִבְדָּם  
וּלְמִצְרַיִם הָאֹכְלִים אֹתוֹ לִבְדָּם כִּי לֹא יוֹכְלוֹן הַמִּצְרַיִם  
לֵאכֹל אֶת־הָעִבְרִים לָחֶם כִּי־תוֹעֵבָה הוּא לְמִצְרַיִם:  
<sup>לֵב</sup> וַיֵּשְׁבוּ לִפְנֵי הַבָּכָר בְּבִכְרָתוֹ וְהַצָּעִיר כְּצַעֲרָתוֹ  
וַיִּתְמָהוּ הָאֲנָשִׁים אִישׁ אֶל־רֵעֵהוּ: <sup>לֵד</sup> וַיֵּשָׂא מִשָּׂאת  
מֵאֵת פָּנָיו אֶל־הֶם וַתֵּרֶב מִשָּׂאת בְּנִימִן מִמִּשָּׂאת כָּל־  
חֲמֵשׁ יָדוֹת וַיִּשְׁתּוּ וַיִּשְׂכְּרוּ עִמּוֹ:

his face, returned, composed himself, and said, “Serve the meal.”  
<sup>32</sup> They served him by himself, and them by themselves, and the  
Egyptians who ate in his household by themselves, for Egyptians  
don’t eat with Hebrews; they have a horror of it. <sup>33</sup> They sat facing  
him in order of seniority, from the eldest to the youngest, and the  
men looked at one another in amazement. <sup>34</sup> He gave them portions  
from his own dish, the portion for Benjamin being five times larger  
than that of any of the others. They drank with him and were happy.

<sup>32</sup> The word תוֹעֵבָה (*‘horror’*) describes something that is loathsome or off-limits; for other practices the Egyptians considered disgusting, see 46:34 & Ex 8:22. That the Egyptians found eating with foreigners disgusting is well-attested in extra-biblical literature by writers like Herodotus, Diodorus, and Strabo.

<sup>33</sup> The brothers’ *‘amazement’* was because there was no way, as far as they knew, that Joseph could have known the order of their birth.

<sup>34</sup> The brothers were apparently relaxed and set at ease, despite Joseph’s obvious favouritism toward Benjamin.

## GENESIS 44

## בראשית פרק מד

- א וַיֹּצֵא אֶת־אֲשֶׁר עַל־בֵּיתוֹ לֵאמֹר מִלֵּא אֶת־אֲמָתֹתַי הָאֲנָשִׁים אֹכֵל כֹּאֲשֶׁר יוּכְלוּן שָׂאת וְשִׁים בְּסָף־אִישׁ בְּפִי אֲמָתֹתָיו: ב וְאֶת־גִּבִּיעִי גִבִּיעַ הַכֶּסֶף תָּשִׂים בְּפִי אֲמָתֹתַי הַקָּטָן וְאֶת כֶּסֶף שִׁבְרוֹ וַיַּעַשׂ כַּדְּבַר יוֹסֵף אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר:
- ג הַבֹּקֶר אֹר וְהָאֲנָשִׁים שָׁלְחוּ הֵמָּה וַחֲמֹרֵיהֶם: ד הֵם יֵצְאוּ אֶת־הָעִיר לֹא הִרְחִיקוּ וַיֹּסֶף אֹמֵר לְאֲשֶׁר עַל־בֵּיתוֹ קוּם רְדֹף אַחֲרֵי הָאֲנָשִׁים וְהִשְׁגָּתָם וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם לָמָּה שָׁלַמְתֶּם רָעָה תַּחַת טוֹבָה: ה הֲלוֹא זֶה אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁתֶּה אֲדֹנִי בּוֹ וְהוּא נָחַשׁ יִנְחֹשׁ בּוֹ הִרְעַתְתֶּם אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתֶם:
- ו וַיִּשְׁגֹּם וַיִּדְבֹּר אֲלֵהֶם אֶת־הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה: ז וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלָיו לָמָּה יִדְבֹּר אֲדֹנִי כַּדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה חֲלִילָה לַעֲבָדֶיךָ
- <sup>1</sup> Joseph gave this order to his chamberlain: "Fill these men's sacks with as much food as they can carry and put each man's money in the mouth of his sack. <sup>2</sup> Then, put my cup, the silver one, in the mouth of the youngest one's sack as well as the money for his grain. He carried out the instructions Joseph had given.
- <sup>3</sup> In the light of the morning, the men were sent off with their donkeys. <sup>4</sup> They had just left the city, and had not gone far before Joseph said to his chamberlain, "Away, and follow those men; when you catch up with them, say to them, "Why have you repaid good with evil? <sup>5</sup> Is this not the one my lord uses for drinking, and for reading omens? What you have done is wrong.""
- <sup>6</sup> He caught up with them and repeated these words. <sup>7</sup> They asked, "What does my lord mean? Your servants would never do such a

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- <sup>1</sup> An alternative reading for 'chamberlain' (here following the NJB) is 'steward of his house' (as NRSV).
- <sup>2</sup> Literally translated, the last sentence reads, "And he did according to the word of Joseph which he spoke."
- <sup>3</sup> The clauses of this sentence have the subject before the verb, indicating synchronic action.
- <sup>4</sup> At the end of this verse, the NRSV, following the LXX (ἵνα τί ἐκλέψατέ μου τὸ κόνδυ τὸ ἀργυροῦν), adds 'Why have you stolen my silver cup?' (This addition explains the opening of v. 5.) Here, we follow the MT (and NJB).
- <sup>5</sup> The way in which water fell into a cup, or the sound it made, or the patterns of oil-drops poured into it, were interpreted as omens. This method of divination was common in the ancient East.
- <sup>6</sup> The referent of the opening pronoun, 'he', is the chamberlain.
- <sup>7</sup> The literal translation of the brothers' question is, "Why does my lord speak according to these words?"

מַעֲשׂוֹת כְּדָבָר הַזֶּה: <sup>ח</sup> הֵן כֶּסֶף אֲשֶׁר מָצְאוּ בְּפִי  
אִמְתַּחֲתֵינוּ הַשִּׁיבָנוּ אֵלָיךְ מֵאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן וְאִיךָ נִגְנֹב  
מִבֵּית אֲדֹנֶיךָ כֶּסֶף אוֹ זָהָב: <sup>ט</sup> אֲשֶׁר יִמָּצָא אֹתוֹ  
מֵעֶבְדֶיךָ וּמֵת וְגַם-אֲנַחְנוּ נָהִיָּה לְעֶבְדִּים:  
יֵאמָר גַּם-עַתָּה כְּדִבְרֵיכֶם כִּן-הוּא אֲשֶׁר יִמָּצָא אֹתוֹ  
יִהְיֶה-לִּי עֶבֶד וְאַתֶּם תִּהְיוּ נָקִים: <sup>י</sup> וַיִּמְהָרוּ וַיּוֹרְדוּ אִישׁ  
אֶת-אִמְתַּחְתּוֹ אֶרֶצָה וַיִּפְתְּחוּ אִישׁ אִמְתַּחְתּוֹ:  
<sup>יב</sup> וַיַּחְפֹּשׂ בַּגְדוֹל הַחֹל וּבִקְטָן כָּלָה וַיִּמָּצָא הַגְּבִיעַ  
בְּאִמְתַּחַת בְּנִימִן: <sup>יג</sup> וַיִּקְרְעוּ שְׂמֹלֹתָם וַיַּעֲמֹס אִישׁ עַל-  
חֻמְרוֹ וַיֵּשְׁבוּ הָעִירָה:

<sup>יד</sup> וַיָּבֹא יְהוּדָה וְאָחִיו בֵּיתָה יוֹסֵף וְהוּא עוֹדֵנוּ שָׁם וַיִּפְּלוּ  
לִפְנֵי אֶרֶצָה: <sup>טו</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם יוֹסֵף מַה-הַמַּעֲשֶׂה הַזֶּה  
אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתֶם הֲלוֹא יָדַעְתֶּם כִּי-נִחַשׁ יִנְחֹשׁ אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר  
כְּמֹנִי: <sup>טז</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוּדָה מַה-נֹּאמַר לְאֲדֹנִי מִה־נִּדְבָר

thing. <sup>8</sup> Look, the money we found in the mouths of our corn sacks we brought back to you from the land of Canaan. Would we then steal silver or gold from your master's house? <sup>9</sup> Whichever of your servants is found to have it will die and we shall be slaves of my lord." <sup>10</sup> He replied, "It shall be as you say; the one on whom it is found shall become my slave but the rest can go free." <sup>11</sup> Each of them quickly lowered his sack to the ground and each opened his own. <sup>12</sup> He searched them, starting with the eldest and ending with the youngest, and found the cup in Benjamin's sack. <sup>13</sup> They tore their clothes; then each man loaded his donkey and returned to the city.

<sup>14</sup> Judah and his brothers arrived at Joseph's house; he was there, so they fell on the ground before him. <sup>15</sup> Joseph asked them, "What have you done? Do you not know that one like me is a reader of omens?" <sup>16</sup> Judah said, "How can we answer, my lord? What can we say? How

<sup>8</sup> An alternative opening of the second sentence is "Why then would we steal ...?"

<sup>9</sup> The literal translation of 'whichever of your servants is found to have it' (here following the NJB) is 'the one with whom it is found from your servants'.

<sup>10</sup> The chamberlain agrees with them the culprit should be punished, but not as harshly as they suggest; furthermore, the innocent parties will not be punished: the word נָקִים means 'acquitted', that is, free of guilt and the responsibility for it.

<sup>11</sup> The brother's speed in opening their sacks shows their presumption of innocence.

<sup>12</sup> The referent of the opening pronoun, 'he' is the chamberlain.

<sup>13</sup> Some translations (e.g. NETB) transpose the initial 'they' with the phrase 'each man'; here, we follow the NJB & NRSV.

<sup>14</sup> The disjunctive clause, 'he was there', here provides supplemental information.

<sup>15</sup> Having been initiated into Egyptian wisdom, Joseph can claim to practice divination, by which means the theft was discovered. The infinitive absolute appears before the finite verb for emphasis, stressing his ability to do this.

<sup>16</sup> The Hitpa'el form of the verb (נִצַּטְּדָק) here means 'to prove ourselves just', 'to declare ourselves righteous', or 'to prove our innocence'.



וּמִה־נִצָּטְדָק הָאֱלֹהִים מִצָּא אֶת־עוֹן עֲבָדֶיךָ הַנֶּנּוּ  
עֲבָדִים לְאֹדְנִי גַם־אֲנֹחֲנוּ גַם אֲשֶׁר־נִמְצָא הַגִּבֵּיעַ בִּידּוֹ:  
יִיאָמֶר חֲלִילָה לִּי מַעֲשׂוֹת זֹאת הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר נִמְצָא  
הַגִּבֵּיעַ בִּידּוֹ הוּא יִהְיֶה־לִּי עֶבֶד וְאַתֶּם עָלוּ לְשָׁלוֹם אֶל־  
אֲבִיכֶם: {ס}

יִי וַיָּגֶשׁ אֵלָיו יְהוּדָה וַיֹּאמֶר בִּי אֹדְנִי יִדְבַר־נָא עֲבָדֶךָ  
דָּבָר בְּאָזְנִי אֹדְנִי וְאֶל־יֵחָר אַפֶּךָ בְּעֲבָדֶךָ כִּי כְמוֹד  
כַּפְרֵעָה: יִיאָמֶר שְׂאֵל אֶת־עֲבָדֶיךָ לֵאמֹר הֲיִשְׁלַכְּם  
אָב אוֹ־אָח: כִּי וַנֹּאמֶר אֶל־אֹדְנִי יִשְׁלַנּוּ אָב זָקֵן וְיִלְד  
זָקֵן קָטָן וְאָחִיו מֵת וַיִּתֵּר הוּא לְבָדּוֹ לְאִמּוֹ וְאָבִיו  
אֶהְיֶה: כֹּא וַתֹּאמֶר אֶל־עֲבָדֶיךָ הוֹרְדֵהוּ אֵלַי וְאֲשִׁימָה  
עֵינַי עָלָיו: כִּב וַנֹּאמֶר אֶל־אֹדְנִי לֹא־יוּכַל הַנֶּעַר לַעֲזֹב  
אֶת־אָבִיו וְעֹזֵב אֶת־אָבִיו וּמָת: כִּג וַתֹּאמֶר אֶל־עֲבָדֶיךָ  
אִם־לֹא יֵרֵד אַחֲיֶכֶם הַקָּטָן אִתָּכֶם לֹא תִסְפּוּן לִרְאוֹת  
פָּנַי:

can we clear ourselves? God himself has uncovered your servants' guilt. Here we are then, my lord's slaves, both we and the one in whose hand the cup was found." <sup>17</sup> He said, "I could not think of doing such a thing. The man in whose hand the cup was found shall be my slave, but you can go back in peace to your father."

<sup>18</sup> Then Judah went to him and said, "Please my lord, let your servant have a private word with my lord; do not be angry with your servant, for you are like Pharaoh. <sup>19</sup> My lord asked his servants, "Have you father or brother?" <sup>20</sup> We said to my lord, "We have an old father, and a younger brother born of his old age; his brother is dead, so he alone is left of his mother and his father loves him." <sup>21</sup> Then you said to your servants, "Bring him down to me that I may see him." <sup>22</sup> We said to my lord, "The boy cannot leave his father; if he does, his father will die." <sup>23</sup> But you said to your servants, "If your youngest brother does not come down with you, you will not see my face again."

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- <sup>17</sup> Joseph tests his brothers to see whether, as in his case once, they will let Benjamin go into slavery and return to their father to justify the loss of another of his sons.
- <sup>18</sup> Joseph has as much power as Pharaoh, either to condemn or to pardon. Judah will make his appeal, wording his speech in such a way as to appeal to Joseph's compassion for the father, whom he mentions no less than fourteen times in the speech.
- <sup>19</sup> After 'servants', the MT adds 'saying', which also appears in the NRSV; here, we follow the NJB.
- <sup>20</sup> The tragedy of Joseph's supposed death heightens the pathos; for, of Jacob's two sons by Rachel, only Benjamin is left, and Jacob's life is 'bound up' in the boy's life (v. 30).
- <sup>21</sup> The literal translation of 'that I may see him' is 'that I may set my eyes upon him'.
- <sup>22</sup> The last two verbs are perfect tenses with *vav* (ו) consecutive; the former is subordinated to the latter as a conditional clause.
- <sup>23</sup> In place of 'my face', here following the MT (& NRSV), the NJB has 'me'.

כד ויהי כי עלינו אל-עבדך אבי ונגדל'ו את דברי  
 אדני: כה ויאמר אבינו שבו שברו-לנו מעט-אכל:  
 כו ונאמר לא נוכל לרדת אם-יש אחינו הקטן אתנו  
 וירדנו כי-לא נוכל לראות פני האיש ואחינו הקטן  
 איננו אתנו: כז ויאמר עבדך אבי אלינו אתם ידעתם  
 כי שנים ילדה-לי אשתי: כח ויצא האחד מאתי ואמר  
 אך טרף טרף ולא ראיתיו עד-הנה: כט ולקחתם גם-  
 את-זה מעם פני וקרהו אסון והורדתם את-שיבתי  
 ברעה שאלה:

ל ועתה כבאי אל-עבדך אבי והנער איננו אתנו  
 ונפש קשורה בנפשו: לא והיה כראותו כי-אין הנער  
 ומת והורידו עבדיך את-שיבת עבדך אבינו ביגון  
 שאלה: לב כי עבדך ערב את-הנער מעם אבי לאמר  
 אם-לא אביאנו אליך וחטאתי לאבי כלהימים:  
 לג ועתה ישב-נא עבדך תחת הנער עבד לאדני

<sup>24</sup> When we went back to your servant my father, we told him the words of my lord. <sup>25</sup> Our father said, “Go back and buy us a little food.” <sup>26</sup> We said, “We cannot go down; if our youngest brother is with us, we will go down; for, we cannot see the man’s face unless our youngest brother is with us.” <sup>27</sup> Your servant our father said to us, “You know that my wife bore me two sons; <sup>28</sup> when one left me, I said, “He must be torn to pieces,” and I have not seen him since. <sup>29</sup> If you take this one from me too and harm comes to him, you will bring down my grey hairs with sorrow to Sheol.” <sup>30</sup> So, if I come to your servant my father, and the boy is not with us, as his life is bound up with him, <sup>31</sup> when he sees that the boy is no more, he will die. Your servants will bring down the grey hairs of your servant, our father, with sorrow to Sheol. <sup>32</sup> For, your servant went surety to my father for the boy, saying: If I do not bring him back to you, let me bear the blame before my father forever. <sup>33</sup> Let

<sup>24</sup> The literal translation of ‘what my lord had said’ is ‘the words of my lord’.

<sup>25</sup> In place of ‘go back’, here following the MT (& NJB), the NRSV, following the LXX (*Βαδίσατε πάλιν*) has ‘go again’.

<sup>26</sup> The direct object of ‘go down’ (twice) is not in the MT but it is implied.

<sup>27</sup> The ‘wife’ here is Jacob’s beloved, Rachel, the mother of Joseph and Benjamin.

<sup>28</sup> The literal translation of ‘left me’ is ‘went forth from me’.

<sup>29</sup> Literally translated, this verse ends, “... you will bring down my white hairs to Sheol.”

<sup>30</sup> The literal translation of ‘with him’ is ‘in his life’.

<sup>31</sup> In place of ‘the boy is no more’, here following the WEB, the NJB has ‘the boy is not with us’.

<sup>32</sup> To add emphasis, NETB opens this verse with ‘indeed’ in place of ‘for’.

<sup>33</sup> In place of ‘please’, here following the NRSV, the NJB has ‘I implore you’.

וְהַנֶּעֱר יַעַל עִם־אֲחִיו: לִי כִי־אֵיךְ אֶעֱלֶה אֶל־אָבִי  
וְהַנֶּעֱר אֵינְנוּ אֲתִי בְּפָנֶי אֲרָאָה בְּרָע אֲשֶׁר יִמָּצֵא אֶת־  
אָבִי: your servant stay, then, please, as my lord's slave in place of the boy,  
and let the boy go back with his brothers. <sup>34</sup> For, how can I go back  
to my father and not have the boy with me? I could not bear to see  
the misery that would overwhelm my father."

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<sup>34</sup> The literal translation of 'misery' is 'calamity' and that of 'overwhelm' is 'find'.

## GENESIS 45

## בראשית פרק מה

א וְלֹא־יָכַל יוֹסֵף לְהִתְאַפֵּק לְכָל הַנֹּעֲזִיבִים עָלָיו וַיִּקְרָא  
הוֹצִיאוּ כָל־אִישׁ מֵעָלָיו וְלֹא־עָמַד אִישׁ אִתּוֹ בְּהִתְוֹדַע  
יוֹסֵף אֶל־אֶחָיו: ב וַיִּתֵּן אֶת־קֹלוֹ בְּבִכּוֹ וַיִּשְׁמְעוּ מִצְרַיִם  
וַיִּשְׁמַע בֵּית פַּרְעֹה:

ג וַיֹּאמֶר יוֹסֵף אֶל־אֶחָיו אֲנִי יוֹסֵף הָעוֹד אֲבִי חַי וְלֹא־  
יָכְלוּ אֶחָיו לֵעֲנוֹת אִתּוֹ כִּי נִבְהָלוּ מִפָּנָיו: ד וַיֹּאמֶר יוֹסֵף  
אֶל־אֶחָיו גִּשׁוּ־נָא אֵלַי וַיִּגָּשׁוּ וַיֹּאמֶר אֲנִי יוֹסֵף אֶחֱיֶיכֶם  
אֲשֶׁר־מָכַרְתֶּם אֹתִי מִצְרַיִמָּה: ה וַעֲתָה | אֶל־תַּעֲצֹבוּ  
וְאֶל־יִחַר בְּעֵינֵיכֶם כִּי־מָכַרְתֶּם אֹתִי הִנֵּה כִּי לְמַחִיָּה  
שָׁלַחֲנִי אֱלֹהִים לִפְנֵיכֶם: ו כִּי־זֶה שְׁנַתִּים הָרַעֵב בְּקָרֵב  
הָאָרֶץ וְעוֹד חֲמֵשׁ שָׁנִים אֲשֶׁר אֵין־חֲרִישׁ וְקָצִיר:  
ז וַיִּשְׁלַחֲנִי אֱלֹהִים לִפְנֵיכֶם לְשׁוֹם לָכֶם שְׂאֲרִית בָּאָרֶץ  
וְלִהְיוֹת לָכֶם לִפְלִיטָה גְדֹלָה: ח וַעֲתָה לֹא־אַתֶּם  
שָׁלַחְתֶּם אֹתִי הִנֵּה כִּי הָאֱלֹהִים וַיְשִׁימֵנִי לְאָב לְפָרְעָה  
וּלְאֲדוֹן לְכָל־בֵּיתוֹ וּמִשָּׁל בְּכָל־אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם:

<sup>1</sup> And Joseph could not control himself before all his retainers, and he cried, "Let everyone leave me." No one was with him when Joseph made himself known to his brothers <sup>2</sup> but he wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard, and the news reached Pharaoh's palace.

<sup>3</sup> Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Joseph. Is my father still alive?" His brothers could not answer him; they were dismayed before him.

<sup>4</sup> Joseph said to his brothers, "Come close to me." They came closer and he said, "I am your brother Joseph whom you sold into Egypt.

<sup>5</sup> Now, do not grieve; do not reproach yourselves for having sold me here; for, God sent me here to preserve life. <sup>6</sup> For, this is the second year there has been famine in the land, and there are still five years to come of no ploughing or reaping. <sup>7</sup> God sent me before you to preserve your race in the land and to save your lives – many lives.

<sup>8</sup> So, it was not you who sent me here but God; he has made me father to Pharaoh, lord of all his house, and ruler of all the land of Egypt.

## GENESIS 45

<sup>1</sup> The literal translation of 'was with him' is 'stood by him'.

<sup>2</sup> This verse follows the LXX (καὶ ἀφῆγεν φωνήν μετὰ γλαυθμοῦ· ἤκουσαν δὲ πάντες οἱ Αἰγύπτιοι, καὶ ἀκουστὸν ἐγένετο εἰς τὸν οἶκον Φαραῶ); the MT is corrupt – JPS reads, "And he wept aloud; and the Egyptians heard, and the house of Pharaoh heard."

<sup>3</sup> The brothers fear Joseph's vengeance (see 50:15ff).

<sup>4</sup> In place of the opening 'then' (here following the NJB & NRSV), the MT has 'and', and NETB omits the conjunction altogether.

<sup>5</sup> Taken together with 50:20, vv. 5–8 set forth the significance of the Joseph narrative (see #37:1).

<sup>6</sup> The literal translation of 'famine in the country' is 'famine in the midst of the land'.

<sup>7</sup> The literal translation of 'preserve your race' (here following NETB) is 'to make you a remnant'.

<sup>8</sup> 'Father to Pharaoh' was a title of the vizier (Is 22:21, cf. 1M 11:32).

ט מהרו ועלו אל-אבי ואמרתם אליו פה אמר בנך יוסף שמני אלהים לאדון לכל-מצרים רדה אלי אל-תעמד: י וישבת בארץ-גשן והיית קרוב אלי אתה ובניך ובני בניך וצאנך ובקרך וכל-אשר-לך: יא וכלכלתי אתך שם כִּי-עוד חמש שנים רעב פן-תורש אתה וביתך וכל-אשר-לך: יב והנה עיניכם לאות ועיני אחי בנימין כִּי-פי המדבר אליכם: יג והגדתם לאבי את-כל-כבודי במצרים ואת כל-אשר ראיתם ומהרתם והורדתם את-אבי הנה: יד ויפל על-צוארי בנימון-אחיו ויבך ובנימון בכה על-צואריו: טו וינשק לכל-אחיו ויבך עליהם ואחרי כן דברו אחיו אתו: טז והקל נשמע בית פרעה לאמר באו אחי יוסף וייטב בעיני פרעה ובעיני עבדיו: ז ויאמר פרעה אל-יוסף אמר אל-אחיד זאת עשו טענו את-בעירכם ולכו-

9 “Hurry to your father and tell him, “Your son Joseph says this: God has made me lord of all Egypt; come down to me at once. 10 You shall live in the land of Goshen where you will be near me, you, your children, your grandchildren, your flocks, your herds, and all you have. 11 I will sustain you there (for, there are yet five years of famine) lest you become poor, you, your house, and all you have.” 12 You see with your own eyes, and my brother Benjamin, that it is my mouth that speaks to you. 13 Tell my father of all the honour I enjoy in Egypt, and of all you have seen; then hurry and bring my father here.” 14 Then he fell on the neck of his brother Benjamin and wept; and Benjamin wept on his neck. 15 He kissed all his brothers and wept on them, after which his brothers talked with him. 16 News reached Pharaoh’s house that Joseph’s brothers had come and it pleased Pharaoh to hear it, and his servants. 17 Pharaoh told Joseph, “Say to your brothers, “Do this: load your beasts and go off

9 After ‘hurry’, the MT adds ‘and go up’, but this phrase is redundant in modern English.

10 ‘Goshen’ (גֶּשֶׁן) is the present Wadi Tumilat, a narrow strip of grazing land in the eastern Nile Delta. Since the settlers would be near Joseph, the assumption is that Pharaoh’s capital was in the Delta region, which was indeed the case during the Hyksos period (see #37:1 & #41:40).

11 In place of ‘I will sustain’, here following the MT (כלכלתי) and NJB, the NRSV has ‘I will provide for’ and NETB has ‘I will provide you with food’.

12 Literally translated, this verse reads, “And, look, your eyes see and the eyes of my brother Benjamin, that my mouth is the one speaking to you.”

13 The perfect verbal form with the *vav* consecutive (והגדתם) here expresses instruction (‘tell’).

14 In place of the second occurrence of ‘neck’, the NJB has ‘shoulder’.

15 Alternative readings for ‘on them’ (NJB) are ‘upon them’ (NRSV) and ‘over them’ (NETB).

16 The literal translation of ‘it pleased’ is ‘it was good in the eyes of’.

17 In place of ‘go off to’ (literally, ‘go, enter’), here following the NJB, the NRSV has ‘go back to’.

בָּאוּ אֶרְצָה כְּנָעַן: י<sup>ח</sup> וּקְחוּ אֶת־אֲבִיכֶם וְאֶת־בְּתִיכֶם  
וּבָאוּ אֵלַי וְאֶתְנֶה לָכֶם אֶת־טוֹב אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם וְאֶכְלוּ  
אֶת־חֶלֶב הָאָרֶץ: י<sup>ט</sup> וְאֶתָּה צִוִּיתָה זֹאת עֲשׂוּ קַחוּ־לָכֶם  
מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם עֲגֻלוֹת לְטַפְכֶם וּלְנָשֵׁיכֶם וּנְשֹׂאתֶם אֶת־  
אֲבִיכֶם וּבָאתֶם: כ<sup>י</sup> וְעֵינֵיכֶם אֶל־תָּחֹס עַל־כְּלִיכֶם כִּי־  
טוֹב כָּל־אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם לָכֶם הוּא:

כ<sup>א</sup> וַיַּעֲשׂוּ־כֵן בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּתֵּן לָהֶם יוֹסֵף עֲגֻלוֹת עַל־פִּי  
פְּרָעָה וַיִּתֵּן לָהֶם צֶדֶה לְדֶרֶךְ: כ<sup>ב</sup> לְכֹלם נָתַן לְאִישׁ  
חֲלָפוֹת שְׂמֹלֹת וּלְבִנְיָמִן נָתַן שְׁלֹשׁ מֵאוֹת כֶּסֶף וְחֲמִשׁ  
חֲלָפֹת שְׂמֹלֹת: כ<sup>ג</sup> וּלְאֲבִיו שָׁלַח כִּזְאֹת עֲשָׂרָה חֲמֹרִים  
נָשָׂאִים מְטוֹב מִצְרַיִם וַעֲשֹׂר אֶתְנֹת נְשֹׂאת בָּר וּלְחֶם  
וּמִזֹּן לְאֲבִיו לְדֶרֶךְ: כ<sup>ד</sup> וַיִּשְׁלַח אֶת־אֲחִיו וַיֵּלְכוּ וַיֹּאמֶר  
אֲלֵהֶם אֶל־תִּרְגְּזוּ בַדֶּרֶךְ:

כ<sup>ה</sup> וַיַּעֲלוּ מִמִּצְרַיִם וַיָּבֹאוּ אֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן אֶל־יַעֲקֹב אֲבִיהֶם:  
כ<sup>ו</sup> וַיֵּגְדוּ לוֹ לֵאמֹר עוֹד יוֹסֵף חַי וְכִי־הוּא מִשָּׁל בְּכָל־  
אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם וַיִּפֶּג לְבֹו כִּי לֹא־הָאֱמִין לָהֶם: כ<sup>ז</sup> וַיִּדְבְּרוּ

to the land of Canaan. <sup>18</sup> Fetch your father and families, and come back to me. I will give you the best land of Egypt offers, and you shall eat the fat of the land.” <sup>19</sup> For your part, give them this order: “Do this: take wagons from the land of Egypt, for your little ones and your wives. Get your father and come. <sup>20</sup> Never mind about your property; for, the best that the land of Egypt offers is yours.””

<sup>21</sup> Israel’s sons did so. Joseph gave them wagons, as Pharaoh had ordered, and he gave them provisions for the way. <sup>22</sup> To each one he gave a festal garment and, to Benjamin, three hundred silver shekels and five festal garments. <sup>23</sup> He sent his father ten donkeys laden with the best that Egypt offered and ten she-donkeys laden with corn, bread, and food for his father’s journey. <sup>24</sup> Then he sent his brothers on their way and said to them, “Do not be upset on the journey.”

<sup>25</sup> Thus, they left Egypt and came to the land of Canaan and their father Jacob. <sup>26</sup> They told him, “Joseph is still alive, and he is ruler of the whole land of Egypt.” He was stunned and did not believe them.

<sup>18</sup> According to Egyptian sources, it was not unusual for Pharaoh to permit Asians to settle in his country in time of famine.

<sup>19</sup> ‘Give them this order’ follows the LXX (σὺ δὲ ἐντείλαι ταῦτα); the MT has ‘you are ordered’.

<sup>20</sup> The literal translation of ‘never mind about’ is ‘let not your eye regard’.

<sup>21</sup> The literal translation of ‘as Pharaoh had ordered’ is ‘according to the mouth of Pharaoh’.

<sup>22</sup> In place of ‘festal garment(s)’, here following the NJB, NJPS has ‘change(s) of raiment’; it is hard to capture the exact meaning in modern English.

<sup>23</sup> After ‘father’, the MT adds ‘according to this’.

<sup>24</sup> In the NRSV, the last sentence reads: “Do not quarrel along the way;” the verb תִּרְגְּזוּ means ‘be agitated’, but no cause is specified.

<sup>25</sup> Literally translated, this verse ends, “... and they entered the land of Canaan to Jacob their father.”

<sup>26</sup> In place of ‘ruler’, here following the NRSV & NETB, the NJB has ‘administrator’.



אֵלָיו אֶת כָּל־דִּבְרֵי יוֹסֵף אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר אֲלֵהֶם וַיֵּרָא אֶת־  
הָעֲגֻלּוֹת אֲשֶׁר־שָׁלַח יוֹסֵף לָשֹׂאת אֹתוֹ וַתְּחִי רוּחַ  
יַעֲקֹב אָבִיהֶם: כֹּחַ וַיֹּאמֶר יִשְׂרָאֵל רַב עוֹד־יוֹסֵף בְּנִי חֲיִי  
אֵלַיְכָה וְאַרְאֶנּוּ בְטָרֶם אֲמֹת:

<sup>27</sup> But, when they told him all Joseph had said to them, and when he saw the wagons, that Joseph had sent to fetch him, the spirit of their father Jacob revived, <sup>28</sup> and Israel said, "Enough! My son Joseph is still alive. I must go and see him before I die."

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<sup>27</sup> Literally translated, this verse opens, "And they spoke to him all the words of Joseph, which he had spoken to them."

<sup>28</sup> Note the reversion to the name 'Israel' (יִשְׂרָאֵל) in place of 'Jacob' (יַעֲקֹב) – cf. vv. 25 & 27).

## GENESIS 46

## בראשית פרק מו

א ויֵסַע יִשְׂרָאֵל וְכָל־אֲשֶׁר־לוֹ וַיָּבֹא בְּאֶרֶץ שְׁבַע וַיִּזְבַּח  
זִבְחִים לֵאלֹהֵי אָבִיו יִצְחָק: ב וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים | לְיִשְׂרָאֵל  
בְּמֵרָאֵת הַלַּיְלָה וַיֹּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב | יַעֲקֹב וַיֹּאמֶר הִנְנִי:  
ג וַיֹּאמֶר אָנֹכִי הֵאֱלֹהִים אָבִיךָ אֶל־תִּירָא מִרָדָה  
מִצְרַיִמָּה כִּי־לִגְוִי גָדוֹל אֲשִׁימֶךָ שָׁם: ד אָנֹכִי אֶרֶד עִמָּךְ  
מִצְרַיִמָּה וְאָנֹכִי אֶעֱלֶיךָ גַּם־עֲלֶה וְיִוָּסֶף יִשִּׁית יָדוֹ עַל־  
עֵינֶיךָ: ה וַיָּקָם יַעֲקֹב מִבְּאֵר שְׁבַע וַיֵּשְׂאוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל  
אֶת־יַעֲקֹב אֲבִיהֶם וְאֶת־טַפָּם וְאֶת־נְשֵׁיהֶם בְּעֶגְלוֹת  
אֲשֶׁר־שָׁלַח פָּרְעֹה לִשְׂאֹת אֹתוֹ: ו וַיִּקְחוּ אֶת־מִקְנֵיהֶם  
וְאֶת־רִכּוּשָׁם אֲשֶׁר רָכְשׁוּ בְּאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן וַיָּבֹאוּ מִצְרַיִמָּה  
יַעֲקֹב וְכָל־זֶרְעוֹ אֹתוֹ: ז בָּנָיו וּבָנֵי בָנָיו אֹתוֹ בָּנָתָיו  
וּבָנוֹת בָּנָיו וְכָל־זֶרְעוֹ הֵבִיא אֹתוֹ מִצְרַיִמָּה: {ס}  
ח וְאֵלֶּה שְׁמוֹת בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל הַבָּאִים מִצְרַיִמָּה יַעֲקֹב  
וּבָנָיו בְּכֹר יַעֲקֹב רְאוּבֵן: ט וּבְנֵי רְאוּבֵן חֲנוּךְ וּפְלֹוא

<sup>1</sup> Israel left with all he had, reached Beersheba, and offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac. <sup>2</sup> God spoke to Israel in a vision at night, saying "Jacob, Jacob." He said, "I am here." <sup>3</sup> And he said, "I am God, the God of your father. Do not fear going down into Egypt; for, I will make you a great nation there. <sup>4</sup> I will go down into Egypt with you and I will bring you back again, and Joseph's hand shall close your eyes." <sup>5</sup> And Jacob left Beersheba. Israel's sons carried their father Jacob, their little ones, and their wives in the wagons Pharaoh had sent to fetch him. <sup>6</sup> Taking their livestock and all they had acquired in the land of Canaan, they went to Egypt, Jacob and all his seed with him: <sup>7</sup> his sons and his grandsons, his daughters and his granddaughters; all his seed he took with him to Egypt.

<sup>8</sup> These are the names of Israel's sons who came to Egypt: Reuben, Jacob's firstborn; <sup>9</sup> sons of Reuben: Hanoch, Pallu, Hezron, and

## GENESIS 46

<sup>1</sup> In place of 'all he had', here following the WEB, the NJB has 'his possessions'.

<sup>2</sup> In place of 'a vision', here following the NJB, the NRSV has 'visions'; the MT has the plural, but this is probably a plural of intensity.

<sup>3</sup> As on a previous occasion (28:13-15), before Jacob left the land of the promise to go to a foreign land, God renewed the promise to make him a 'great nation' in Egypt (Ex 1:7).

<sup>4</sup> According to Hebraic corporate thinking, the words 'bring you back again' were fulfilled; for, the father lived on in the person of his sons.

<sup>5</sup> Alternative readings for 'fetch' (NJB) are 'carry' (NRSV) and 'transport' (NETB).

<sup>6</sup> The literal translation of 'family' is 'offspring'.

<sup>7</sup> After both 'sons' and 'grandsons', the MT repeats 'with him' (see v. 6).

<sup>8</sup> Most of the names of the ancestral clan leaders are found in the list in Nb 26.

<sup>9</sup> For 'Hanoch' (חֲנוּךְ), 'Pallu' (פְּלֹוא), 'Hezron' (חֶצְרוֹן) and 'Carmi' (כַּרְמִי), the LXX reads, respectively, *Ενωχ*, *Φαλλου*, *Ασρων* and *Χαρμι*.

וַחֲצֹרֹן וְכַרְמִי: י<sup>10</sup> וּבְנֵי שִׁמְעוֹן יִמְוָאֵל וַיְמִין וְאַהֲד וַיְכִין  
וַצַּחַר וְשָׂאוּל בֶּן־הַפְּנִעֲנִית: י<sup>11</sup> א וּבְנֵי לֵוִי גֶרְשׁוֹן קְהַת  
וּמְרָרִי: י<sup>12</sup> ב וּבְנֵי יְהוּדָה עֵר וֹנָן וְשֵׁלָה וּפְרֶץ זֶרַח  
וַיִּמָּת עֵר וֹנָן בְּאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן וַיְהִיו בְּנֵי־פְרֶץ חֲצֹרֹן  
וְחַמּוּל: י<sup>13</sup> ג וּבְנֵי יִשְׁשַׁכָּר תּוֹלַע וּפּוּחַ וַיּוֹב וְשִׁמְרֹן: י<sup>14</sup> ד וּבְנֵי  
זְבֻלֹן סֶרֶד וְאֵלֹן וַיַּחֲלֵאֵל: י<sup>15</sup> ט אֵלֶּה בְנֵי לֵאָה אֲשֶׁר  
יָלְדָה לְיַעֲקֹב בְּפָדָן אֲרָם וְאֵת דִּינָה בְּתוֹ כָּל־נַפְשׁ בָּנָיו  
וּבָנוֹתָיו שְׁלָשִׁים וְשָׁלֹשׁ:

י<sup>16</sup> טז וּבְנֵי גָד צִפְיֹן וְחַגִּי שׁוּנִי וְעֶזְבֹּן עֵרִי וְאַרְוֹדִי וְאַרְאֵלִי:  
י<sup>17</sup> יז וּבְנֵי אֲשֶׁר יִמְנָה וַיִּשְׁוָה וַיִּשְׁוִי וּבְרִיעָה וְשֶׁרָח אַחֲתָם  
וּבְנֵי בְרִיעָה חֶבֶר וּמַלְכִּיאֵל: י<sup>18</sup> יח אֵלֶּה בְנֵי זֵלְפָּה אֲשֶׁר־  
נָתַן לָבֵן לְלֵאָה בְּתוֹ וַתֵּלֶד אֶת־אֵלֶּה לְיַעֲקֹב שֵׁשׁ  
עֶשְׂרֵה נַפְשׁ: י<sup>19</sup> יט בְּנֵי רַחֵל אֵשֶׁת יַעֲקֹב יוֹסֵף וּבִנְיָמִן:

Carmi. <sup>10</sup> Sons of Simeon: Jemuel, Jamin, Ohad, Jachin, Zohar, and Shaul the son of a Canaanite woman. <sup>11</sup> Sons of Levi: Gershon, Kohath, and Merari. <sup>12</sup> Sons of Judah: Er, Onan, Shelah, Perez, and Zerah (but Er and Onan died in the land of Canaan), and Hezron, and Hamul, sons of Perez. <sup>13</sup> Sons of Issachar: Tola, Puvah, Jashub, and Shimron. <sup>14</sup> Sons of Zebulun: Sered, Elon, and Jahleel. <sup>15</sup> These are the sons of Leah, born to Jacob in Paddan-Aram, with his daughter Dinah; in all, his sons and daughters were thirty-three.

<sup>16</sup> Sons of Gad: Ziphion, Haggi, Shuni, Ezbon, Eri, Arodi, and Areli.

<sup>17</sup> Sons of Asher: Jimnah, Jishvah, Jishvi, Beriah, with their sister Serah; the sons of Beriah: Heber and Malchiel. <sup>18</sup> These are the sons of Zilpah, whom Laban gave to his daughter Leah; she bore these to Jacob – sixteen persons. <sup>19</sup> Sons of Rachel, wife of Jacob: Joseph and

<sup>10</sup> For 'Jemuel', 'Jamin', 'Ohad', 'Jachin', 'Zohar' and 'Shaul', the LXX reads, respectively, *Ιεμουηλ, Ιαμιν, Αωδ, Ιαχιν, Σααρ* and *Σαουλ*.

<sup>11</sup> For 'Gershon' (גֶּרְשׁוֹן), 'Kohath' (קְהַת) and 'Merari' (מְרָרִי), the LXX has *Γηρσων, Κααθ* and *Μεραρι*, respectively.

<sup>12</sup> For 'Er' (עֵר), 'Onan' (אֹנָן), 'Shelah' (שֵׁלָה), 'Perez' (פְּרֶץ) and 'Zerah' (זֶרַח), the LXX has, respectively, *Ηρ, Ονναν, Σηλωμ, Φαρης* and *Ζαρα*.

<sup>13</sup> For 'Tola' (תּוֹלַע), 'Puvah' (פּוּחַ), 'Jashub' (here following the Samaritan Pentateuch – the MT has 'Job', יוֹב) and 'Shimron' (שִׁמְרֹן), the LXX has *Θωλα, Φουα, Ιασουβ* and *Ζαμβραμ*, respectively.

<sup>14</sup> For 'Sered' (סֶרֶד), 'Elon' (אֵלֹן) and 'Jahleel' (יַחֲלֵאֵל), the LXX reads, respectively, *Σερεδ, Αλλων* and *Αλοηλ*.

<sup>15</sup> Literally translated, this verse ends, "all the lives of his sons and his daughters, thirty-three."

<sup>16</sup> For 'Ziphion' (צִפְיֹן), 'Haggi' (חַגִּי), 'Shuni' (שׁוּנִי), 'Ezbon' (עֶזְבֹּן), 'Eri' (עֵרִי), 'Arodi' (אַרְוֹדִי) and 'Areli' (אַרְאֵלִי), the LXX has *Σαφων, Αγγις, Σαυνις, Θασοβαν, Αηδισ, Αρσηδισ* and *Αρσηλις*, respectively.

<sup>17</sup> For 'Jimnah' (יִמְנָה), 'Jishvah' (יִשְׁוָה), 'Jishvi' (יִשְׁוִי), 'Beriah' (בְּרִיעָה), 'Heber' (חֶבֶר) and 'Malchiel' (מַלְכִּיאֵל), the LXX has, respectively, *Ιεμνα, Ιεσουα, Ιεουλ, Βαρια, Χοβορ* and *Μελχιηλ*.

<sup>18</sup> For 'Zilpah' (זֵלְפָּה), the LXX reads *Ζελφας*.

<sup>19</sup> For 'Joseph' (יוֹסֵף) and 'Benjamin' (בִּנְיָמִן), the LXX reads, respectively, *Ιωσηφ* and *Βενιαμιν*.

ב וַיֹּלֶד לְיוֹסֵף בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם אֲשֶׁר יָלְדָהּ לוֹ אֲסֵנֶת  
 בִּתְפֹּטִי פֶרַע כֹּהֵן אֶן אֶת־מְנַשֶּׁה וְאֶת־אֶפְרַיִם:  
 כֹּא וּבְנֵי בְנִימֵן בִּלְעַ וּבְכֶר וְאַשְׁבֵּל גֶּרָא נַעֲמָן אַחִי  
 וְרֹאשׁ מִפִּים וְחָפִים וְאַרְדִּי: כֵּב אֵלֶּה בְנֵי רָחֵל אֲשֶׁר יָלַד  
 לְיַעֲקֹב כָּל־נַפְשׁ אַרְבַּעַה עָשָׂר: כֶּג וּבְנֵי־דָן חֲשִׁים:  
 כִּד וּבְנֵי נַפְתָּלִי יַחְצֵאל וְגֻנִי וְיֶזֶר וְשִׁלֵּם: כֵּה אֵלֶּה בְנֵי  
 בִלְהָה אֲשֶׁר־נָתַן לָבָן לְרָחֵל בִּתּוֹ וּתְלַד אֶת־אֵלֶּה  
 לְיַעֲקֹב כָּל־נַפְשׁ שִׁבְעָה: כִּו כָּל־הַנַּפְשׁ הַבָּאָה לְיַעֲקֹב  
 מִצְרַיִמָּה יֵצְאִי יִרְכּוּ מִלְּבָד נָשִׁי בְנֵי־יַעֲקֹב כָּל־נַפְשׁ  
 שְׁשִׁים וָשֵׁשׁ: כִּז וּבְנֵי יוֹסֵף אֲשֶׁר־יָלְדוּ לוֹ בְּמִצְרַיִם נַפְשׁ  
 שְׁנַיִם כָּל־הַנַּפְשׁ לְבֵית־יַעֲקֹב הַבָּאָה מִצְרַיִמָּה  
 שִׁבְעִים: {ס}

Benjamin.<sup>20</sup> Born to Joseph in Egypt were: Manasseh and Ephraim, children of Asenath, the daughter of Potiphera priest of On.<sup>21</sup> The sons of Benjamin: Bela, Becher, Ashbel, Gera, Naaman, Ehi, Rosh, Muppim, Huppim and Ard.<sup>22</sup> These are the children of Rachel, who were born to Jacob – fourteen persons in all.<sup>23</sup> Sons of Dan: Hushim.<sup>24</sup> Sons of Naphtali: Jahzeel, Guni, Jezer and Shillem.<sup>25</sup> These are the sons of Bilhah, whom Laban gave to his daughter Rachel; she bore these to Jacob – seven in all.<sup>26</sup> The people who went to Egypt with Jacob, of his own blood, apart from the wives of Jacob's sons, were sixty-six all told.<sup>27</sup> Joseph's sons born to him in Egypt were two in number. The members of the family of Jacob who went to Egypt totalled seventy.

<sup>20</sup> The LXX reads *Ἡλίουπόλεως* in place of 'On' (cf. #42:45) and, at the end of the verse, adds the following five descendants of Manasseh and Ephraim: "Born to Manasseh of the concubine Sura was Machir, and Machir fathered Gilead; and the sons of Ephraim, the brother of Manasseh, were Sutalaam and Tam, and the son of Sutalaam was Edem." (*ἐγένοντο δὲ υἱοὶ Μανασση, οὓς ἔτεκεν αὐτῷ ἡ παλλακὴ ἡ Σύρα, τὸν Μαχίρ· Μαχίρ δὲ ἐγέννησεν τὸν Γαλααδ. υἱοὶ δὲ Εφραιμ ἀδελφοῦ Μανασση· Σουταλααμ καὶ Τααμ. υἱοὶ δὲ Σουταλααμ· Εδεμ.*)

<sup>21</sup> For 'Bela' (בִּלְעַ), 'Becher' (בְּכֶר), 'Ashbel' (אַשְׁבֵּל), 'Gera' (גֶּרָא), 'Naaman' (נַעֲמָן), 'Ehi' (אַחִי), 'Rosh' (רֹאשׁ), 'Muppim' (מִפִּים), 'Huppim' (חֲפִים) and 'Ard' (אַרְדִּי), the LXX has, respectively, *Baλα, Χοβωρ, Ασβηλ, Γηρα, Νοεμαν, Αρχις, Ρως, Μαμφιν, Οφιμιν* and *Αραδ*.

<sup>22</sup> For 'Rachel' (רָחֵל), the LXX reads *Ραχηλ*.

<sup>23</sup> For 'Hushim' (חֲשִׁים), the LXX reads *Ασομ*; the NRSV follows the Greek form ('Hashum').

<sup>24</sup> For 'Jahzeel' (יַחְצֵאל), 'Guni' (גֻנִי), 'Jezer' (יֶזֶר) and 'Shillem' (שִׁלֵּם), the LXX reads, respectively, *Ασιηλ, Γωννι, Ισσααρ* and *Συλλημ*.

<sup>25</sup> After 'seven', the NJB & NRSV add 'persons', though this word is not in the MT.

<sup>26</sup> Literally translated, this verse reads, "All the people who went with Jacob to Egypt, the ones who came out of his body, apart from the wives of the sons of Jacob, all the people were sixty-six."

<sup>27</sup> The total of 'seventy-five' given by Stephen in Ac 7:14 is from the LXX, which adds an extra five descendants of Ephraim and Manasseh (cf. #20).

כח ואת־יהודה שלח לפניו אל־יוסף להודות לפניו  
 גשנה ויבאו ארצה גשן: כט ויאסר יוסף מרכבתו ויעל  
 לקראת־ישראל אביו גשנה וירא אליו ויפל על־  
 צואריו ויבך על־צואריו עוד: ל ויאמר ישראל אל־  
 יוסף אמותה הפעם אחרי ראותי את־פניך כי עודך  
 חי:

לא ויאמר יוסף אל־אחיו ואל־בית אביו אעלה  
 ואגידה לפרעה ואמרה אליו אחי ובית־אבי אשר  
 בארץ־כנען באו אלי: לב והאנשים רעי צאן כִּי־אנשי  
 מקנה היו וצאנם ובקרים וכל־אשר להם הביאו:  
 לג והיה כִּי־יקרא להם פרעה ואמר מה־מעשיכם:  
 לד ואמרתם אנשי מקנה היו עבדיך מנעורינו ועד־  
 עתה גם־אנחנו גם־אבותינו בעבור תשבנו בארץ גשן  
 כִּי־תועבת מצרים כל־רעה צאן:

<sup>28</sup> He sent Judah ahead to Joseph, to show the way ahead to Goshen. When they arrived in the land of Goshen, <sup>29</sup> Joseph made ready his chariot and went up to meet his father Israel in Goshen. As soon as he appeared, he fell on his neck and, for a long time, wept on his neck. <sup>30</sup> Israel said to Joseph, "Now I can die, now that I have seen you again, and seen you are still alive."

<sup>31</sup> Then Joseph said to his brothers and his father's house, "I will go up and tell Pharaoh, "My brothers and my father's house from the land of Canaan have come to me. <sup>32</sup> The men are shepherds, keepers of livestock, and they have brought their flocks and herds and all they have." <sup>33</sup> Pharaoh will call you and ask, "What is your occupation?" <sup>34</sup> Tell him, "Since our youth, your servants have tended livestock, we and our fathers." So, you will be able to stay in the land of Goshen." For, the Egyptians have a horror of all shepherds.

<sup>28</sup> 'Present himself' is from the Samaritan Pentateuch (literally, 'appear before'); the MT is uncertain.

<sup>29</sup> In place of the second occurrence of 'neck', here following the MT (& NRSV), the NJB has 'shoulder'.

<sup>30</sup> Literally translated, this verse ends, "... after my seeing your face that you are still alive."

<sup>31</sup> Desiring to have his relatives near him in the Delta, Joseph advises his brothers to testify that they were shepherds; since this occupation was abominable to Egyptians in the interior (v. 34), Pharaoh would see the wisdom of setting them apart in the land of Goshen.

<sup>32</sup> The literal translation of 'shepherds' is 'feeders of sheep'.

<sup>33</sup> For this verse, here following the NJB & NRSV, NETB has, "Pharaoh will summon you and say, 'What is your occupation?'"

<sup>34</sup> The last sentence sounds odd after previous advice and is probably an interpolation. Though sometimes explained as a reference to the Egyptian's hatred for the Hyksos, the 'Shepherd Kings', this explanation of the word, 'Hyksos' is not found earlier than the Hellenistic period.



## בראשית פרק מז

א וַיָּבֹא יוֹסֵף וַיֹּגֵד לְפַרְעֹה וַיֹּאמֶר אָבִי וְאֶחָי וְצֹאנִם  
וּבְקָרָם וְכָל-אֲשֶׁר לָהֶם בָּאוּ מֵאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן וְהֵנָּה בְּאֶרֶץ  
גֹּשֶׁן: ב וּמִקְצֵה אֶחָיו לָקַח חֲמִשָּׁה אָנָשִׁים וַיַּצְגֵם לִפְנֵי  
פַּרְעֹה: ג וַיֹּאמֶר פַּרְעֹה אֶל-אֶחָיו מַה-מַּעֲשִׂיכֶם  
וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֶל-פַּרְעֹה רָעָה צֵאן עֲבָדֶיךָ גַּם-אֲנַחְנוּ גַּם-  
אֲבוֹתֵינוּ: ד וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֶל-פַּרְעֹה לָגֹר בְּאֶרֶץ בְּאֵנוֹ כִּי-  
אֵין מְרֹעָה לְצֹאן אֲשֶׁר לְעֲבָדֶיךָ כִּי-כִבֵּד הָרַעַב בְּאֶרֶץ  
כְּנָעַן וְעַתָּה יִשְׁבוּ-נָא עֲבָדֶיךָ בְּאֶרֶץ גֹּשֶׁן:

ה וַיֹּאמֶר פַּרְעֹה אֶל-יוֹסֵף לֵאמֹר אָבִיךָ וְאֶחָיךָ בָּאוּ  
אֵלֶיךָ: ו אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם לִפְנֶיךָ הִוא בְּמִיטֵב הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּשֶׁב  
אֶת-אָבִיךָ וְאֶת-אֶחָיךָ יִשְׁבוּ בְּאֶרֶץ גֹּשֶׁן וְאִם-יֹדַעְתָּ  
וַיִּשְׁבָּם אֲנָשִׁי-חֵיל וְשִׁמְתָם שָׂרֵי מִקְנֵה עַל-אֲשֶׁר-לִי:

## GENESIS 47

<sup>1</sup> Joseph went and told Pharaoh, "My father and brothers, with their flocks and herds and all they own, have come from the land of Canaan and are now in the land of Goshen." <sup>2</sup> He took five of his brothers and presented them to Pharaoh. <sup>3</sup> Pharaoh asked his brothers, "What is your occupation?" They said to Pharaoh, "Your servants are shepherds, like our fathers." <sup>4</sup> They told Pharaoh, "We have come to sojourn in this land; for, there is no pasture for your servants' flocks; the famine is sore in land of Canaan. Now give your servants leave to stay in the land of Goshen."

<sup>5</sup> Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Your father and your brothers have come to you. <sup>6</sup> The land of Egypt is before you; settle your father and your brothers in the best of the land; let them live in the land of Goshen; if you know of able men among them, let them oversee my livestock."

## GENESIS 47

- <sup>1</sup> Literally translated, this verse ends, "Look they (are) in the land of Goshen." Joseph draws attention to the fact of their presence in Goshen.
- <sup>2</sup> The literal translation of this verse, here following the NJB, is, "and from the whole of his brothers he took five men and presented them before Pharaoh."
- <sup>3</sup> The literal translation of 'like our fathers' is 'both we and our fathers'.
- <sup>4</sup> In place of 'stay for now' (literally, 'sojourn'), here following the NJB, the NRSV has 'reside as aliens'.
- <sup>5</sup> Vv. 5-12 describe the settlement in Egypt.
- <sup>6</sup> The NJB substantially rearranges vv. 5-6 (here following the NRSV), as follows:
- <sup>5a</sup> Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, <sup>6b</sup> "They may stay in the land of Goshen, and if you know of any capable men among them, put them in charge of my own livestock." <sup>5b</sup> Jacob and his sons went to Egypt where Joseph was. Pharaoh, king of Egypt, heard of this and said to Joseph, "Your father and brothers have come to you. <sup>6a</sup> The country of Egypt is open to you: settle your father and brothers in the best region."
- The words 'Jacob and his sons ... and said to Joseph' are from the LXX (Ἰακωβ καὶ οἱ υἱοὶ αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἤκουσεν Φαραὼ βασιλεὺς Αἰγύπτου. καὶ εἶπεν Φαραὼ πρὸς Ἰωσήφ λέγων) and are not present in the MT.



וַיָּבֵא יוֹסֵף אֶת־יַעֲקֹב אָבִיו וַיַּעֲמִדְהוּ לִפְנֵי פַרְעֹה  
וַיְבָרֶךְ יַעֲקֹב אֶת־פַּרְעֹה: <sup>ח</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר פַּרְעֹה אֶל־יַעֲקֹב  
כַּמָּה יָמֵי שְׁנֵי חַיֶּיךָ: <sup>ט</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב אֶל־פַּרְעֹה יָמֵי שְׁנֵי  
מַגּוּרֵי שְׁלֹשִׁים וּמֵאת שָׁנָה מָעוֹט וָרָעִים הָיוּ יָמֵי שְׁנֵי  
חַיֵּי וְלֹא הִשְׁיֵגוּ אֶת־יָמֵי שְׁנֵי חַיֵּי אֲבֹתִי בְיָמֵי מַגּוּרֵיהֶם:  
<sup>י</sup> וַיְבָרֶךְ יַעֲקֹב אֶת־פַּרְעֹה וַיֵּצֵא מִלִּפְנֵי פַרְעֹה: <sup>יא</sup> וַיּוֹשֶׁב  
יוֹסֵף אֶת־אָבִיו וְאֶת־אֶחָיו וַיִּתֵּן לָהֶם אַחְזָה בָּאָרֶץ  
מִצְרַיִם בְּמִיטֵב הָאָרֶץ בָּאָרֶץ רַעֲמֶסֶס כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה  
פַּרְעֹה: <sup>יב</sup> וַיַּכְלִל יוֹסֵף אֶת־אָבִיו וְאֶת־אֶחָיו וְאֶת כָּל־  
בֵּית אָבִיו לֶחֶם לִפְנֵי הַטָּף:

<sup>יג</sup> וְלֶחֶם אֵין בְּכָל־הָאָרֶץ כִּי־כָבֵד הָרָעָב מְאֹד וְתֹלָה  
אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם וְאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן מִפְּנֵי הָרָעָב: <sup>יד</sup> וַיִּלְקֹט יוֹסֵף  
אֶת־כָּל־הַכֶּסֶף הַנִּמְצֵא בְּאֶרֶץ־מִצְרַיִם וּבְאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן  
בְּשֹׁבֵר אֲשֶׁר־הֵם שֹׁבְרִים וַיָּבֵא יוֹסֵף אֶת־הַכֶּסֶף בֵּיתָה  
פַּרְעֹה:

<sup>7</sup> Joseph brought his father and presented him to Pharaoh. Jacob blessed Pharaoh. <sup>8</sup> Pharaoh asked Jacob, "How many years of life do you have?" <sup>9</sup> Jacob told Pharaoh, "The days of my travels are one hundred and thirty years; few years and unhappy, falling short of the years of my fathers in days of their travels." <sup>10</sup> Jacob blessed Pharaoh and left Pharaoh's presence. <sup>11</sup> Joseph settled his father and brothers, giving them a holding in the land of Egypt, in the best of the land, in the land of Rameses, as Pharaoh had command. <sup>12</sup> Joseph provided his father, brothers, and all his father's house with food according to the number of their dependants.

<sup>13</sup> There was no bread in the whole land, for the famine was so severe that the land of Egypt and the land of Canaan were weak with hunger. <sup>14</sup> Joseph collected all the money to be found in Egypt and Canaan, in exchange for the grain they were buying, and put the money in Pharaoh's palace.

<sup>7</sup> The precise meaning of the Hebrew verb translated 'blessed' is difficult in this passage, because the content of Jacob's blessing is not given; the expression could simply mean that he greeted Pharaoh, but that seems insufficient in this setting. Jacob probably praised Pharaoh, for the verb is used this way for praising God; it is also possible that he recited a formal prayer, asking God to reward Pharaoh for his kindness.

<sup>8</sup> Literally translated, Pharaoh's question is, "How many are the days of the years of your life?"

<sup>9</sup> The word רָעִים ('unhappy') can sometimes mean 'evil', but that would give the wrong connotation here, where it refers to pain or sorrow.

<sup>10</sup> The literal translation of 'Pharaoh's presence' is 'from before Pharaoh'.

<sup>11</sup> The name 'Rameses' (רַעֲמֶסֶס) is an anachronism: it was at a later period that the region (Tanis or Qantir) acquired its name from Rameses II.

<sup>12</sup> The literal translation of 'dependants', here following the NJB & NRSV, is 'little ones'.

<sup>13</sup> The Israelites, accustomed to the idea of private property, were surprised by the Egyptian system: almost all land was crown property.

<sup>14</sup> The literal translation of 'palace' (here following the NJB) is 'house' (as NRSV).

<sup>טו</sup> וַיִּתְּנוּ הַכֶּסֶף מִמֶּלֶךְ מִצְרַיִם וּמִמֶּלֶךְ כְּנָעַן וַיָּבֹאוּ כָל־  
מִצְרַיִם אֶל־יוֹסֵף לֵאמֹר הִבֵּה־לָנוּ לֶחֶם וְלָמָּה נָמוֹת  
נִגְדָּד בְּיָ אֲפִס כֶּסֶף: <sup>טז</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר יוֹסֵף הֲבֹ מִקְנֵיכֶם  
וְאַתְּנָה לָכֶם בְּמִקְנֵיכֶם אֶסְ-אֲפִס כֶּסֶף: <sup>יז</sup> וַיָּבִיאוּ אֶת־  
מִקְנֵיהֶם אֶל־יוֹסֵף וַיִּתֵּן לָהֶם יוֹסֵף לֶחֶם בְּסוּסִים  
וּבְמִקְנֵה הָעֶזְאֵן וּבְמִקְנֵה הַבָּקָר וּבַחֲמֹרִים וַיִּנְהֵלֵם  
בַּלֶּחֶם בְּכָל־מִקְנֵיהֶם בַּשָּׁנָה הַהוּא:

<sup>יח</sup> וַתֵּתֶם הַשָּׁנָה הַהוּא וַיָּבֹאוּ אֵלָיו בַּשָּׁנָה הַשְּׁנִית  
וַיֹּאמְרוּ לוֹ לֹא־נִכְחַד מֵאֲדֹנִי כִּי אִם־תָּם הַכֶּסֶף וּמִקְנֵה  
הַבְּהֵמָה אֶל־אֲדֹנִי לֹא נִשְׁאָר לִפְנֵי אֲדֹנִי בְּלֹתִי אִם־  
גּוֹיְתָנוּ וְאֲדַמְתָּנוּ: <sup>יט</sup> לָמָּה נָמוֹת לְעֵינֶיךָ גַּם־אֲנַחְנוּ גַּם  
אֲדַמְתָּנוּ קִנְיָה־אֲתָנוּ וְאֶת־אֲדַמְתָּנוּ בַּלֶּחֶם וְנִהְיָה  
אֲנַחְנוּ וְאֲדַמְתָּנוּ עֲבָדִים לְפָרְעָה וְתֹן־זֶרַע וְנִחְיָה וְלֹא  
נָמוֹת וְהָאֲדָמָה לֹא תָשָׁם:

<sup>כ</sup> וַיִּקֶן יוֹסֵף אֶת־כָּל־אֲדָמַת מִצְרַיִם לְפָרְעָה כִּי־מָכְרוּ  
מִצְרַיִם אִישׁ שָׂדֵהוּ כִּי־חָזַק עֲלֵהֶם הָרָעָב וַתְּהִי הָאָרֶץ

<sup>15</sup> When the money was spent in the land of Egypt and in the land of Canaan, all Egypt came to Joseph and said, "Give us bread; must we die in your sight? For, our money is gone." <sup>16</sup> Joseph said, "Give me your cattle; I will give you bread in exchange for your cattle, if your money is gone." <sup>17</sup> So, they brought their cattle to Joseph; and Joseph gave them bread, in exchange for horses, sheep, cattle, and donkeys; he fed them that year with bread, in exchange for all their livestock.

<sup>18</sup> When that year ended, they came to him the next year and said to him, "We will hide it from my lord: our money has run out and the livestock are my lord's. There is nothing left for my lord except our bodies and our land. <sup>19</sup> Shall we die before your eyes, both we and our land? Buy us, and our land, in exchange for bread; we with our land will be Pharaoh's slaves; but give us something to sow, that we may live and not die and the land may not become desolate."

<sup>20</sup> So, Joseph bought all the land in Egypt for Pharaoh; each of the Egyptians sold his field, so sore was the famine, and the whole land

<sup>15</sup> The phrase, 'all Egypt' (כָּל־מִצְרַיִם), is a metonymy and refers to all the people of Egypt.

<sup>16</sup> The word 'bread' does not occur here in the MT and is added for clarity.

<sup>17</sup> The definite article before 'donkeys' is here not translated.

<sup>18</sup> In place of 'my lord' here following the MT, NETB, following the LXX (κυρίου ἡμῶν) has 'our lord'.

<sup>19</sup> In place of 'slaves', here following the NRSV, the NJB has 'serfs'; the idea of slavery is not attractive to the modern mind but, in the ancient world, it was the primary way of dealing with the poor and destitute: if the people became slaves of Pharaoh, it was Pharaoh's responsibility to feed them and care for them, and it was the best way for them to survive the famine.

<sup>20</sup> After 'sore', the MT adds 'upon them'.

לַפְרֹעָה: <sup>כא</sup> וְאֶת־הָעָם הָעֶבְרִי אֲתוֹ לְעֶרִים מִקְצֵה  
 גְּבוּל־מִצְרַיִם וְעַד־קִצְהוֹ: <sup>כב</sup> רַק אֲדָמַת הַכֹּהֲנִים לֹא  
 קָנָה כִּי חֹק לַכֹּהֲנִים מֵאֵת פְּרֹעָה וְאָכְלוּ אֶת־חֶקֶם  
 אֲשֶׁר נָתַן לָהֶם פְּרֹעָה עַל־כֵּן לֹא מָכְרוּ אֶת־אֲדָמָתָם:  
<sup>כג</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר יוֹסֵף אֶל־הָעָם הֵן קָנִיתִי אֶתְכֶם הַיּוֹם וְאֶת־  
 אֲדָמָתְכֶם לַפְּרֹעָה הֵאֱלַכְם זֶרַע וּזְרַעְתֶּם אֶת־  
 הָאֲדָמָה: <sup>כד</sup> וְהָיָה בַּתְּבוּאָת וּנְתַתֶּם חֲמִישִׁית לַפְּרֹעָה  
 וְאַרְבַּע הַיֵּדֶת יִהְיֶה לָכֶם לְזֶרַע הַשָּׂדֶה וּלְאֹכְלֵכֶם  
 וּלְאֲשֶׁר בְּבֵתֵיכֶם וּלְאֹכֵל לְטַפְכֶּם: <sup>כה</sup> וַיֹּאמְרוּ הַחִיתִּינוּ  
 נִמְצָא־חֵן בְּעֵינֵי אֲדֹנָי וְהָיִינוּ עֲבָדִים לַפְּרֹעָה: <sup>כו</sup> וַיֵּשֶׁם  
 אֹתָהּ יוֹסֵף לְחֹק עַד־הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה עַל־אֲדָמַת מִצְרַיִם  
 לַפְּרֹעָה לְחֹמֶשׁ רַק אֲדָמַת הַכֹּהֲנִים לְבָדָם לֹא הָיְתָה  
 לַפְּרֹעָה:

<sup>כז</sup> וַיָּשֶׁב יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם בְּאֶרֶץ גֹּשֶׁן וַיֵּאָחֲזוּ בָּהּ  
 וַיִּפְּרוּ וַיִּרְבּוּ מְאֹד: <sup>כח</sup> וַיְחִי יַעֲקֹב בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם שִׁבְעַ  
 עֶשְׂרֵה שָׁנָה וַיְהִי יְמֵי־יַעֲקֹב שְׁנֵי חֲזִיו שִׁבְעַ שָׁנִים  
 וְאַרְבָּעִים וּמֵאֵת שָׁנָה:

became Pharaoh's. <sup>21</sup> The people he made slaves, from one end of  
 Egypt to the other. <sup>22</sup> But he did not buy the land of the priests; for,  
 the priests received an allowance from Pharaoh and lived on the  
 allowance Pharaoh gave them. So, they did not have to sell their land.  
<sup>23</sup> Then Joseph said to the people, "I have this day bought you and  
 your land, for Pharaoh. Here is seed for you: sow the land. <sup>24</sup> Now,  
 at harvest, you must give a fifth to Pharaoh; the other four-fifths you  
 can have for sowing your fields, to provide food for yourselves and  
 your households, and food for your dependants." <sup>25</sup> "You have saved  
 our lives," they replied. "If we may enjoy my lord's favour, we will  
 be Pharaoh's slaves." <sup>26</sup> So, Joseph made a statute, still in force today,  
 concerning the soil of Egypt: a fifth goes to Pharaoh. The land of the  
 priests alone did not go to Pharaoh.

<sup>27</sup> The Israelites stayed in the land of Egypt, in the country of Goshen.  
 They acquired property there; they were fruitful and multiplied  
 greatly. <sup>28</sup> Jacob lived seventeen years in the land of Egypt, and the  
 length of his life was a hundred and forty-seven years.

<sup>21</sup> 'Made slaves' follows the LXX (κατεδουλώσατο) and Samaritan Pentateuch; the MT opens: "And as for the people, he removed them city by city."

<sup>22</sup> In place of 'So', NETB has 'that is why'.

<sup>23</sup> The perfect verbal form with the *vav* consecutive (וַיִּזְרְעוּם – 'sow') is equivalent to a command here.

<sup>24</sup> The literal translation of 'dependants' is 'little ones'.

<sup>25</sup> The narrator does not intend to sanction absolutism but only to praise Joseph for his wisdom in delivering the people.

<sup>26</sup> The word 'statute' (following the NJB, NRSV & NETB) translates חֹק.

<sup>27</sup> This last paragraph (vv. 27–28) is considered by some to be a Priestly note.

<sup>28</sup> The literal translation of 'length of his life ... years' is 'days of the years of his life'.

כֵּן וַיִּקְרָבוּ יְמֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל לָמוּת וַיִּקְרָא לְבָנוֹ לְיוֹסֵף  
וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ אֶס-נָא מִצָּאתִי חַן בְּעֵינֶיךָ שִׂים־נָא יָדְךָ  
תַּחַת יְרֵכִי וְעָשִׂיתָ עִמָּדִי חֶסֶד וְאַמֶּת אֶל־נָא תִקְבְּרֵנִי  
בְּמִצְרַיִם: לֹא וְשָׁכַבְתִּי עִם־אֲבֹתִי וְנִשְׁאַתְנִי מִמִּצְרַיִם  
וְקִבַּרְתָּנִי בְּקִבְרָתָם וַיֹּאמֶר אָנֹכִי אֲעֹשֶׂה כְּדִבְרְךָ:  
לֹא וַיֹּאמֶר הַשְׁבֵּעָה לִּי וַיִּשָּׁבַע לוֹ וַיִּשְׁתַּחוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל עַל־  
רֹאשׁ הַמֶּטָּה: {פ}

<sup>29</sup> When Israel's time to die drew near, he called his son Joseph and said to him, "If I enjoy your favour, place your hand under my thigh and promise to be kind and good to me, do not bury me in Egypt. <sup>30</sup> When I sleep with my fathers, carry me out of Egypt and bury me in their tomb." "I will do as you say," he replied. <sup>31</sup> "Swear to me," he insisted. Therefore, he swore to him, and Israel bowed himself at the head of the bed.

<sup>29</sup> The literal translation of 'time' is 'days'. On the expression 'put your hand under my thigh', see #24:2.

<sup>30</sup> Joseph binds himself by oath to bury Jacob in his ancestors' tomb, i.e. Machpelah (Ch. 23, 49:29–30, 50:12–13).

<sup>31</sup> When Israel 'bowed himself at the head of the bed' (cf. Heb 11:21), he made a gesture of reverence (1K 1:47); the NJB has 'Sank back on the pillow'. By confusing מֶטָּה (bed) with מִטָּה (staff), the LXX makes 'Israel bow over his staff' (προσεκύνησεν Ἰσραὴλ ἐπὶ τὸ ἄκρον τῆς ῥάβδου αὐτοῦ).

## GENESIS 48

## בראשית פרק מח

<sup>א</sup> ויהי אחרי הדברים האלה ויאמר ליוסף הנה אביך חלה ויקח את-שני בניו עמו את-מנשה ואת-אפרים: <sup>ב</sup> ויגד ליעקב ויאמר הנה בנך יוסף בא אליך ויתחזק ישראל וישב על-המטה:

<sup>ג</sup> ויאמר יעקב אל-יוסף אל שדי נראה-אלי בלזו בארץ כנען ויברך אתי: <sup>ד</sup> ויאמר אלי הנני מברך והרביתך ונתתיך לקהל עמים ונתתי את-הארץ הזאת לזרעך אחריך אחזת עולם: <sup>ה</sup> ועתה שני-בניך הנולדים לך בארץ מצרים עד-באי אליך מצרימה ליהם אפרים ומנשה כראובן ושמעון יהיו-לי: <sup>ו</sup> ומולדתך אשר-הולדת אחריהם לך יהיו על שם אחיהם יקראו בנחלתם: <sup>ז</sup> ואני בבאי מפדן מתה עלי רחל בארץ כנען בדרך בעוד כברת-ארץ לבא אפרתה ואקברה שם בדרך אפרת הוא בית לחם:

<sup>1</sup> Some time later it was reported to Joseph, "Your father has been taken ill." Therefore, he took with him his two sons Manasseh and Ephraim. <sup>2</sup> When Jacob was told, "Look, your son Joseph has come to you," Israel, summoning his strength, sat up in bed.

<sup>3</sup> Jacob told Joseph, "El Shaddai appeared to me at Luz in the land of Canaan and blessed me, <sup>4</sup> saying to me, "I will make you fruitful and multiply you; I will make you a group of peoples and give this land to your offspring, as a perpetual possession." <sup>5</sup> Now your two sons, born to you in the land of Egypt before I came to you in Egypt, are mine; Ephraim and Manasseh shall be mine just as Reuben and Simeon. <sup>6</sup> The children you have had since then shall be yours and they shall be known by their brothers' names for their inheritance. <sup>7</sup> "When I came from Paddan, to my sorrow, Rachel died, in the land of Canaan, while we were some distance from Ephrath. I buried her there on the road to Ephrath, at Bethlehem."

## GENESIS 48

- <sup>1</sup> The literal translation of 'was reported' is 'and one said'; with no expressed subject in the text, the verb can be translated with the passive voice.
- <sup>2</sup> In place of 'look, your son Joseph', here following the MT (& NJB – the NRSV omits 'look'), NETB has 'your son Joseph has just'.
- <sup>3</sup> Alternative readings for 'El Shaddai', here following the MT (אל שדי) and NJB, are 'God Almighty' (NRSV) and 'Sovereign God' (NETB).
- <sup>4</sup> The word אחזת, translated 'possession', describes a permanent holding in the land; it is the noun form of the verb אחז that was used for the land given to them in Goshen (47:27).
- <sup>5</sup> By adopting his grandsons, Jacob gives them status equal to his eldest sons, Reuben and Simeon.
- <sup>6</sup> The last part of this verse means that any subsequent children of Joseph will be incorporated into the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh.
- <sup>7</sup> Before 'Rachel', the NJB adds 'your mother', following the Samaritan Pentateuch; here, we follow the MT.

ח וַיֵּרָא יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־בְּנֵי יוֹסֵף וַיֹּאמֶר מִי־אֵלֶּה: ט וַיֹּאמֶר יוֹסֵף אֶל־אָבִיו בְּנֵי הֵם אֲשֶׁר־נָתַן־לִי אֱלֹהִים בְּזֶה וַיֹּאמֶר קַח־סֵנָא אֵלַי וְאִבְרָכֶם: י וְעֵינַי יִשְׂרָאֵל כָּבְדוּ מִזֶּקֶן לֹא יוֹכֵל לִרְאוֹת וַיֵּגֶשׁ אֹתָם אֵלָיו וַיִּשָּׁק לָהֶם וַיַּחֲבֹק לָהֶם: יא וַיֹּאמֶר יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל־יוֹסֵף רְאֵה פָנֶיךָ לֹא פָלַלְתִּי וְהִנֵּה הִרְאָה אֹתִי אֱלֹהִים גַּם אֶת־זֶרְעֶךָ: יב וַיּוֹצֵא יוֹסֵף אֹתָם מֵעַם בְּרַכּוֹ וַיִּשְׁתַּחוּ לְאִפּוֹ אָרְצָה:

יג וַיִּקַּח יוֹסֵף אֶת־שְׁנֵיהֶם אֶת־אֶפְרַיִם בְּיָמִינוּ מִשְׁמָאל יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאֶת־מְנַשֶּׁה בְּשִׁמְאֻל מִיְּמִין יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיֵּגֶשׁ אֵלָיו: יד וַיִּשְׁלַח יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־יָמִינוֹ וַיִּשֵּׁת עַל־רֹאשׁ אֶפְרַיִם וְהוּא הַצָּעִיר וְאֶת־שִׁמְאֻל עַל־רֹאשׁ מְנַשֶּׁה שְׂכַל אֶת־יָדָיו כִּי מְנַשֶּׁה הַבְּכוֹר:

טו וַיְבָרֶךְ אֶת־יוֹסֵף וַיֹּאמֶר

<sup>8</sup> When Israel saw Joseph's sons he asked, "Who are these?" <sup>9</sup> "They are my sons, whom God has given me here," Joseph told his father. He said, "Bring them to me, so I may bless them." <sup>10</sup> Israel's eyes were dim with age, so he could not see well. So, Joseph made them come closer to him and he kissed and embraced them. <sup>11</sup> Then Israel said to Joseph, "I did not think I would see you again but God has let me see your family as well." <sup>12</sup> Then Joseph took them from his lap and bowed to the ground.

<sup>13</sup> Joseph took them both, Ephraim with his right hand on Israel's left and Manasseh in his left hand, on Israel's right, and brought them close to him. <sup>14</sup> But Israel held out his right hand and laid it on the head of Ephraim, the younger, and his left on the head of Manasseh, crossing his hands – Manasseh was, in fact, the firstborn.

<sup>15</sup> Then he blessed Joseph saying:

<sup>8</sup> Before 'sons', the NJB adds 'two'; here, we follow the MT & NRSV.

<sup>9</sup> After 'bring them to me', the NRSV adds 'please'.

<sup>10</sup> The opening disjunctive clause provides supplemental information that is important to the story: the weakness of Israel's sight is one of several connections between this chapter and Ch. 27. Here, there are two sons, and it appears that the younger is being blessed over the older by a blind old man; while it was by Jacob's deception in Ch. 27, here it is with Jacob's full knowledge.

<sup>11</sup> The literal translation of 'see you' is 'see your face'.

<sup>12</sup> The children were placed in Jacob's lap (literally, 'between the knees'), as part of an adoption rite (see 30:3 and, on adoption, 16:2 & 26).

<sup>13</sup> In place of 'towards' (twice in this verse), here following the NJB & NRSV, NETB has 'across from'.

<sup>14</sup> In place of 'firstborn' (here following the MT & NRSV), the NJB has 'elder'.

<sup>15</sup> The literal translation of 'been my shepherd' is 'shepherded me' the verb has been translated as an English noun (as NJB, NRSV & NETB) for stylistic reasons.



הָאֱלֹהִים אֲשֶׁר הִתְהַלְכוּ אֲבֹתַי לִפְנֵי  
 אַבְרָהָם וְיִצְחָק  
 הָאֱלֹהִים הָרַעָה אֹתִי  
 מֵעוֹדִי עַד־הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה:  
 טז המַּלְאָךְ הַגָּאֵל אֹתִי מִכָּל־רָע  
 יְבָרֵךְ אֶת־הַנְּעָרִים  
 וְיִקְרָא בָהֶם שְׁמִי  
 וְשֵׁם אֲבֹתַי אַבְרָהָם וְיִצְחָק  
 וַיִּדְּגוּ לָרֹב בְּקֶרֶב הָאָרֶץ:

"May God before whom walked my fathers  
 Abraham and Isaac walked,  
 may God who has been my shepherd  
 all my life until this day,  
 16 may the angel who has saved me from all harm,  
 bless these boys,  
 may my name live on in them,  
 and the names of my fathers, Abraham and Isaac.  
 May they grow and increase on the earth."

יז וַיֵּרָא יוֹסֵף כִּי־יָשִׁית אָבִיו יָד־יְמִינוֹ עַל־רֹאשׁ אֶפְרַיִם  
 וַיֵּרַע בְּעֵינָיו וַיִּתְמַךְ יַד־אָבִיו לְהַסִּיר אֹתָהּ מֵעַל רֹאשׁ־  
 אֶפְרַיִם עַל־רֹאשׁ מְנַשֶּׁה: יח וַיֹּאמֶר יוֹסֵף אֶל־אָבִיו לֹא־  
 כֵּן אָבִי כִּי־זֶה הַבְּכֹר שֵׁים יָמִינְךָ עַל־רֹאשׁוֹ: יט וַיִּמָּאֵן  
 אָבִיו וַיֹּאמֶר יָדְעָתִי בְנִי יָדְעָתִי גַם־הוּא יִהְיֶה־לָּעַם  
 וְגַם־הוּא יִגְדָּל וְאוֹלָם אָחִיו הַקָּטָן יִגְדָּל מִמֶּנּוּ וְזָרְעוֹ  
 יִהְיֶה מְלֹא־הַגּוֹיִם: כ וַיְבָרֶכֶם בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא לֵאמֹר בָּרֵךְ  
 יְבָרֵךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר יִשְׁמַךְ אֱלֹהִים כְּאֶפְרַיִם וְכַמְנַשֶּׁה  
 וַיִּשֶׂם אֶת־אֶפְרַיִם לִפְנֵי מְנַשֶּׁה: כא וַיֹּאמֶר יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל־

17 Joseph saw his father lay his right hand on the head of Ephraim and it upset him; he took his father's hand and tried to shift it from Ephraim's head to Manasseh's head. 18 Joseph said to his father, "Not so, father; this is the elder: put your right hand on his head." 19 But his father refused, saying, "I know, my son, I know; he too shall become a people; he too shall be great; yet, his younger brother shall be greater than he and his offspring shall become many nations." 20 So, he blessed them that day, saying: "May you be a blessing in Israel; may they say: God make you like Ephraim and Manasseh!" In

16 The Samaritan Pentateuch reads 'king' in place of 'angel' but the MT reading may be maintained; Jacob closely associates God with an angelic protective presence.

17 The literal translation of 'upset him' is 'was bad in his eyes'.

18 The gestures of blessing were considered as efficacious in themselves, the right hand conferring more than the left.

19 Ephraim did become the most influential of the northern group of tribes and was to be the nucleus of the future (Northern) Kingdom of Israel.

20 Both of the pronouns, 'you,' here are singular in the MT but plural in the LXX (ὁμῶν & σε).

יוֹסֵף הֵנָּה אֶנֶכִּי מֵת וְהָיָה אֱלֹהִים עִמָּכֶם וְהָשִׁיב  
 אֶתְכֶם אֶל-אֶרֶץ אֲבֹתֵיכֶם: <sup>כב</sup> וְאֲנִי נָתַתִּי לְךָ שֵׁכֶם  
 אֶחָד עַל-אֶחָיִךְ אֲשֶׁר לָקַחְתִּי מִיַּד הָאֲמֹרִי בְּחֶרֶבִי  
 וּבִקְשָׁתִּי:  
 {פ} this way, he put Ephraim before Manasseh. <sup>21</sup> Then Israel said to  
 Joseph, “Now I am about to die. However, God will be with you and  
 take you back to the land of your fathers. <sup>22</sup> As for me, I give you a  
 Shechem more than your brothers, the one I took from the Amorites  
 with my sword and my bow.”

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<sup>21</sup> The 2<sup>nd</sup> person pronouns in this verse are plural in the *MT* (but cf. #20).

<sup>22</sup> There is a play on the word שֵׁכֶם, which means ‘shoulder’, but is also the name of the town and district of Shechem, which was to become the property of the sons of Joseph, and where Joseph himself was to be buried (Jos 24:32).

## בראשית פרק מט

## GENESIS 49

א וַיִּקְרָא יַעֲקֹב אֶל-בָּנָיו וַיֹּאמֶר הָאֶסְפוּ וְאֶגִּידָה לָכֶם  
את אשר-יקרא אתכם באחרית הימים: 1 Jacob called his sons and said; "Gather together that I may declare to you what lies before you in time to come.

ב הַקְבֹּצוּ וּשְׁמְעוּ בְנֵי יַעֲקֹב  
וּשְׁמְעוּ אֶל-יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲבִיכֶם:

2 "Gather round and listen, sons of Jacob;  
listen to Israel your father.

ג רְאוּבֵן בְּכֹרִי אֶתָּה  
כְּחִי וְרֵאשִׁית אוֹנִי

3 "Reuben, you are my firstborn,  
my vigour, and the first fruit of my manhood,  
foremost in pride, foremost in strength.

ד יֵתֶר שָׂאת וַיֵּתֶר עָז:  
פָּחַז כַּמַּיִם אֶל-תּוֹתֶר

4 Uncontrolled as a flood: you shall not be foremost;  
for, you mounted your father's bed,  
and so defiled my couch, to my sorrow.

אז חללתי יצועי עליה:

{פ}

ה שְׁמַעוֹן וְלֵוִי אֲחִים

5 "Simeon and Levi are brothers;  
they carried out their malicious plans.

ו כָּלִי חֲמָס מְכַרְתִּיהֶם:  
בְּסֹדֶם אֶל-תְּבֹא נַפְשִׁי

6 Let my soul not enter into their counsel  
nor my heart join in their company,

בקהלם אל-תחד כבדי

### GENESIS 49

- 1 The expression 'in time to come' (בְּאַחֲרִית הַיָּמִים, literally, 'in the end of days') is found most frequently in prophetic passages; it may refer to the end of the age or to the distant future. The contexts of some of the sayings stretch from the immediate to the coming of the Messiah.
- 2 In place of 'gather round and listen', here following the NJB, the NRSV has 'assemble and hear'.
- 3 In place of 'pride', here following the NJB, the NRSV has 'rank' and NETB has 'dignity'.
- 4 Reuben, the firstborn, forfeits the position of honour as a punishment for his incest.
- 5 Simeon and Levi are cursed for their treacherous attack on Shechem. Simeon very soon ceased to exist, being for the most part absorbed by Judah; Levi vanished as a secular tribe but Dt 33:8-11 makes much of its religious function, of which nothing is said here.
- 6 In place of 'my heart', the MT reads 'my glory', but it is preferable to re-point the form and read 'my liver'.

כִּי בְאַפָּם הָרְגוּ אִישׁ  
וּבְרָצָנָם עָקְרוּ-שׁוֹר:  
אָרוּר אַפָּם כִּי עָז  
וְעִבְרָתָם כִּי קִשְׁתָּה  
אֲחֻלָּקֶם בִּיעֲקֹב  
וְאֶפְיָצֶם בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל:

ז

{פ}

יְהוּדָה אֶתָּה יוֹדוּךָ אֲחִיךָ  
יָדְךָ בְּעֶרְףְּ אֵיבֶיךָ  
יִשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ לָךְ בְּנֵי אָבִיךָ:  
גִּיּוֹר אֲרִיָּה יְהוּדָה  
מִטָּרֶף בְּנֵי עֲלִית  
כָּלֶּע רֶבֶץ כְּאַרְיֵה וְכִלְבִּיא  
מִי יְקִימֵנו:  
לֹא-יִסּוֹר שִׁבְט מִיְהוּדָה  
וּמַחֲקֶק מִבֵּין רַגְלָיו  
עַד כִּי-יָבֹא שִׁילֹה  
וְלֹא יִקְהַת עַמִּים:

ח

ט

י

for in their rage they have killed men,  
in their fury they hamstrung bulls.

- 7 Accursed be their rage for its ruthlessness,  
their wrath for its ferocity.  
I will divide them in Jacob;  
I will scatter them in Israel.

- 8 “Judah, your brothers shall praise you:  
you grip your enemies by the neck,  
your father’s sons shall do you homage,

- 9 Judah is a lion cub;  
you climb back, my son, from your kill;  
like a lion he crouches and lies down,  
or a lioness: who dare rouse him?

- 10 The sceptre shall not pass from Judah,  
nor the mace from between his feet,  
until he comes to whom it belongs,  
to whom the peoples shall render obedience.

7 Most commentators see here an anticipation of Levi being in every area but not their own.

8 There is a wordplay here; the name ‘Judah’ (יְהוּדָה) sounds in like the verb translated ‘praise’ (יִדְּוּךָ); the wordplay serves to draw attention to the statement as having special significance.

9 To the prediction of Judah’s primacy and power (vv. 8–9) is added a messianic prophecy (vv. 10–12). In Dt 33:7, Judah lives apart from the others: by then, the kingdom had split.

10 Alternative readings for the third line are: “until tribute comes to him,” “until Shiloh comes;” or “until he comes to Shiloh.”

יא אֶסְרִי לַגֶּפֶן עִירָה  
 וְלִשְׂרָקָה בְּנֵי אֶתְנֹו  
 כִּבְּס בַּיַּיִן לְבָשׁוּ  
 וּבְדָם-עֲנָבִים סוּתָה:  
 יב חֲלִילִי עֵינַיִם מִיָּין  
 וּלְבֹן-שָׁנִים מַחֲלָב:

{פ}

יג זְבוּלֹן לְחוּף יַמִּים יִשְׁכֵּן  
 וְהוּא לְחוּף אֲנִית  
 וַיִּרְכָּתוּ עַל-צִידֹן:

{פ}

יד יִשְׁשַׁכַּר חֲמֹר גָּרָם  
 רֹבֵץ בֵּין הַמִּשְׁפָּתִים:  
 טו וַיֵּרָא מְנַחֵה כִּי טוֹב  
 וְאֶת-הָאָרֶץ כִּי  
 נַעֲמָה וַיֵּט נֶשְׁכָּמוֹ  
 לְסִבָּל וַיְהִי לְמַס־עֶבֶד:

{ס}

11 He ties up his young ass to the vine,  
 to its stock the foal of his she-ass.

He will wash his coat in wine,  
 his cloak in the blood of the grape.

12 His eyes are dark with wine;  
 his teeth are white with milk.

13 "Zebulun lives by the shore of the sea,  
 he is a sailor on board the ships,  
 he has Sidon close by him.

14 "Issachar is a strong ass,  
 lying down in the midst of the sheepfolds.

15 He will see how good it was to take his ease,  
 how pleasant was the country,  
 so he will bow his shoulders for the load;  
 he will become a slave to forced labour.

11 In the 3<sup>rd</sup> line, the perfect verb (‘will wash’) is used rhetorically, describing coming events as though they have already taken place.

12 Some translate ‘dark’ and ‘white’ as comparatives, ‘darker than wine ... whiter than milk’.

13 Zebulun will have a favourable position, no longer shut up in the interior (Jos 19:10–16) but with access to the Mediterranean (on the coast near Phoenicia/Sidon). Expansion into Asher’s territory is assumed.

14 Issachar, ensconced in the fertile Plain of Esdraelon, grew soft and accepted the yoke of the Canaanites.

15 The verb forms in this verse are preterite; they are used in a rhetorical manner, describing the future as if it had already transpired.

טז דָּן יִדִּין עַמּוֹ  
 כָּאֶחָד שְׁבֵטֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:  
 יז יִהְיֶה־דָּן נָחֵשׁ עַל־דֶּרֶךְ  
 שְׁפִיפֹן עַל־אֶרֶח  
 הַנֶּשֶׁךְ עֶקְבֵי־סוֹס  
 וַיִּפֹּל רֹכֶבּוֹ אֲחֹרֶ:  
 יח לִישׁוּעָתְךָ קוֹיָתִי יְהוָה:  
 {ס}  
 ט גָּד גָּדוּד יְגוּדָנוּ  
 וְהוּא יִגַּד עֲקֵב:  
 {ס}  
 כ מֵאֲשֶׁר שְׁמֹנֶה לַחֲמוֹ  
 וְהוּא יִתֵּן מִעֲדָנֵי־מֶלֶךְ:  
 {ס}  
 כא נַפְתָּלִי אִילָה שְׁלַחָה  
 הַנֹּתֵן אֲמֵרֵי־שֹׁפָר:  
 {ס}

16 "Dan will govern his people  
 like any other of the tribes of Israel.  
 17 May Dan be a snake on the road,  
 a viper on the path,  
 that bites the horse on the hock  
 and its rider falls backward.  
 18 "I long for your deliverance, Yahweh.  
 19 "Gad will be raided by raiders,  
 and he will raid at their heels.  
 20 "Asher, his bread is rich;  
 he provides food fit for a king.  
 21 "Naphtali is a swift hind,  
 dropping beautiful fawns.

16 'Dan will govern' (דָּן יִדִּין) is a play on words, as in 30:6.

17 The comparison of Dan to a venomous snake hints that Dan, though small, would be potent, gaining victory through its skill and shrewdness.

18 This verse, an invocation in the manner of the Psalms, marks approximately the middle of the poem.

19 For 'heels', the MT has the singular form (עֲקֵב – 'heel'); the MT has suffered from bad division at this point: the initial נ on the first word in the next verse should probably be taken as a plural ending on the word.

20 The MT opens this verse with 'from Asher' but see the comment on the initial נ in #19. Asher's land, situated on the coastal strip between Mount Carmel and Phoenicia, was so rich that it yielded 'food fit for a king' (Dt 33:24).

21 An alternative reading of the 2<sup>nd</sup> line is: "giving beautiful words."



כב בֶּן פֶּרֶת יוֹסֵף בֶּן פֶּרֶת עַל־עֵין  
בָּנוֹת צַעֲדָה עַל־שׁוּר:  
כג וַיִּמָּרְרוּ וַרְבוּ  
וַיִּשְׁטְמוּהוּ בַּעֲלֵי חֲצִים:  
כד וַתֵּשֶׁב בְּאֵיתָן קִשְׁתּוֹ  
וַיִּפְּזוּ זִרְעֵי יָדָיו  
מִיַּדִּי אֲבִיר יַעֲקֹב  
מִשֵּׁם רַעָה אֲבֵן יִשְׂרָאֵל:  
כה מֵאֵל אָבִיךָ וַיַּעֲזֹרְךָ  
וְאֵת שְׁדֵי וַיְבָרְכֶךָ  
בְּרִכַּת שָׁמַיִם מֵעַל  
בְּרִכַּת תְּהוֹם רַבָּצֶת תַּחַת  
בְּרִכַּת שְׁדִים וְרַחֵם:  
כו בְּרִכַּת אָבִיךָ  
גְּבוּרָה עַל־בְּרִכַּת הַהָרִים  
עַד־תֵּאוֹת גְּבַעַת עוֹלָם

22 “Joseph is a fruitful creeper near the spring,  
whose tendrils climb over the wall.

23 Bowmen provoked him;  
they drew and assailed him.

24 Yet, their bow was broken by a mighty One;  
the sinews of their arms were snapped  
by the power of the Mighty One of Jacob,  
by the name of the Stone of Israel.

25 By the God of your father who assists you,  
by El Shaddai who blesses you;  
with blessings of heaven above,  
blessings of the deep lying below,  
blessings of breasts and womb.

26 The blessings of your father are stronger  
than the blessings of the ancient mountains,  
the bounties of the everlasting hills;

22 The meaning of the last line of this verse is uncertain; the literal translation of ‘tendrils’ is ‘daughters’.

23 The verb forms in vv. 23-24 are used in a rhetorical manner, describing future events as if they had already taken place.

24 The ‘Stone of Israel’, equivalent to the ‘Rock’, is a frequent title of Yahweh in the Psalms. For this verse, the MT is corrupt; the translation here given (following the NJB) is based on the LXX: *καὶ συνετρίβη μετὰ κλάτους τὰ τόξα αὐτῶν, καὶ ἐξελύθη τὰ νεῦρα βραχιόνων χειρῶν αὐτῶν διὰ χεῖρα δυνάστου Ιακωβ, ἐκείθεν ὁ κατισχύσας Ισραηλ*.

25 The ‘deep lying below’ refers to the subterranean flood, whose waters irrigate the earth (Dt 8:7).

26 ‘Dedicated’ is from the Hebrew, ‘Nazir’ (see #Nb 6:1). ‘Mountains’ is a conjectural translation (הַרְרִי); the MT has ‘the ones who conceived me’ (הוֹרִי). The text used herein for this verse follows the NRSV; in the NJB, the 1<sup>st</sup> 2 lines continue v. 25, with: “... blessings of the grain and flowers, blessings of the eternal mountains;” this substantial difference arises from the conjectural interpretation of the consonantal Hebrew MSS.

תְּהִיִּן לְרֹאשׁ יוֹסֵף  
וּלְקֶדֶד נֹזֵר אָחִיו:

{פ}

כז בְּנִימִין זֶאֱב יִטְרֹף  
בַּבֹּקֶר יֹאכַל עֵד  
וּלְעֶרֶב יַחֲלֹק שָׁלָל:

כח כָּל־אֵלֶּה שְׁבֵטֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל שְׁנַיִם עָשָׂר וְזֹאת אֲשֶׁר־  
דִּבֶּר לָהֶם אֲבִיהֶם וַיְבָרֶךְ אוֹתָם אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר כִּבְרָכְתּוּ  
בָּרֶךְ אֹתָם: כט וַיֵּצֵא אוֹתָם וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם אֲנִי נֹאסֵף אֶל־  
עַמִּי קְבְּרוּ אֹתִי אֶל־אֲבֹתִי אֶל־הַמְעָרָה אֲשֶׁר בַּשָּׂדֶה  
עַפְרֹן הַחִתִּי: ל בַּמְעָרָה אֲשֶׁר בַּשָּׂדֶה הַמַּכְפֵּלָה אֲשֶׁר  
עַל־פְּנֵי־מִמְרָא בְּאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן אֲשֶׁר קָנָה אַבְרָהָם אֶת־  
הַשָּׂדֶה מֵאֵת עַפְרֹן הַחִתִּי לְאַחֲזֹת־קֶבֶר: לא שָׁמָּה  
קָבְרוּ אֶת־אַבְרָהָם וְאֵת שָׂרָה אִשְׁתּוֹ שָׁמָּה קָבְרוּ אֶת־  
יִצְחָק וְאֵת רִבְקָה אִשְׁתּוֹ וְשָׁמָּה קָבַרְתִּי אֶת־לֵאָה:  
לב מִקְנֶה הַשָּׂדֶה וְהַמְעָרָה אֲשֶׁר־בּוֹ מֵאֵת בְּנֵי־חֵת:  
לג וַיִּכְלֵ יַעֲקֹב לְצֹת אֶת־בָּנָיו וַיֹּאסֵף רַגְלָיו אֶל־הַמֶּטֶה  
וַיִּגֹּעַ וַיֹּאסֵף אֶל־עַמּוּיוֹ:

may they descend on Joseph's head,  
on the brow of the dedicated one among his brothers.

27 "Benjamin is a ravening wolf,  
in the morning he devours his prey,  
and in the evening he is still dividing the spoil."

28 All these make up the tribes of Israel, twelve in number, and this is what their father said to them. He blessed them, giving to each one an appropriate blessing. 29 Then he instructed them, saying to them, "I am about to be gathered to my people. Bury me near my fathers, in the cave that is in the field of Ephron the Hittite, 30 in the cave in the field at Machpelah, opposite Mamre, in the land of Canaan, which Abraham bought from Ephron the Hittite as a burial-plot. 31 There Abraham was buried and his wife Sarah. There Isaac was buried and his wife Rebekah. There I buried Leah. 32 I mean the field and the cave in it that were bought from the sons of Heth." 33 When Jacob finished instructing his sons, he drew his feet up into the bed and, breathing his last, was gathered to his people.

27 This picture of a bellicose Benjamin is vindicated by the tribe's subsequent history (see Jg 3:15ff, 5:14, 19–20, and the career of Saul in 1S).

28 The literal translation of the last sentence is, "and he blessed them, each of whom according to his blessing, he blessed them."

29 The NJB opens this verse, here following the NRSV, with "Then he gave them these instructions."

30 On Abraham's purchase of this burial-plot, see 23:4–11.

31 In place of the passive forms ('was buried'), here following the MT, NJB & NRSV, NETB uses active verbs ('they buried').

32 There is no known connection between these 'sons of Heth', apparently a Canaanite group (see 10:15), and the Hittites of Asia Minor.

33 In place of 'finished instructing his sons', here (loosely) following the NJB, the NRSV has 'ended his charge to his sons'.

## GENESIS 50

## בראשית פרק נ

א ויפל יוסף על־פני אביו ויבך עליו וישק־לו: ב ויצו יוסף את־עבדיו את־הרפאים לחנט את־אביו ויחנטו הרפאים את־ישראל: ג וימלאו־לו ארבעים יום כי בן ימלאו ימי החנטים ויבכו אתו מצרים שבועים יום: ד ויעברו ימי בכיתו וידבר יוסף אל־בית פרעה לאמר אס־נא מצאתי חן בעיניכם דברו־נא באזני פרעה לאמר: ה אבי השביעני לאמר הנה אנכי מת בקברי אשר כריתי לי בארץ כנען שמה תקברני ועתה אעלה־נא ואקברה את־אבי ואשובה: ו ויאמר פרעה עלה וקבר את־אביך כאשר השביעך: ז ויעל יוסף לקבר את־אביו ויעלו אתו כל־עבדי פרעה זקני ביתו וכל זקני ארץ־מצרים: ח וכל בית יוסף ואחיו ובית אביו רק טפס וצאנם ובקרם עזבו

<sup>1</sup> At this, Joseph fell on his father; he wept on him and kissed him. <sup>2</sup> Joseph ordered the doctors in his service to embalm his father; the doctors embalmed Israel. <sup>3</sup> They took forty days; for, that is how long it takes to embalm. The Egyptians mourned him for seventy days. <sup>4</sup> When the days of mourning for him were over, Joseph said to Pharaoh's house, "If I have found your favour, please say to Pharaoh: <sup>5</sup> My father made me swear an oath, saying, "I am about to die. Bury me in the tomb I have dug for myself in the land of Canaan." So, let me go up to bury my father; then, I shall return." <sup>6</sup> Pharaoh said, "Go and bury your father, according to the oath he made you swear." <sup>7</sup> Joseph went up to bury his father; and with him went all Pharaoh's servants, the palace elders, all the elders of the land of Egypt, <sup>8</sup> all Joseph's family and his brothers, and his father's family. Only their

## GENESIS 50

- <sup>1</sup> The expression 'fell on his father' describes Joseph's unrestrained sorrow over Jacob's death.
- <sup>2</sup> Embalming, an ancient Egyptian custom, was necessary if Jacob's body was to be carried back to Canaan.
- <sup>3</sup> Egyptians are said to have mourned for a monarch seventy-two days; thus, out of respect for Joseph, Jacob was given a royal funeral.
- <sup>4</sup> The literal translation of 'mourning' is 'weeping' and that of 'say to Pharaoh' is 'speak in the ears of Pharaoh'.
- <sup>5</sup> Jacob had dug a tomb for himself east of the Jordan (v. 10) and was buried there rather than at Machpelah (vv. 12–13). This explains why the funeral cortege detoured to Transjordan (vv. 10–11), though a main road from Egypt led along the coast to Beersheba.
- <sup>6</sup> Literally translated, this verse ends, "... just as he made you swear an oath."
- <sup>7</sup> In place of 'elders', here following the MT & NRSV, the NJB has 'dignitaries' and NETB has 'senior courtiers'.
- <sup>8</sup> In place of 'children', here following the NRSV, the NJB has 'those unfit to travel'; the Hebrew word here and in certain other places (43:8, 47:12, 50:8 & 21) has a wider meaning: dependants, the very young and the very old.

בְּאֶרֶץ גֹּשֶׁן: <sup>ט</sup> וַיַּעַל עִמּוֹ גַּם-רֶכֶב גַּם-פָּרָשִׁים וַיְהִי  
הַמַּחֲנֶה כְּבֹד מְאֹד:

<sup>י</sup> וַיָּבֹאוּ עַד-גֹּרֶן הָאֶטָד אֲשֶׁר בְּעֵבֶר הַיַּרְדֵּן וַיִּסְפְּדוּ-שָׁם  
מִסְפַּד גָּדוֹל וְכָבֵד מְאֹד וַיַּעַשׂ לְאָבִיו אָבֵל שִׁבְעַת  
יָמִים: <sup>יא</sup> וַיֵּרָא יוֹשֵׁב הָאֶרֶץ הַכְּנַעֲנִי אֶת-הָאֵבֶל בְּגֵרָן  
הָאֶטָד וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵבֶל-כְּבֹד זֶה לְמִצְרַיִם עַל-כֵּן קָרָא  
שְׁמָהּ אָבֵל מִצְרַיִם אֲשֶׁר בְּעֵבֶר הַיַּרְדֵּן:

<sup>יב</sup> וַיַּעֲשׂוּ בָנָיו לוֹ כֵּן כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּם: <sup>יג</sup> וַיֵּשְׂאוּ אֹתוֹ בָּנָיו  
אֶרֶצָה כְּנַעַן וַיִּקְבְּרוּ אֹתוֹ בְּמַעְרַת שְׂדֵה הַמַּכְפֵּלָה  
אֲשֶׁר קָנָה אַבְרָהָם אֶת-הַשְּׂדֵה לְאַחֲזֵת-קֶבֶר מֵאֵת  
עֶפְרָן הַחִתִּי עַל-פְּנֵי מִמְרָא:

<sup>יד</sup> וַיָּשָׁב יוֹסֵף מִצְרַיִמָּה הוּא וְאָחָיו וְכָל-הָעֲלִילִים אֹתוֹ  
לִקְבֹּר אֶת-אָבִיו אַחֲרֵי קִבְרוֹ אֶת-אָבִיו:

<sup>טו</sup> וַיֵּרְאוּ אֶחָיו-יוֹסֵף כִּי-יָמֵת אָבִיהֶם וַיֹּאמְרוּ לוֹ יִשְׁטַמְנוּ  
יוֹסֵף וְהָשִׁיב יִשְׁיֵב לָנוּ אֶת כָּל-הָרָעָה אֲשֶׁר גָּמַלְנוּ אֹתוֹ:

children and their flocks and herds were left in the land of Goshen.

<sup>9</sup> Chariots and horsemen went with him; it was a very large retinue.

<sup>10</sup> At Goren-ha-Atad, which is across the Jordan, they held a long and solemn lamentation, and he observed three days' mourning for his father. <sup>11</sup> When the Canaanite of the land saw the mourning at Goren-ha-Atad they said, "This is solemn mourning for the Egyptians." So, they call this place Abel-Mizraim; it is across the Jordan.

<sup>12</sup> His sons did what he had ordered them to do for him. <sup>13</sup> His sons carried him to the land of Canaan and buried him in the cave in the field at Machpelah, opposite Mamre, which Abraham had bought from Ephron the Hittite as a burial-plot.

<sup>14</sup> After he had buried his father, Joseph returned to Egypt, he, his brothers, and all who had come up with him for his father's burial.

<sup>15</sup> Since their father was dead, Joseph's brothers said, "What if Joseph holds a grudge and repays us for all the evil we did him?" <sup>16</sup> So, they

<sup>9</sup> The literal translation of 'retinue' is 'camp'.

<sup>10</sup> The NRSV and NETB translate 'Goren-ha-Atad' (גֹּרֶן הָאֶטָד) to 'the Threshing-floor of Atad'; its location is not certain.

<sup>11</sup> Abel-Mizraim (אָבֵל מִצְרַיִם) - 'Meadow of Egypt' or 'Mourning of Egypt' is not known; there are traces here of a tradition other than that relating to the family grave at Machpelah, namely that Jacob was buried in Transjordan.

<sup>12</sup> For this verse, here following the NJB, the NRSV reads, "Thus his sons did for him as he had instructed them."

<sup>13</sup> Cf. 23:4-11, and the footnotes thereto.

<sup>14</sup> The NJB, following the LXX, omits 'after he had buried his father'.

<sup>15</sup> In place of 'holds a grudge', here following the NRSV, the NJB has 'treats us as enemies'.

<sup>16</sup> The literal meaning of 'word' is 'a command' but the brothers wouldn't be commanding Joseph; probably, they sent their father's orders to Joseph.

<sup>טז</sup> וַיֵּצֵאוּ אֶל־יוֹסֵף לֵאמֹר אֲבִיךָ צִוָּה לִפְנֵי מוֹתוֹ לֵאמֹר:  
<sup>יז</sup> כֹּה־תֹאמְרוּ לְיוֹסֵף אֲנָא שָׂא נָא פֶשַׁע אַחִיךָ  
 וְחַטָּאתָם כִּי־רָעָה גָּמְלוּךָ וְעַתָּה שָׂא נָא לִפְשַׁע עַבְדֶּיךָ  
 אֱלֹהֵי אֲבִיךָ וַיִּבֶךְ יוֹסֵף בְּדַבְרָם אֵלָיו:

<sup>יח</sup> וַיָּלְכוּ גַם־אֶחָיו וַיִּפְּלוּ לִפְנָיו וַיֹּאמְרוּ הִנֵּנוּ לְךָ  
 לַעֲבָדִים: <sup>יט</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם יוֹסֵף אֶל־תִּירְאוּ כִּי הִתַּחַת  
 אֱלֹהִים אָנִי: <sup>כ</sup> וְאַתֶּם חֲשַׁבְתֶּם עָלַי רָעָה אֱלֹהִים  
 חֲשַׁבָה לְטֹבָה לְמַעַן עֲשֶׂה כִּי־זֶה הָיָה לְהַחֲיִית עַם־רַב:  
<sup>כא</sup> וְעַתָּה אֶל־תִּירְאוּ אֲנֹכִי אֲכַלְכֶּל אֶתְכֶם וְאֶת־טַפְכֶּם  
 וַיִּנָּחֶם אוֹתָם וַיְדַבֵּר עַל־לִבָּם:

<sup>כב</sup> וַיָּשָׁב יוֹסֵף בְּמִצְרַיִם הוּא וּבֵית אָבִיו וַיְחִי יוֹסֵף מֵאָה  
 וְעֶשְׂרִי שָׁנִים: <sup>כג</sup> וַיֵּרָא יוֹסֵף לְאַפְרַיִם בְּנֵי שְׁלֹשִׁים גַּם  
 בְּנֵי מַכִּיר בֶּן־מְנַשֶּׁה יְלָדוֹ עַל־בְּרֵכִי יוֹסֵף: <sup>כד</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר  
 יוֹסֵף אֶל־אֶחָיו אֲנֹכִי מֵת וְאֱלֹהִים פֶּקֶד יִפְקֹד אֶתְכֶם  
 וְהֵעֲלָה אֶתְכֶם מִן־הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת אֶל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר

sent word to Joseph: "Before your father died, he gave us this order:  
<sup>17</sup> "Say to Joseph: Forgive your brothers' sin and all the wrong they  
 did you." Now, we beg you, forgive the crime of the servants of your  
 father's God." Joseph wept when they spoke to him.

<sup>18</sup> His brothers came and fell down before him, saying, "We are here  
 as your slaves." <sup>19</sup> But Joseph said, "Do not be afraid! Am I in God's  
 place? <sup>20</sup> You meant harm to me but God meant it for good, in order  
 to save many people, as he is doing today. <sup>21</sup> So, you need not fear; I  
 myself will provide for you and your dependants." Thus, he  
 reassured them with words that touched their hearts.

<sup>22</sup> So, Joseph stayed in Egypt with his father's family; and Joseph  
 lived a hundred and ten years. <sup>23</sup> Joseph saw the third generation of  
 Ephraim's children, and the children of Machir, Manasseh's son,  
 who were born on Joseph's lap. <sup>24</sup> At length Joseph said to his  
 brothers, "I am about to die; but God will come to you and take you

<sup>17</sup> Before 'sin', the NJB adds 'crime and their'. In place of 'when they spoke', here following the NRSV, the NJB reads 'at the message they sent'.

<sup>18</sup> In place of 'we are here', here following the NRSV, the NJB has 'present ourselves before you'.

<sup>19</sup> Vv. 19–20 recapitulate the heart and climax of the Joseph story: Joseph asserts that only God can forgive and heal human guilt, and he testifies to God's overruling providence that has already turned evil purposes to a good end.

<sup>20</sup> Literally translated, this verse ends, "God devised it for good in order to do, like this day, to preserve alive a great nation."

<sup>21</sup> In place of 'with words that touched their hearts', here following the MT & NJB, the NRSV has 'speaking kindly to them'.

<sup>22</sup> The literal translation of 'his father's family' is 'the house of his father'.

<sup>23</sup> The children of Machir, Joseph's grandson, being 'born on Joseph's lap', were adopted as his descendants. Machir was the ancestor of a warlike clan of Manasseh that laid claim to Gilead (Nb 32:39–40, Dt 3:15, Jg 5:14).

<sup>24</sup> This verse anticipates the Exodus, based on the promise to Israel's ancestors.

נִשְׁבַּע לְאַבְרָהָם לְיִצְחָק וּלְיַעֲקֹב: כֹּה וַיִּשְׁבַּע יוֹסֵף אֶת־  
בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר פֶּקֶד יִפְקֹד אֱלֹהִים אֶתְכֶם וְהָעִלְתֶם  
אֶת־עַצְמוֹתַי מִזֶּה:  
כֹּה וַיָּמָת יוֹסֵף בֶּן־מֵאָה וָעֶשֶׂר שָׁנִים וַיַּחַנְטוּ אֹתוֹ וַיִּשֶׂם  
בְּאֵרוֹן בְּמִצְרַיִם:  
{ש}

back from this land to the land that he swore to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.” <sup>25</sup> And Joseph made Israel’s sons swear an oath, “When God comes to you, be sure to take my bones from here.”  
<sup>26</sup> Joseph died at the age of a hundred and ten years; they embalmed him and laid him in his coffin in Egypt.

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<sup>25</sup> The verb פֶּקֶד (*‘comes to’*) means ‘visit’, i.e., to intervene for blessing or cursing; here, Joseph announces that God would come to fulfil the promises by delivering them from Egypt. The statement is emphasised by the use of the infinitive absolute with the verb.

<sup>26</sup> The literal translation of *‘at the age of a hundred and ten years’* is *‘son of a hundred and ten years’*.